

CONCLUDING REMARKS
PRESIDENT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
FOURTH UN CONFERENCE ON LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES
ISTANBUL, 13 MAY 2011

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Each of us came to Istanbul with expectations and objectives to achieve.

Some will be disappointed that they did not achieve most, or all, of what they wanted. Others will be pleased that their objectives were met, or even exceeded. This is the nature of negotiations.

I choose, however, to see Istanbul not as a negotiation but a dialogue: a dialogue in which there are not supposed to be winners or losers.

This was an opportunity to build bridges between and among all the stakeholders and important actors in the development efforts of least developed countries: bridges between developed and developing countries; bridges between developed countries and LDCs; bridges between LDCs and other developing countries; and bridges between LDCs themselves. Indeed, bridges between governments, the private sector, and civil society.

Istanbul was an opportunity to break down the many invisible walls that prevent us from talking and understanding each other: Walls that intend to protect those who least need the protection and yet hurt the most vulnerable: Walls that insulate, yet isolate and marginalize. We must join forces to help LDCs break out of poverty.

We may not have built all the bridges we need, nor broken all the walls we need to break. But, we have made a start. We have set clear goals for ourselves and concrete measures to achieve these ends. Even though the journey is bound to be long and hard, with patience and determination, we will get there.

As long as we understand that the ultimate truth is that real and sustainable human progress can only happen if it brings prosperity to all the peoples, to all the regions and to all the countries of the world. There cannot be real peace, real happiness in this world -- as long as we allow small islands of wealth to float in the turbulent oceans of poverty!

As President of the UN Economic and Social Council this year, let me assure you that the Council, a Charter body of the United Nations, will play its part in ensuring that the Istanbul Declaration and Programme of Action will become reality.

I thank you!