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Statement

by

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Agenda Item 2: Preparations for the Conference:
Briefings and Presentations

Intergovernmental Preparatory Committee
for the Fourth United Nations Conference on
the Least Developed Countries
Second Session

New York
4-8 April 2011

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished members of the PrepCom Bureau,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Three months ago we met here for the first session of the International Preparatory Committee and started discussions about a new Programme of Action for LDCs to be agreed by the leaders of LDCs and their partners in Istanbul next month. Since then, negotiations have been held continuously and many member states have provided inputs into the process, for which I would like to commend them. I seize this opportunity to call up on LDCs and their development partners to show the flexibility required to conclude the negotiations on substantive issues by the end of this second session of the PrepCom. The success of the Conference will depend on it.

The series of almost 20 pre-conference events has been completed. The purpose of these events was to engage member states and International Organizations in substantive discussions on the priority areas for LDCs development. I am glad to report that all of these pre-conference events made substantive contributions to the draft Istanbul programme of Action and their topics are reflected in the draft. Documentation of most of the pre-conference events has been distributed in the room.

There have also been a number of other events last week. Let me highlight just a few of them.

The President of the General Assembly has organized an event on “investment in and financing productive capacities in LDCs”, at which the Secretary-General of the United Nations has highlighted economic diversification, investment in agriculture, and fair trade as three pillars needed to accelerate progress.

France organised a seminar on ‘Tackling the Vulnerability of LDCs’, where the idea that the allocation of aid should take the vulnerability of LDCs into account was discussed.

Maldives also organised a seminar, where the needs of graduating countries for enhanced smooth transition measures - including from the UN - were highlighted.

Just last Friday the President of the General Assembly had convened a civil society hearing, which highlighted the importance of civil society participation in the preparatory process.

Many of you have participated in several of these events, which all came up with relevant conclusions for a new PoA. I cannot go in much detail here, but I urge you to consider these conclusions, which are based on solid analytical work, and reflect them in the new PoA.

Besides the intergovernmental track, three other tracks - namely Parliamentarians, Civil Society and the Private Sector, are also engaged in the preparatory process, which will be presented later. Let me just express my gratitude especially to the members of the Steering Committees of the civil society and private sector tracks as well as to Interparliamentarian Union (IPU) for their important contributions to the process.

Mr. Chairman,

The Secretary-General has appointed a Group of Eminent Persons in August last year to examine obstacles faced by LDCs to their economic progress and to recommend a new paradigm for transforming the LDCs. Their report has just been submitted to the Secretary General and published last week.

The Secretary General's report on the 10 year appraisal of the implementation of the BPoA has also been published in the last few weeks.

Allow me to highlight a few findings and recommendations of these reports.

Both reports find that economic and social development in LDCs has been better during the implementation of the Brussels Programme than in the previous decade, especially with respect to economic growth but also with notable successes in improving human development attributes and progress in education and infrastructure development in several countries.

However, LDCs are still lagging behind with respect to reaching the MDGs and growth has not been sufficiently translated into poverty reduction. There are large differences among individual LDCs with respect to reaching the goals and targets of the BPoA . In addition, the multiple, inter-related global crises and challenges, such as increased food insecurity, volatile energy and commodity prices, and a global financial crisis , as well as the effects of climate change had and continue to have a severe impact on development.

Thus one of the main conclusions is that business as usual will not do and that the specific challenges faced by LDCs need to be addressed in a new PoA.

The report of the eminent persons group highlights that clear, quantifiable targets and the differentiation of responsibilities that were part of the approach of the BPoA should be preserved. These targets need to be defined within a limited set of clearly defined and time bound objectives.

The new Programme of Action should not only provide additional impetus to realizing the MDGs in LDCs but also put strong emphasis on enabling them to achieve sustained, accelerated and inclusive economic growth and reduce their vulnerability to external shocks. To this end a focus on diversification and productive capacity - including in agriculture, economic infrastructure- especially in energy and employment creation will be crucial. Risk reduction measures need to be enhanced and made accessible for LDCs.

Treating LDCs as a group on the basis of their low per capita income, human assets and economic vulnerability remains the fundamental premise for special measures in their favour. Thus, the LDC category needs to be recognised by all development partners and priority needs to be given to LDCs, including through strengthened and innovative international support measures.

One of the lessons learned from the Secretary General's report is that more commitment to provide increased, more effective and predictable international support for LDCs is needed, including through South-South cooperation, to increase the number of LDCs graduating from the category.

National and international responses for each LDC should be tailored in order to achieve greater effectiveness of support measures. Greater ownership and leadership of LDCs is indispensable, including mainstreaming and integration of the PoA in national development strategies, plans and programmes, as well as multi-stakeholder engagement by parliamentarians, civil society organizations, and the private sector. The regional dimension including the involvement of regional bodies in which LDCs are members has also been highlighted.

For the implementation of improved development strategies in LDCs a capable developmental state is a precondition. The role of the state needs to be strengthened not in the old sense of nationalisation and import substitution programmes but learning from experiences of the new emerging economies. The developmental state, as also advocated by UNCTAD's LDC reports, gives top priority to economic development and provides incentives and complementary inputs, where the market provision is not sufficient. This includes measures like targeted support for R&D in areas with potential competitiveness, complemented by skills development to enable technology transfer. It also includes promoting fiscal space for the delivery of key public services and prioritising employment creation in macroeconomic policies.

Monitoring and follow-up should not only focus on goals and targets but also on actions by both LDCs and development partners to strengthen mutual accountability. In this respect also the statistical capacity in LDCs needs to be strengthened. The feedback provided can be used to make appropriate adjustments in terms of realigning incentives and evaluating the state of accomplishments of the PoA generally.

In order to be effective enhanced support measures for LDCs need to be complemented by a new international support architecture, putting them into a framework of rules, norms, understandings and practices which guide international economic relations.

This new international support architecture should encompass finance, trade, technology, commodities and new challenges including climate change. It would increase policy coherence in these areas and ensure that the international trade and financial architecture would be more supportive and responsive to the special needs and priorities of LDCs.

Mr. Chairman,

The new Istanbul Programme of Action will determine the development paradigm for years to come. As I said in the beginning, we have made progress in the negotiations over the past three months, but with only one more month to go, I think the process needs to accelerate and more efforts to overcome some differences need to be made. I urge all delegations to redouble efforts and show as much flexibility and solidarity as needed to agree on a renewed partnership that goes beyond the Brussels Programme with some real value added for LDCs.

As we begin the second Intergovernmental Preparatory Committee Meeting today, we must bear in mind the fate of the people living in LDCs, outline a vision on how to make sure all of them will have the opportunity to develop their full potential and live a decent life and must come up with concrete means to implement them. Today and the next four days would therefore be crucial for all of us. It is crucial for the success of the Conference, including high-level participation, that agreement is reached before the Istanbul Summit starts.

It would be remiss of me if I do not acknowledge that we are fortunate to have Ambassador Jarmo Viinanen of Finland as the chair of the PrepCom. His wisdom, experiences and able stewardship, supported by a highly committed team of distinguished bureau members, will continue to lead to a successful, action-oriented, focused and ambitious outcome of the UN LDC IV. You can rest assured, Ambassador, of full support and cooperation from my office to your noble endeavours.

Mr. Chairman,

Before I conclude, I would like to present to you the structure and some highlights of the Istanbul Summit. As you know, the Conference will be organized around four interrelated tracks, namely the Inter-governmental track involving the governments of LDCs and their partners; the Parliamentary track involving members of the legislature from LDCs and their partners, the Civil society track with activities by civil society organisations, including NGOs, academia, media and foundations, and the Private sector track involving activities by private sector actors.

The inaugural ceremony of the Intergovernmental track of Conference will be held on Monday, 9 May and feature addresses by the President of Turkey, the Secretary General of the United Nations and key speakers. After the opening of the Conference, the intergovernmental track will proceed with the General Debate, the Committee of the Whole and High-Level Interactive Thematic Debates. Member States have already agreed on the six themes for the thematic debates, namely:

- Enhancing productive capacities and the role of the private sector in LDCs;
- Resource mobilisation for LDCs' development and global partnership;
- Harnessing trade for LDCs' development and transformation;
- Good governance at all levels
- Reducing vulnerabilities, responding to emerging challenges, and enhancing food security in LDCs; and
- Human and social development, gender equality and empowerment of women;

Furthermore, a broad coalition of UN system organization, Member States, regional groups and other relevant stakeholders will organize over 40 special events related to LDC-specific priority areas that aim to produce concrete deliverables for LDCs during the Conference. I would like to use this opportunity to express my sincerest appreciation for the strong commitment that has been shown by all organizing partners.

The Parliamentary track of the Conference will consist of a Parliamentary Forum, held on Sunday, 8 May. This event will be co-organized by the Inter-parliamentary Union and the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, with the support of the United Nations. The Forum will bring together 150 - 200 members of parliament attending the LDC IV Conference, from LDCs as well as non-LDCs, to ensure parliamentary participation in the implementation and review of the new programme of action for the LDCs.

The Civil Society track of the Conference will take place from 7 to 13 May. Organized by Civil Society organizations, it will feature a Civil Society Forum, seminars, workshops and strategy sessions as well as the screening of films and an exhibition. The participation of the civil society in UNLDC-IV aims at strengthening the bottom-up character of the process and ensuring a more inclusive new programme.

Last but not least, UNLDC-IV will, for the first time, feature a broad participation the private sector and in this way seek to identify concrete, action-oriented proposals addressing LDC-specific problems and challenges in the area of investment, enterprise development, trade and finance. The Private Sector Track will include three components: On the first day of the Conference, the lunch-time High-Level Meeting on Investment and Partnerships will provide a unique opportunity for direct engagement of the private sector and high-level Government officials. Furthermore, under the umbrella of the 'Global Business Partnership Forum' which will take place from 9-13 May 2011, private sector organizations in cooperation with UN agencies and partners will organize approximately 40 private-sector relevant meetings that will offer participants of all four tracks unparalleled opportunities to interact and to contribute to building, and ultimately benefiting from, the markets of the future. Last but not least, a Trade Fair will take place from 9-13 May 2011, and will showcase export and other commercial opportunities in the LDCs.

I would like to wholeheartedly thank our host country Turkey for their political leadership and full engagement in the preparatory process both on the substantive and the logistical side, including their generous financial support, which includes enabling the participation of participants from all 4 tracks plus the media in the Istanbul Summit.

I would like to strongly urge all Member Countries to attend the Conference to be held in Istanbul from 9-13 May 2011 at the highest possible level as a gesture of support and solidarity in favour of LDCs.

I thank you for your attention.