



**STATEMENT BY LDC WATCH AT THE ECOSOC NGO FORUM:  
"THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
AND THE NEW INTERNATIONAL AID ARCHITECTURE"**

**UN Headquarters, New York  
4 April 2008**

The increase in number of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) from 24 in 1971 to 49 today, and ironically, after three decades of special development attention, three UN LDC conferences and three specific Programmes of Action, clearly proves the failure of existing development paradigms including the international aid agenda to effectively address the development challenges and constraints in these poorest countries. The ever-increasing wave of neo-liberal globalization has further threatened the LDC economies characterized by debt burden, economic shocks, hunger, human rights violations including gender injustice, conflict, weak governance and even environmental vulnerabilities. The poor, vulnerable and marginalized, including women, children and the youth who form more than 50 per cent of the population of the LDCs continue to live in a dream of sustainable development and peace.

LDC Watch, as an alliance of national and regional civil society organizations, networks and movements based in the LDCs with support from development partner countries, therefore, acts as a coordinating group for LDC civil society to advocate, lobby, campaign and network for the realization of the internationally agreed development goals, specifically, the Brussels Programme of Action (BPoA) on the LDCs for the Decade 2001-2010, that was agreed at the Third UN Conference on the LDCs (UN LDCIII) by the LDC governments and their development partners.

The BPoA is based on the international development targets including those contained in the Millennium Declaration and aims to "promote the sustainable development of the LDCs". LDC Watch, as a partner and pressure group, engages in a multi-stakeholder framework to ensure the effective implementation of the international development commitments, including the BPoA for realizing sustainable development, peace and human rights in the LDCs.

Hence, in the context of the role of civil society with regard to the new international

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aid architecture, LDC Watch firmly advocates for the enhanced participatory role of LDC civil society towards ensuring the effectiveness of international aid vis-à-vis national development agenda and processes of their own countries. Civil society, as representatives of people's organizations and initiatives, carry the legitimate voice of the poor and the marginalized and are better placed to articulate pro-people interests in the national and international debates of the aid effectiveness agenda.

Civil society must be an integral part of all development plans and processes to ensure local democratic ownership, self-governance, local knowledge and expertise that safeguard and uphold people-led sustainable development. All stakeholders must make a conscious effort to acknowledge and incorporate the contribution of civil society in the overall development agenda.

**LDC Watch, therefore, calls on LDC governments and development partners to reaffirm their mutually agreed development commitments and assured delivery on the following pressing demands:**

- ✓ Recognize civil society as equal partners in development and provide them due space in formulating development policies as well as decision-making;
- ✓ Facilitate civil society's role, especially of women and the youth, towards ensuring a people-centered policy framework by providing adequate resources, support and cooperation;
- ✓ Commit aid for eradicating poverty and socio-economic injustices, and promoting sustainable development, social security and human rights;
- ✓ Increase aid allocations for building basic social services, livelihoods and social infrastructure;
- ✓ Increase aid volume for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment for their meaningful participation in all development processes;
- ✓ Reaffirm aid towards building human and institutional capacities for enhancing productive capacities in the LDCs;
- ✓ Achieve the target of 0.15 per cent of their GNP by the development partners as official development assistance to LDCs;
- ✓ Implement the OECD-DAC recommendations to untie aid to LDCs;
- ✓ Cancel 100% debt of the LDCs;
- ✓ End all aid conditionality including policy prescriptions and structural adjustment reforms;

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- ✓ Enhance mutual accountability, governance, transparency, democratization and harmonization for better aid effectiveness;
- ✓ Promote local democratic ownership of aid rather than only national ownership which undermines pro-poor agenda and interests;
- ✓ Realize the local social, cultural and political realities of recipient countries and not take aid solely a technical tool of domination;
- ✓ Recognize the environmental vulnerabilities of LDCs and stop the use of aid to the detriment of the environment.

It is imperative that the new international aid architecture recognizes the energy, expertise and commitment of civil society as key ingredients for its mission to make sustainable development a reality for the poor, vulnerable and marginalized people living in the LDCs!

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