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United Nations

Remarks

By

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at the

EXPERTS LEVEL SEGMENT

of the

Ministerial Conference of the Least Developed Countries

for the

**Mid-term comprehensive global review of the Brussels Programme of
Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010**

Cotonou, Benin

5 June 2006

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished delegates,

Colleagues from the UN system and from other international and multilateral organizations

On behalf of the United Nations, I welcome you to this Experts' level segment of the Ministerial conference of the LDCs. Here in Cotonou. This is the final leg of the LDC preparatory process that began with the national reviews, the reports of which were subsequently considered at a regional level of the UN Commissions. Side by side, the UN agencies also held series of Inter-Agency consultations, and 13 agencies have provided their sectoral reports, besides other contributions to the process. The outcome of all these activities are available to the LDC Ministerial Conference as well as to your meeting here in Cotonou preparing the LDC strategy document for the Mid-term Comprehensive Global Review of the Brussels Programme. This meeting in Cotonou is a milestone gathering in the preparatory process for the global review in September by the UN General Assembly.

I commend the government and the people of Benin, our global chairman, for hosting this Ministerial Conference so soon after assuming the responsibilities of the government after the historic elections. Our special thanks go to UNDP for their generous support to facilitate participation of LDC delegates to this and other previous preparatory meetings as well as for the organization of this meeting. We are deeply grateful for that.

For the purposes of our work, let us remind ourselves of the guidelines given by the General Assembly for the midterm review. These were to make an assessment on the implementation of the seven commitments and provide the occasion to member states to reaffirm the goals and objectives agreed upon at the Third UN Conference of LDCs. Secondly, best practices and lessons learned should be shared. Thirdly, the review should identify the obstacles and constraints that have been encountered, and the actions and initiatives needed to overcome them. And finally, the important measures required for the further implementation of the Programme should be indicated. The need to address new challenges and emerging issues was also called for by the General Assembly.

Given that 80 percent of the 750 million people in the LDCs live with income of less than two dollars a day, the overarching goal of the Brussels Programme is to halve the proportion of people living in extreme poverty and suffering from hunger by 2015, in the LDCs. This

Programme aims to improve the living conditions in the 50 LDCs by providing a framework and global partnership to accelerate sustained economic growth and sustainable development in LDCs, to end marginalization, inequality and deprivation in these countries, and to enable them to integrate beneficially into the global economy. The Brussels Programme also aims to create conditions necessary for the implementation of policies and strategies that would contribute to the growth and expansion of the private sector, entrepreneurship and innovation by facilitating access to technology, private capital flows and other related resources. The need for increased support to the LDCs through south-south cooperation and through partnership with civil society also remains significant.

The work of this experts segment is critical to further and finalize the work and recommendations emanating from the LDCs in line with the Brussels Programme. Hence, I urge the Experts Meeting to give it their best consideration so that the Ministers can come up with a good outcome in Cotonou.

The preparatory process also received a number of inputs from 49 national reports, reports of the UN Regional Commissions – UNECA, UNESCAP and UNESCWA – as well as 13 sectoral reports from UN system agencies. These reports are also available to the LDCs on the UN-OHRLLS website as well as on a disc that is available to this meeting. These sectoral reports will provide insights into the work being undertaken by UN agencies and international organizations for and on behalf of the LDCs.

From Addis Ababa to Bangkok to New York and now here in Cotonou, the LDC group, with Benin as the Chair under the able leadership of Edouard Aho-Glele, has been considering the possible outcomes of the LDC ministerial meeting. I am happy to say that the LDCs are doing as thorough a job as possible and I have no doubt that this Experts level Segment of the Ministerial Meeting will be able put up excellent recommendations to the ministers the day after tomorrow.

Looking ahead, the outcomes of this ministerial meeting will be deliberated upon in the Preparatory Meeting of Experts for the High-level meeting of the General Assembly on 5,6 and 7 September, and the High-level Meeting of the 61st session of the General Assembly on 18 and 19 September. The President of the UN General Assembly would also convene a one-day public hearings of civil society and the private sector. That will be on 22 June in New York.

In conclusion, let me say that the midterm review is an excellent opportunity for the LDCs to further the implementation of the Brussels Programme. The LDCs need to show their determination to move ahead with the programme, especially at a time when the international community and the developed partners are willing to help the process further. The leadership and capacity development in LDCs is key element in this. From the insights that we have gained from

the national and regional outcomes including the Inter-agency consultations, I would like to draw your attention to the following areas that are emerging as needing particular attention during the remaining years of the Programme. Those are:

- Rural development and agriculture
- Infrastructure, including Information and Communications Technology (ICT)
- Governance, particularly at the local levels where the actual implementation of development projects and programmes take place
- Gender mainstreaming and empowerment of women
- Energy as one of the main driving forces for economic development and social well-being, and
- Conflict resolution.

I wish you all the best in your deliberations. My Office and I will be at hand to help in any manner possible to make the process a success.

I thank you.
