

COTONOU MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegation of the Least Developed Countries participating in the Ministerial Conference held in Cotonou, Benin on 7 and 8 June 2006, to prepare for the comprehensive global midterm review of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 during the sixty-first session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York on 18 and 19 September 2006,

Recalling the Declaration and Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010,

Recalling also the Millennium Declaration and in particular the Millennium Development Goals aimed at eradicating poverty,

Further recalling the outcome of the Ministerial Conference of the Least Developed Countries held in Cotonou, Benin, from 5 to 7 August 2002,

Bearing in mind the Ministerial Declaration of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council of June 2004, in New York, that reaffirmed the need to undertake increased efforts and speedy measures with a view to meeting the goals and targets of the Brussels Programme of Action in a timely manner,

Recalling the commitment made by World Leaders in 2005 World Summit to address the special needs of the Least Developed Countries,

Aware of the need to work jointly and in synergy to contribute effectively and efficiently to the global fight against poverty and to the promotion of sustainable development,

Aware also, that Least Developed Countries in conflict and emerging from conflict experience difficulties in the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action,

Have agreed to the following:

1. We reaffirm that sustained economic growth, sustainable development and poverty eradication are imperative for the improvement of living standards of our people.
2. We reiterate that the Millennium Development Goals, as well as the other internationally agreed development goals, can effectively be achieved in the Least Developed Countries through the timely fulfillment of the seven commitments of the Brussels Programme of Action.
3. We acknowledge the weak implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 and hence, we strongly reaffirm the need for its full implementation as it provides a fundamental framework of partnership for sustained economic growth, sustainable development and poverty eradication in our countries.
4. We note that our national reports on the midterm review, which are the outcome of national level dialogues amongst stakeholders on the state of implementation of the Brussels

Programme of Action, reflect the achievements made and constraints encountered in the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action and the way forward.

5. We emphasize the need for creating an overall enabling environment for national and international actions to eradicate poverty and promote sustainable development in the Least Developed Countries.
6. We underline that good governance within each Least Developed Country and at the international level is essential to enable the successful implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action.
7. We recognize that national security and stability are essential for the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action in Least Developed Countries, in particular in those in conflicts and emerging from conflicts and require enhanced international support with the view to achieving the goals and targets of the Brussels Programme of Action in a timely manner.
8. We recognize that while the Least Developed Countries have the primary responsibility for their own development, the role of the international community and the multilateral institutions is essential in providing them with adequate resources and technical assistance to enhance their productive capacities, as well as economic growth, poverty eradication and sustainable development.
9. We acknowledge that the civil society and the private sector must play an important role in promoting social and economic development activities in the Least Developed Countries.
10. We recognize that health issues, particularly HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, as well as other communicable diseases such as the avian flu pose a grave problem in the Least Developed Countries due to insufficient technical know-how, human and institutional capacity and financial resources, and we urge the international community to ensure that the health needs of the Least Developed Countries are comprehensively addressed in all regional and global programmes.
11. We urge development partners to accelerate efforts to reduce the increasing vulnerability of Least Developed Countries, to preserve the global environment, reduce the loss of biodiversity, limit the adverse impacts of climate change, combat desertification and stem land degradation and to build the resilience of the Least Developed Countries to natural disasters and their ability to recover from them.
12. We stress the need for the Committee for Development Policy of the United Nations Economic and Social Council to revise the graduation criteria so as to make the Economic Vulnerability Index the sine qua non for graduation overriding all other indices.
13. We affirm the need for the international community to render the necessary support to the graduating countries with a view to avoiding the disruption of their development projects and programmes and allow them to continue developing.
14. We emphasize the need to implement the commitments made in the 2005 World Summit Outcome to address the special needs of the Least Developed Countries. In this regard we urge all countries and the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods Institutions, to

make concerted efforts and adopt speedy measures to meet in a timely manner the goals and targets of the Brussels Programme of Action.

15. We reiterate the urgent need for the international community to fulfill the commitments and objectives of the Monterrey Consensus with respect to official development assistance (ODA) for Least Developed Countries and to other financial measures, including increased grant-based financing and total bilateral and multilateral debt cancellation.
16. We recognize that international trade is vital for the development of our countries and the eradication of poverty and we stress the importance of enabling the beneficial and meaningful integration of the Least Developed Countries into the multilateral trading system, in accordance with the Doha mandate and the outcome of the 2005 Sixth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization.
17. We reaffirm the need to accelerate and facilitate the accession of Least Developed Countries to the World Trade Organization, and urge Members to exercise restraint in seeking concessions from acceding Least Developed Countries.
18. We reaffirm that an effective multilateral system based on relevant international law, supported by strong international institutions with the United Nations at the centre, is fundamental for the reduction of extreme poverty and the achievement of sustainable development.
19. We urge the United Nations system to effectively implement the outcome of all United Nations conferences and summits in a manner that ensures the achievement of the goals and objectives of the Brussels Programme of Action.
20. We emphasize the need for greater coordination and coherence among organizations of the United Nations system including Bretton Woods Institutions and other multilateral organizations, in mainstreaming the Brussels Programme of Action in their respective work programme and reports so as to ensure the effective implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action.
21. We also recognize the importance of furthering inter and intra-regional South-South cooperation in areas such as trade, health, disaster risk reduction and early warning systems, investments, communications, transport and transit infrastructure.
22. We welcome the measures taken by developed and developing countries as well as by multilateral organisations to promote South-South cooperation and call on them to substantially enhance their resources and efforts for capacity building and development in the Least Developed Countries, including the sharing of best practices in sustainable development of Least Developed Countries.
23. We commend the United Nations Development Programme and, especially the Special Unit for South South Cooperation for their financial contributions to the organization of meetings held in preparation for the mid term review of the Brussels Programme of Action, respectively in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 21-23 February 2006, and in Bangkok, Thailand, from 14-15 March 2006, as well as the Ministerial Conference in Cotonou, Benin, from 5-8 June 2006.

24. We express appreciation for the efforts of the United Nations Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, the United Nations Development Programme, and other relevant United Nations agencies, in advancing the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action.
25. We commend the Least Developed Countries Coordination Bureau for its role in coordinating positions and activities to facilitate the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action and for representing the Least Developed Countries' interests and concerns in the United Nations system and in all international and multilateral fora.
26. We express gratitude and appreciation to the Government and people of Benin for hosting the Least Developed Countries Ministerial Conference and for the facilities made available to ensure its success.
27. We adopt the Cotonou Strategy for the further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010.
