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PREPARATIONS FOR THE 2006 COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BRUSSELS PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

Summary of the Inter-Agency Consultations

held on 28 September 2005, UNHQ, New York

The second Inter-Agency Consultations of the UN System and International Organizations on the preparations for the 2006 comprehensive review of the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (BPoA) was organized by the Office of the High Representative.

Under-Secretary-General Anwarul K. Chowdhury opened the meeting and informed participants that the summary of the proceedings of the first meeting held on 15 July 2005, other documents, and one of which was a Roadmap, had been circulated to participants. He mentioned that the Roadmap was an evolving one, especially as we were waiting for the intergovernmental mandate from the 60th session of the General Assembly on the modalities for the 2006 comprehensive review. These modalities would be reflected in the Roadmap. Hence, the Roadmap was “work in progress” right up to the comprehensive review.

Mr. Chowdhury continued and said that this meeting had been primarily convened for the Inter-Agency Consultations to hear the Chairman of the LDC Group, Mr. Edouard Aho-Glele (Benin), and he called upon Mr. Aho-Glele to take the floor.

Mr. Aho-Glele said that this was the first time that he had been invited to take part at such Inter-Agency consultations, and expressed the desire to be invited to future meetings in order to provide information and interact with the agencies.

As far as the comprehensive review was concerned, the LDC Group had met several times on the matter. It was envisaged that the format and modalities of the comprehensive review or mid-term review (MTR) would be as follows:

- Preparatory meetings at the national, regional and international levels with the involvement of UN system organizations, regional organizations including civil society and the private sector. In this context, the Asia Pacific region under the auspices of UN ESCAP would hold their meeting in Bangkok probably in February 2006. The UN ECA would hold their meeting in Addis Ababa during



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March 2006. These regional meetings would be followed by the global meeting in Cotonou, Benin in June 2006.

- Meeting at the “expert level” prior to the General Assembly plenary meetings for the comprehensive review.
- High-level Plenary meetings of the General Assembly to undertake the comprehensive review involving all stakeholders in the Brussels Programme of Action.
- Adoption of the Final Document

Mr. Aho-Glele said that this was the “thinking” so far in the LDC Group and that he would be glad to further consult on the matter with other stakeholders and development partners.

After the intervention by Mr. Aho-Glele, Mr. Chowdhury opened the floor for discussions.

UNCTAD representative Mr. Habib Ouane sought clarification regarding civil society and private sector participation and the process that would include these groups in the comprehensive review.

The representative of UN Regional Commissions Mr. Kazi Rahman said that the issue of LDCs was a cross-cutting one within the framework of the regional preparations. The Commissions believed in mainstreaming the BPOA, and as a result, they had given special focus and devoted considerable resources to their LDC programmes. He then sought clarification and further elaboration on the proposed modalities indicated by the Chairman of the LDC Group, especially as regards the expert-level group.

The WTO (Tourism) representative Mr. Rafeuddin Ahmed, raised the following:

- What did the LDC Group expect from the UN system as a whole?
- The Roadmap was missing the idea of South-South cooperation at the regional level and this needed to be highlighted in order to be able to mobilize the solidarity of the South for the BPOA.

Mr. Ahmed indicated that there were a number of programmes of the WTO that were pertinent to the LDCs, like the WTO programme brought out in Johannesburg on sustainable development of LDCs, and the declaration adopted at the recent WTO summit meeting.



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On the issue of the expert group meeting, Mr. Ahmed said that it should be a part of the whole preparatory process. It should not come after all the intergovernmental meetings were over, but the outcome of the expert group's meeting should feed into the process of the intergovernmental consultations and before the proposed Benin meeting took place.

Mr. Chowdhury intervened to clarify that the civil society process was already established. In 2001 since the Brussels conference the LDC Watch had been set up. This organization had their own preparatory process including at the regional levels for the comprehensive review, and would make their report at the comprehensive review. At the same time, a broad-based national level intergovernmental review should also include all stakeholders including civil society and the private sector. It was expected that the LDC Watch preparations would culminate in the global comprehensive review.

Mr. Aho-Glele recalled how civil society had undertaken parallel preparations for the Third United Nations Conference on LDCs held at Brussels. He had thought that they would be working together for the preparations and not have separate events. He felt that all partners should work together including civil society. The Group wanted to constantly work with all partners as this is how partnerships should work. We should plan out our work together in order to achieve tangible results.

Secondly, he said that he was concerned with the approach of LDC issues being cross-cutting or "transversal." This interpretation was of concern to LDCs. He felt that the LDC programme should be specific or stand-alone.

Thirdly, with regard to the expectations that the LDC Group had from the UN system, he was of the view that different UN organizations had different mandates. Accordingly, they had their own specific roles to play in the process and in implementing the BPOA. Therefore, the UN system involvement was not as a single entity but as separate parts of the entity. As an example he said that they had already opened a dialogue with UNDP which had provided them with a model agreement that they could enter with the organization. He took the opportunity to thank the UNDP for their proposal.

Fourthly, on the issue of South-South cooperation Mr. Aho-Glele said that such type of cooperation was a "catalyzer" and would not replace the development partners within which they had specific commitments to the LDCs, and on their part, the LDCs had commitments as well. Southern countries could not replace North-South cooperation but only be able to supplement and complement the process. Hence, at the comprehensive review of the BPOA they were more concerned with North-South cooperation. On the other hand, Mr. Aho-Glele welcomed the proposals of the WTO (Tourism) which would



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contribute to the implementation of the LDC action plan, and the LDC Group would be prepared to cooperate with them.

Fifthly, on the expert group meeting that he had proposed and which had attracted comments, he said that it was a part of the process, and his vision and that expressed were the same except in nuance. This expert group would draft the outcome document of the comprehensive review. In this context it should be remembered that the mandate for the comprehensive review emanated not from ECOSOC but the General Assembly. ECOSOC was mandated only for the annual reviews of the BPOA but the comprehensive review would be under the General Assembly and this was reflected in the resolution that had adopted the BPOA. Hence, the expert group meeting would comprise the focal points in each organization concerned and involve other partners who were responsible. They would do the real work to draft the final document.

Sixthly, when it came to the preparations for the comprehensive review, there were the intellectual preparations and the logistical preparations. For the intellectual preparations the LDC Group had approached UNCTAD, and they had agreed to undertake this activity. UNCTAD had offered to enter into an agreement with the LDC Group as well as to support them in the preparatory process.

Then there was the issue of financial support. The LDC Group appealed to all the UN system organizations to provide financial support to successfully carry out the comprehensive review of the BPOA. In this regard they depended on the UN-OHRLLS, and thanked the High Representative for his efforts in this regard.

Mr. Kazi Rahman explained that when it came to the Regional Commissions they had a variety of programmes with sub-programmes under which the LDC components figured. These programmes were reviewed by the advisory committee of Permanent Representatives. Therefore, it was important to involve all sub-programmes and the UN system for support.

The CEB Secretariat representative, Mr. Qazi Shaukat Fareed, said that the CEB would be in a position to direct the coordination of activities of the different UN system agencies to play a joint or individual role and hold them responsible. Further consultations would be required with UN-OHRLLS in this regard.

Mr. Aho-Glele intervened and expressed the view that what Mr. Kazi Rahman said was the same thing he was saying. If the LDCs figured in the programmes and sub-programmes of the Regional Commissions then the LDC Group would welcome this.



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Mr. Aho-Glele said that he was pleased that CEB was taking the LDC issue into account. He felt that one level should not exclude the other level, that is, the individual organization level.

Mr. Chowdhury intervened and said that the role of the CEB was already clear in paragraphs 97 and 98 of the BPOA and this also included the UNDG. The paragraphs read as follows:

97. The organizations of the UN system as well as other relevant multilateral organizations are invited to continue to accord high priority to LDCs, to integrate the provisions of the Programme of Action appropriately in their work programmes, and to undertake within their respective mandates multi-year programming of actions in favour of LDCs. Their executive bodies are invited to organize sectoral appraisals of the Programme of Action at regular intervals in their respective areas of competence and make available the outcomes of such appraisals to the annual global reviews. These organizations are also invited to participate fully in reviews of the Programme of Action at the national, subregional, regional and global levels.

98. The Secretary-General of the United Nations is requested to ensure at the secretariat level the full mobilization and coordination of all parts of the United Nations system to facilitate coordinated implementation as well as coherence in the follow-up and monitoring of the Programme of Action at the national, regional, subregional and global levels. The ACC as well as the United Nations Development Group are invited to consider how to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of UN system-wide follow-up and monitoring of the Programme of Action. The system of focal points in each United Nations organization, which were set up in the context of preparations for the Conference, may be kept active in the context of review and follow-up of the implementation of the Programme of Action during the decade.

Mr. Chowdhury further proposed that the CEB should have the comprehensive review (MTR) on its agenda. He emphasized on the need for the agencies also to meet every two months to see what was being done in the preparations for the review. At the same time, the aspect of “public information” was important for the MTR including within the framework of the respective organizations.

Mr. Ahmed said that the comprehensive review should be taken up for consideration at the April 2006 session of the CEB. In this context the Roadmap should also reflect these review meetings of the CEB.



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(Chairman of the LDC Group left the meeting on the conclusion of his interactions with the agencies. The second part of Inter-Agency discussions continued)

Mr. Chowdhury said that the Roadmap will take into account the actions CEB will be undertaking in respect of the comprehensive review.

Mr. Fareed said that Mr. Chowdhury should initiate the inclusion of the comprehensive review (MTR) in the CEB's agenda, and that the substantive work in this regard would have to be done by the UN-OHRLLS. The CEB would inform the executive heads in this regard.

The DPI representative, Ms. Vivian Heston-Demirel, said that DPI was ready to work on a communications strategy for the comprehensive review, and that Mr. Chowdhury should come to the UN Communications Group to brief them on the matter.

Mr. Habib Ouane drew the attention of the meeting to paragraph 93 of the BPOA. He said that there was a specific provision in this paragraph to undertake an evaluation process that took into account the number of important developments that had taken place affecting the implementation of the BPOA since Brussels. Examples were the Gleneagles G-8 meeting and the recent World Bank/IMF meetings last week in Washington D.C. Hence, there was a need to look at the relevant provisions and commitments to see what needed to be taken into account for the review.

Mr. Ouane summed up his remarks stating that an overall assessment of the provisions of paragraph 93 should be undertaken, and as UNCTAD had done some years ago by engaging a consultant in order to determine the commitments to be fulfilled and the adjustments that needed to be done with the BPOA.

Paragraph 93 reads:

93. Follow-up, monitoring and review of the Programme of Action along the above tracks should involve all relevant stakeholders. They should be conducted in a coherent and mutually supportive manner. Consequently, well-functioning linkages should be built among different levels of follow-up. Through these processes, the actions identified in the Programme of Action will also be regularly adapted to new and evolving developments.

The representative of UNAIDS, Ms. Sonia Elliott confirmed UNAIDS' commitment to the BPOA within the framework of its mandate. She wanted to know when specific proposals for activities relating to the comprehensive review should be submitted. She also wanted to know the nature and timing of the high-level meeting on the comprehensive review.



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The IOM representative, Mr. Luca Dall'Oglio raised the issue of IOM's activities on remittances and its impact on LDCs. These activities including the high-level dialogue on migration taking place next year should also be referred to as an input to the comprehensive review.

Mr. Chowdhury responded as follows on the issues raised:

- When it came to timing, the 2006 UN General Assembly would take up the comprehensive review during its session between September to December 2006.
- With regard to the high-level meeting a number of ministers were expected to attend. Depending on the timing, some Heads of State/Government may also be able to attend. But the issue of the level of attendance was again a matter of political decision. He cited the example of the 1995 review when a number of ministers had been present. If the review took place before the general debate we could also think of a roundtable meeting of Heads of State/Government.
- The references to remittances would be put back into the Roadmap.
- With regard to the point raised by UNCTAD the issue had been raised with the LDC Group as a "course adjustment". If the current session of the General Assembly gave the mandate, the intention was to have a separate Report of the Secretary-General for the comprehensive review (MTR). Such a report would reflect the changes that need to be brought about in the BPOA as a result of the developments that had occurred during the last five years since Brussels. There was also the possibility of holding a roundtable meeting to find out the changes since Brussels. Mr. Chowdhury would keep in touch with UNCTAD in this regard.

The UNCDF Executive Secretary Mr. Richard Weingarten said that on the issue of remittances he wanted to express a thought relating to the Expert Advisory Group on the Year of Microcredit and the issues relating to LDC access to financial resources and the absence of data. Was this an appropriate subject to include in the activities being envisaged? What type of liaison should be established with the World Bank?

Mr. Chowdhury reminded that the BPOA mentions micro credit and a special event could be thought of for the MTR. The UN-OHRLS could discuss this further with the UNCDF.

Mr. Habib Ouane referred to the parallel and other events leading up to the comprehensive review and the need to take stock of such matters.



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Mr. Chowdhury said that as and when information on proposals for events were received, it would be taken into account in the Roadmap. He requested the agencies to think about events and activities and to let UN-OHRLLS know. The next year's biennium budget could also facilitate the financing of such proposals.

The GEF representative Ms. Boni Biagini said that the GEF had various programmes and implementing these as in the case of capacity building, the environment, biodiversity and climate change which affected the LDCs. (Details to be obtained from Ms Boni Biagini).

[Global Environment Facility LDC Fund

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) helps developing countries fund projects and programs that protect the global environment. Established in 1991, GEF forges international cooperation and finances actions to address six critical threats to the global environment: biodiversity loss, climate change, degradation of international waters, ozone depletion, land degradation, and persistent organic pollutants (POPs).]

Mr. Chowdhury said that for the record he wanted the meeting to know that the UNIDO representative had left a paper for the meeting. (This paper relates to the various activities of UNIDO towards fulfilling the organization's mandate in the BPOA.

In conclusion, Mr. Chowdhury thanked the participants for their attendance and contributions.
