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BACKGROUND PAPER

**WORKSHOP FOR THE NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS OF THE LEAST
DEVELOPED COUNTRIES**

organized by

**The Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed,
Land-locked Developing, and Small Island Developing Countries**

in collaboration with

UNCTAD, UNDP, UNDESA and World Bank

17 – 21 May 2004

New York

Rationale

1. The five day workshop for the National Focal Points of the Least Developed Countries on the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action is organised by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS), in collaboration with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) and the World Bank (WB) in response to the request of the Group of the Least Developed Countries and as a follow-up to the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries held in May 2001 in Brussels.

2. The Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (BPOA) for the Decade 2001-2010 adopted at this conference provides a framework for a global partnership between the LDCs and their development partners “to accelerate economic growth and sustainable development in LDCs, to end marginalization... and enable them to integrate beneficially into the global economy”(Para 4). The overarching goal of the Programme is “to make substantial progress towards halving the proportion of people living in extreme poverty and suffering from hunger by 2015 and promote sustainable development of the LDCs” (Para 6). To this end, LDCs and their development partners have made joint commitments based on shared but differentiated responsibilities in a number of areas. These commitments are the following:

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| Commitment 1 | Fostering a people-centred policy framework: formulation and implementation of poverty reduction and eradication strategies, adoption of measures aimed at placing the LDCs on a path of accelerated growth and sustainable development, and ensuring equitable distribution of the benefits of economic growth; |
| Commitment 2 | Promoting good governance at the national and the international levels: actively championing the cause of integrity, accountability, transparency, and democratic governance at the national and international levels; |
| Commitment 3 | Building human and institutional capacities: emphasis on the enhancement of literacy, health, nutrition, and sanitation standards, and adoption of sound policies on population and reproductive health; |
| Commitment 4 | Building productive capacities to make globalisation work for LDCs: investing in infrastructure development, promoting computer literacy, and taking advantage of advances in information and communication technologies; |

Commitment 5	Enhancing the role of trade in development: adopting measures aimed at increasing the LDCs' share of world trade, increasing LDCs' penetration of external markets, while at the same time diversifying the economic base in such a way that the contributions of non-trading sectors to the GDP continue to rise;
Commitment 6	Reducing vulnerability and protecting the environment: adoption of measures designed to protect the environment, and reduce the LDCs' vulnerability to the impact of environmental degradation, greenhouse gas emissions, drought, desertification, sea level rise, and toxic waste dumping; and finally
Commitment 7	Mobilizing financial resources: providing a political, legal, and governance environment that promotes and sustains investor confidence, and is conducive to resource mobilization.

3. In addition to the above-listed priority areas, the BPOA has also identified a few cross-cutting issues, notably, poverty eradication, gender equality, employment, governance at the national and international levels, capacity building, sustainable development, special problems of land-locked and small-island LDCs, and challenges facing LDCs affected by, or emerging from, conflict.

4. Of particular reference to the proposed Workshop is the provision in the BPOA for various arrangements for the follow-up, implementation, monitoring, and review (Part III). Recognising that the achievement of the underlying objectives of the Programme hinges on the effectiveness of the follow-up arrangements, the Conference particularly emphasized the fact that

“success of the LDCs in implementing this Programme of Action at the national level will depend, inter alia, on effective human, institutional and technical capacity related to policy development, monitoring of implementation and coordination” (Para 101).

5. Among the issues that the Workshop will address is the extent to which appropriate and effective measures have been instituted at the national level to build and deploy capacities for the implementation of the Programme, and for promoting linkages and synergies with other development programmes such as the PRSPs, CCA/ UNDAFs, NEPAD, and Millennium Development Goals. Equally relevant are the issues of monitoring and evaluation.

6. Without prejudice to the conclusions to be reached at the workshop, one important lesson learnt from the past UN experience is that it is easier to adopt a Programme of Action than to ensure its successful implementation. The Brussels Conference notes with

dismay that 10 years after the adoption of the Paris Programme of Action by the Second United Nations Conference on LDCs in 1990, “the objectives and goals set therein have not been achieved”(Para 2). While a number of LDCs had embarked on reforms shortly after the launching of the Paris Programme of Action, the results of their efforts had been generally well below expectations. Among the obstacles to the realization of the Paris Programme’s objectives were declining resource flows, a heavy and unsustainable debt burden, falling or volatile commodity prices, complex trade barriers, lack of economic and export diversification, and limited market access for key LDCs products, and supply-side constraints.

7. If national capacity for progress monitoring and reporting had been developed, most of the above-listed constraints would have been anticipated, and appropriate remedial measures might have been instituted. Unfortunately, as noted in the first progress report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the BPOA (A/58/86-E/2003/81) few LDCs had put in place the national arrangements that the Brussels Conference regarded as indispensable to the successful implementation of the Programme of Action. Specifically, mechanisms for the implementation, follow-up and monitoring of the Programme are either weak or non-existent.

8. It is against this background of the limited capacity of the LDCs to implement, report, monitor and evaluate national implementation of BPOA, and to participate meaningfully in the review of the Programme at the global level that the Workshop is being organized.

Objectives

9. In light of the foregoing observations on the problems encountered in the implementation of the BPOA, the OHRLLS, upon the request of the LDCs Group, is organising a Workshop for the National Focal Points with the support and collaboration of key UN system stakeholders: UNCTAD, UNDP, UNDESA and World Bank. The underlying objective of the Workshop is to initiate the process of building the necessary capacity for monitoring and reporting on implementation of the BPOA at the country level, and strengthening national capacity for participation in the intergovernmental (particularly, ECOSOC and General Assembly) global review of the implementation of the Programme.

10. The Workshop’s specific objectives are to:

- (a) provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and the sharing of national experiences, including lessons learned and best practices in the implementation, evaluation, monitoring, and review of BOAP;
- (b) establish linkages between BPOA and other relevant development programmes at the country, regional and global level like PRSPs, CCA/UNDAFs, NEPAD and MDGs;
- (c) identify roles and responsibilities of various national stakeholders in the effective follow-up and implementation of the BPOA at the country level;

- (d) build a consensus on methodologies for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the BPOA at the national level and on reporting requirement;
- (e) establish the basis for the network of the LDCs national Focal Points and introduce elements for the LDC/BPOA Information Network; and
- (f) identify obstacles and constraints, emerging challenges and issues in the implementation of the BPOA.

Structure and Content

11. The Workshop will feature presentations, each focusing on one of the aspects of the implementation of the BPOA. Besides the discussions at the plenary sessions, the Workshop will also provide an opportunity for an in-depth examination of specific issues in working groups. The topics to be discussed at plenary sessions and/or in working groups include, but are by no means limited to, the following:

- BPOA as a framework for partnership: commitments, goals, guiding principles;
- Linkages between BPOA and other development programmes;
- Roles of various stakeholders in the implementation of the BPOA at the national, regional and global levels;
- National experiences in the implementation, monitoring, review and evaluation of the Programme: lessons learned and best practices;
- Monitoring and evaluation methodology;
- Reporting guidelines;
- Networking among LDCs and UN Focal Points.

Methodology

12. The Workshop will apply a combination of plenary and group breakout sessions and draw on expert resource persons and National Focal Points experience to transfer knowledge and stimulate discussion.

Outputs

13. Expected outputs include participants' recommendations on:

- (a) The BPOA monitoring methodology;
- (b) Reporting guidelines;
- (c) Roles and responsibilities of national focal points and national forums in the follow-up and implementation of the BPOA at the country level
- (d) Elements for the database on BPOA best practices and lessons learned.

Success Indicators

13. The following are among the likely indicators of the Workshop's achievement:

- The participant's evaluation of the relevance and usefulness of Workshop, and of the adequacy of the topics' coverage by resource persons;
- Increased number and well functioning national forums;
- BPOA mainstreamed in development strategies, policies and programmes of the LDCs;
- Noticeable changes in the quantity and quality of LDCs' inputs to the report of the Secretary-General to the ECOSOC, and the General Assembly.