



**WORKSHOP FOR THE NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS  
ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BRUSSELS PROGRAMME OF ACTION  
FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES (LDCs)**

**New York, 17 – 21 May 2004**

**Statement by Mr. Zephirin Diabre  
Associate Administrator**

**Excellencies,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a pleasure and honor for me to be invited to make this Statement on behalf of UNDP at this very important historic gathering.

Mr. Chairman, the timing of this workshop is auspicious and its theme very pertinent. The workshop is timely because it is being held at a time when the international community is actively engaged in reflecting on the ways and means of strengthening the synergies between the Strategies and Action Plans of the various UN-Sponsored global development summits that took place since the Third LDC Conference in May 2001, notably the Monterrey Finance for Development Meeting, the Johannesburg World Summit for Sustainable Development and the recent World Summit on Information Society.

It is also being held at a time when preparations for the 2005 comprehensive review of the Millennium Declaration are well underway. Our hope is that by reinforcing the linkages between MDGs and the action plans of the other global development summits, we can only enhance the prospects of attaining the goals and targets of the Brussels Programme of Action.

As you will agree, the primary responsibility for the effective implementation and success of the Brussels Programme of Action, as with those of the other global summits rests fundamentally with the national stakeholders. We are, therefore, hopeful that this workshop will also contribute to reinforcing the foundation for the successful implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action.

Mr. Chairman, in order to contribute to achieving fruitful outcomes from the workshop, I would like to dwell on a few key issues that we in UNDP believe are pertinent to your deliberations over the next five days.

The first relates to the development challenges of LDCs. Most of the LDCs remain characterized by high incidence of poverty, weak capacities for high levels of sustainable growth, limited human and institutional capacities, high disease burdens, vulnerability to natural and man made disasters as well as to external economic shocks, marginalization in the global economy, poor social and physical infrastructure and widening digital divide with the rest of the world.

To start with, their growth performance, against the target real growth rate of 7% per annum set by the Brussels Programme of Action for impacting meaningfully on poverty, the current growth rate attained by LDCs as a whole is less than half of this target.

Another important target set by the Brussels Programme of Action is an investment-to-GDP ratio of 25% per annum. Currently the actual performance of most LDCs vis-à-vis this target is around 15-19%, which further diminishes the prospects for accelerated growth and poverty reduction.

Indeed, performance of LDCs in most of the other goals and targets of the Brussels Programme of Action is also well below the desired levels, now exacerbated by conflicts and HIV/AIDS pandemic, which are actually threatening whatever progress has been made in human development by them.

But the news is not all bad. Over the past few years commendable efforts have been made by both LDCs and the external development partners to tackle these development challenges. A significant proportion of the LDCs have persevered with difficult economic reforms, which have resulted in more favorable macroeconomic fundamentals and more stable economic conditions, which are essential for restarting higher levels of sustainable growth in the LDCs. There has also been notable progress on the political front. This is most illustrated in Africa. Over the past six years more participatory forms of governance and restoration of the rule of law has spread to an increasing number of African countries. Concerted efforts have also been made at effective conflict management and prevention. This has resulted in more stable political conditions in a significant number of LDCs.

On the part of the external partners, Monterrey and Johannesburg took place, at which development partners reaffirmed their commitment to increase significantly their commitment to increase development assistance to LDCs as well as address other important external constraints to their efforts at sustainable growth and performance, notably trade barriers and other restrictive policies and high debt burdens.

Yet the challenges remain.

Given the universal commitment to MDGs as the umbrella framework for all development endeavors and international development cooperation presently, it is vital that coherence and linkages be built between MDGs and the Brussels Programme of Action. There is a lot of convergence between the MDGs and the goals and targets of the Brussels Programme of Action. National authorities and their local stakeholders should strive to achieve this synergy and their planning processes and the external partners should support them effectively.

Another important issue I would like to touch upon is the need for sustained national commitment and effective ownership of the Brussels Programme of Action. The necessity for this cannot be over-emphasized. We are therefore encouraged by the active participation of the full spectrum of national stakeholders in this workshop. I strongly recommend that you actively examine ways and means of further reinforcing national commitment and ownership of the Brussels Programme of Action. This will include putting in place appropriate policies and institutions as well as effective monitoring systems.

Real action is also needed on capacity building, the debt and official development assistance fronts as well as the resumption of the WTO trade talks. It is for this reason that we are encouraged by the Commission set up by Prime Minister Tony Blair and active engagement of the European Union and the US Government in the efforts to revive the global trade talks as well as the EU/ACP Cotonu negotiations.

What support has UNDP provided to LDCs in their efforts to tackle their development problems and what contribution does it intend to make to help them lift themselves from the LDC status?

UNDP has always paid special attention to the LDCs. This is underscored by the fact that for a long time UNDP had a special LDC Unit and it has focused more than a proportionate share of its resources to these countries.

But our contribution to the development efforts of these countries cannot be measured merely in its direct resource contributions. UNDP's interventions have always had a strategic and catalytic effect, facilitating the participation of more partners and flow of additional resources. This has been possible because of the trust the programme countries and other development partners alike have in UNDP and because its interventions are designed to have catalytic impact on the development process of the programme countries. UNDP's universal presence also allows for rapid exchange of best practices and provision of assistance to all the LDCs, including those in crisis or emerging from conflicts.

Historically, UNDP has played a significant role in the transition of many LDCs and their efforts to build up their internal capacities through training and technical assistance for managing effectively the transformation processes of their economies and societies. UNDP has also assisted most of the LDC countries to acquire access to global learning through exchange of best practices and experiences.

Currently, UNDP is also actively supporting trade capacity building of many LDCs. In conjunction with these efforts, it is also diligently promoting a more inclusive globalization process, while playing a broader advocacy role on critical issues through our national and global human development reports.

By embracing the MDGs and working together around a common framework for action, we still have every chance of achieving our goals.

I wish you successful deliberations and I thank you for your attention.