

## GENERIC TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR NATIONAL FORUMS

**Background:** Both the Brussels Declaration and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2002-2010 underscore importance of the follow-up and implementation of the Programme at the national level.

Furthermore, Chapter III of the Programme contains a number of concrete and practical recommendations to the LDCs on how to ensure effective follow up and implementation of the Programme at the national level

The Programme, in particular, recommends “the LDCs to undertake this task within their respective national development framework and poverty eradication strategy, including where they exist, PRSPs, CCAs and UNDAF, and with the involvement of civil society, including the private sector, on the basis of a broad based inclusive dialogue” (para 99).

The Programme recognizes: “In some LDCs, national arrangements are already in place for broad-based and inclusive dialogue on development issues and policies. These forums are critical to ensuring genuine consensus and national ownership of national programmes of action and need to be fully supported. Other LDCs should follow this example by developing such national forums” (para 100).

It further states that “the national forums, working in close collaboration with development partners, could provide a platform for regular and systematic follow-up and monitoring of the implementation of commitments by individual LDCs and their development partners at the national level, as well as providing inputs to follow-up at the global, regional, subregional and sectoral levels” (para 100).

The Programme recommends the UN Resident Coordinator system and the country teams, as well country-level representatives of the Bretton Woods Institutions, and other bilateral and multilateral donors and other development partners “to collaborate with and provide support to the national development forums” (para 101).

The Programme emphasises that the country review process should strengthen linkages between the macroeconomic framework and sectoral strategies. It concludes: “There should be strong complementarities between the country review process and the national forums” (para 103).

**Current practice:** As of now 18 from 50 LDCs have established National Forums, mostly using the already existing mechanisms. Some, in line with the recommendations of the Programme, have transformed their Preparatory Committees for the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in the follow-up mechanisms to the Conference, others are using the PRSP, the MDGs or national development mechanisms as their National Forums for the follow-up and implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action at the country level. This ensures cost-effectiveness of

this mechanism, avoidance of duplication of work, streamlining country-led development process and mainstreaming the BPOA into its national development framework.

Establishment of National Forums has been accompanied in some LDCs by their decentralization and sectoral approach. Thus, Sudan besides the central National Forum has also established national forums also at the district level while Zambia, in addition to the Main Committee that serves as National Forum, has created Sub-Committees, each on every of seven Commitments of the Brussels Programme of Action.

Based on the above mentioned general recommendations contained in the Brussels Programme of Action and bearing in mind current practices in the LDCs it is suggested that the establishment of National Forums by the LDCs is guided by the following considerations:

**Objective:** The National Forums are established to ensure genuine consensus and national ownership of national programmes of action.

**Procedures for establishment:** National Forums are established in accordance with national legislation, preferably by a decree to ensure its high visibility and successful implementation of its functions. These could be either newly established mechanisms or already existing mechanisms on PRSPs, MDGs and national development. Alternatively, the Preparatory Committees for the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries could be transformed into the follow-up mechanisms to the Conference.

**Composition:** National Forums can include representatives of relevant governmental institutions (ministries of planning and finance, industry and commerce, international cooperation, economy, investment, privatization, agriculture and rural development, environment, education, health, transport and communication, central bank, local governance, statistical service, etc.), civil society, private sector, academia, media and development partners, as appropriate.

**Structure:** National Forums can have a Chairman, a Secretary and a Secretariat supported by a lead Ministry. They can have sectoral divisions, each for every of seven Commitments of the Brussels Programme of Action. National Forums can also be created at the level of the provinces, regions and districts of the country.

**Core functions:**

1. Undertaking consultations on priorities, objectives and policies of national development plans, in line with the BPOA;
2. Providing a platform for regular and systematic follow-up and monitoring the implementation of commitments by the LDCs and their development partners at the national level;

3. Synergizing all existing country level development programme with the BPOA and establishing linkages between the short-, mid-term PRSPs and long-term BPOA and MDGs, with the RPSPs at the heart of poverty alleviation;
4. Raising awareness and advocacy for the Brussels Programme of Action at the country level.
5. Building partnerships and alliances for achieving the BPOA goals
6. Soliciting external and domestic support to mobilize resources for the follow-up and implementation of the BPOA at the country level.
7. Providing inputs to the follow-up of the BPOA at the global, regional, subregional and sectoral levels.