



**PRESENTATION
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UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE
LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING
COUNTRIES AND SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES**

Working Group – 1

“Countries with Special Needs (LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS) in Meeting MDGs”

**Regional Ministerial Meeting on Millennium Development Goals in Asia
and the Pacific: *the Way Forward 2015***

**Jakarta Convention Centre, Indonesia
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UN-OHRLLS

The United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing Countries (UN-OHRLLS) is the principal organization at the United Nations Secretariat headquarters in New York to promote the implementation of the programmes of action for these most vulnerable and economically disadvantaged member states of the United Nations. The Office was established by the United Nations General Assembly (Resolution 56/227) following the Third United Nations Conference in Brussels and in accordance with the recommendations of the Secretary-General. Under-Secretary-General Mr. Anwarul K. Chowdhury is the High Representative¹. Mr. Om Pradhan is the Chief for Policy Development, Coordination, Monitoring and Reporting.

As of now, and if we let things be as they are, most Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) will not achieve all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) if immediate initiatives, with a much greater degree of urgency and concern and based on stronger political will to fulfil commitments by the international community, development partners, multilateral institutions, and by the countries themselves to implement the MDGs and their targets, are not undertaken.

Recently, this concern has been highlighted in several international forums, and here it would be pertinent to recall a few of them.

¹ For details on the mandate and the activities of the UN-OHRLLS please visit www.un.org/ohrlls.

- ?? The United Nations Secretary-General Mr. Kofi Annan in recent reports has suggested that despite significant progress made by some LDCs on separate goals and targets, the overall progress of the LDCs on MDGs has been extremely slow. Furthermore, if the current trend persists the number of people living in extreme poverty in LDCs could miss the opportunity to come out of the poverty trap by 2015.
- ?? High Representative Mr. Anwarul K. Chowdhury is concerned that 43 per cent of the people in Least Developed Countries continue to live in extreme poverty – on less than a dollar a day, and that, if current trends continued, the number of people living in extreme poverty in Least Developed Countries would increase from 334 million people in 2000 to 471 million in 2015. Achieving the MDGs by 2015 therefore remains a daunting challenge for many LDCs, including the 14 LDCs of the Asia Pacific region.
- ?? The 2001 Nobel Laureate in Economics, Professor Joseph Stiglitz, speaking on 1 June 2005 at the Symposium held in New York on the Global Development Agenda and United Nations Reform, said that the best way to reduce poverty was to grow the economy and that the growth agenda needed to be pro-poor. He said that over the years, countries had learned how to use aid sensibly. Consequently, MDGs cannot be reached without aid to the Least Developed Countries.

These remarks are indicative and an acknowledgment that to achieve the MDGs specific and added efforts will have to be made to assure that the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS make the necessary progress under all the eight MDGs, in addition to addressing the special needs of these most vulnerable countries as spelt out under Millennium Development Goal number 8.

But it is also heartening to acknowledge a number of positive trends that have emerged. In fact the special needs of the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS are being recognized and attempts are being made to address them, even if they happen to be initial steps and inadequate. We are beginning to see encouraging trends that will help these countries towards achieving the MDGs. It will be relevant to mention some of them.

1. United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF) have been prepared for 37 LDCs and information on implementing the Brussels Programme of Action has been furnished by 54 development partners, including NGOs. The total Official Development Assistance (ODA) flow to LDCs amounted to 23.5 billion in 2003, a 31% increase in nominal terms as compared to the previous year. This represents the highest one-year increase of ODA to LDCs.
2. The recent OECD/DAC 2005 High Level Forum held in Paris adopted the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, which will be the new guidelines for enhanced aid to LDCs. In order to ensure that LDCs take full account of this important declaration, UN-OHRLLS and the UNDP organized a joint briefing for LDC representatives in New York in March 2005.
3. The European Union has also indicated its commitment to reach the 0.7 per cent of GNI as ODA by 2015 with an interim target of 0.56 per cent by 2010 and to the doubling of ODA to Africa by 2010. This will consequently bring them closer to achieving the targets of 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of GNI for LDCs.
4. At the recent G8 Meeting in Scotland, the Statement on trade mentioned the LDCs and their specific problems were given recognition. This Statement reiterated their commitment to the objective of duty-free and quota-free market access for products originating from LDCs.
5. It is also understood that the United States is considering assistance to Asia and the Pacific on lines of the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). This suggestion had emerged at the last UN ESCAP Ministerial Meeting held in Bangkok in May 2005.
6. In terms of market access, LDCs have been provided almost full access by major trading nations, but the benefits of this access are yet to contribute in any major way to the development prospects in these countries mainly due to supply-side and capacity constraints in the LDCs. The proposed changes in the “rules of origin” by the European Union and decisions for reduction of subsidies on agricultural products would also boost the trade opportunities for these countries.
7. The World Trade Organization (WTO) initiated the Integrated Framework for Trade-Related Technical Assistance for Least-Developed Countries (IF) in order

- to support the trade-related aspects of development, and poverty reduction strategies. This is an initiative to coordinate the provision of technical assistance and capacity building to LDCs through six core agencies: WTO, IMF, ITC, UNCTAD, UNDP and the World Bank.
8. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) gives special attention to the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS to fund projects and programs to address threats to their environment, in the areas of biodiversity loss, climate change, degradation of international waters, ozone depletion, land degradation, and persistent organic pollutants (POPs).
 9. The Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has decided that the LDCs should be assisted in preparing national adaptation programmes of action (NAPAs) to address urgent and immediate needs and concerns related to climate change.
 10. The World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) has established a WMO Trust Fund for LDCs along with a programme to enhance the capacities and capabilities of the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) so that they can contribute efficiently and in a timely manner to the development of these countries.
 11. The agreement for the \$34 billion increased replenishment of the resources of the International Development Association (IDA-14) has opened up higher prospects for the LDCs and other highly vulnerable countries. This represents the largest expansion of IDA resources in two decades, and the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS should gear up to take full advantage of this increase.
 12. Another area of emerging significance for additional resources for development is the increasing size of remittances sent by the diasporas of the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS. Bearing this in mind, Benin, as the global chair of the LDC Group, has proposed a Ministerial Conference of the LDCs in Cotonou, Benin, during October 2005, to look into the impact of remittances on development.

These are some pertinent developments, which will enhance the international partnerships for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, and which in turn would be conducive for them to achieve the MDGs.

In this context it is pertinent that when we look at the progress made by the 14 Asia Pacific LDCs, it is quite clear that they are doing better than most other LDCs. However, in the Asian context, when compared to the other developing countries of the region the progress in various sectors of development has been mediocre in the LDCs. For instance, the overarching goal of halving the number of people living below the poverty line (\$1 PPP) was 43% for all LDCs. For the Asian and Pacific LDCs this was 38% as compared to the much more impressive 23.5% on an average for Asian developing countries. Again, while Asian developing countries have a higher net enrolment ratio in primary education of 87%, the ratio for Asian and Pacific LDCs is around 78% but which is higher than in LDCs as a whole – 62% in 2001-2002

Questions on the way forward

- *Five years into the MDGs and with ten more years to go, what is the way forward?*
 - *What should be done at the High-Level Plenary Meeting of the United Nations?*
1. With the High-Level Plenary Meeting of the United Nations, now referred to as the World Summit coming up next month at the United Nations General Assembly (14-16 September 2005), it is essential that the voices of all stakeholders, and especially the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, be heard loud and clear, and their interests and concerns be duly reflected along with guidelines to address them expeditiously in the outcome document.
 2. When it comes to the Asia Pacific region, the UN ESCAP has taken notable steps to highlight the issues of the 14 LDCs, which include four LLDCs and seven SIDS of the region. In fact critical information and data relating to these countries have been issued in a publication titled: *Voices of the Least Developed Countries of Asia and the Pacific – Achieving the Millennium Development Goals Through*

Global Partnership. UN ESCAP Executive Secretary Mr. Kim Hak-Su, UNDP Assistant Administrator Mr. Hafiz Pasha, and High Representative Mr. Anwarul K. Chowdhury launched this publication jointly last month in New York. It is worth noting that in its conclusion and recommendations the publication states: “In order to ensure that the Asia-Pacific region as a whole achieves the MDGs by 2015, it is essential that LDCs, as well as their developed and developing country partners find ways to address the unique challenges faced by these countries.” It also states “this is not an argument for charity, but one for the mutual benefit of LDCs and their partners, on commercial and strategic grounds, apart from being morally right.”

3. For these three groups of countries the specific programmes are the Brussels Programme of Action for LDCs, the Almaty Programme of Action for the LLDCs and the Mauritius Strategy for the SIDS. It should be borne in mind that all these three programmes dovetail into the Millennium Development Goals, which are:

1. *Eradication of extreme poverty and hunger*
2. *Achievement of universal primary education*
3. *Promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women*
4. *Reduction of child mortality*
5. *Improvement of maternal health*
6. *Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases*
7. *Ensuring environmental sustainability*
8. *Developing global partnerships for development*

?? The Brussels Programme of Action relate to seven commitments

Commitment 1: Fostering a people-centred policy framework

Commitment 2: Good governance at national and international levels

Commitment 3: Building human and institutional capacities

Commitment 4: Building productive capacities to make globalization work for LDCs

Commitment 5: Enhancing the role of trade in development

Commitment 6: Reducing vulnerability and protecting the environment

Commitment 7: Mobilizing financial resources

?? The Almaty Programme of Action has the following five priorities

1. Fundamental transit policy issues
2. Infrastructure development and maintenance
3. International trade and trade facilitation
4. International support measures
5. Implementation

?? The Mauritius Strategy has an implementation guideline that calls for dedicated financial resources in the key areas of

- (a) Climate change adaptation and sea-level rise
- (b) Energy
- (c) Intellectual property rights and development
- (d) Biodiversity
- (e) Culture and development
- (f) Natural and environmental disasters
- (g) Marine resources
- (h) Agriculture and rural development
- (i) HIV/AIDS
- (j) Transport and security
- (k) Sustainable production and consumption
- (l) Information and communication technology

The Mauritius Strategy also points to the need for access to appropriate technologies, the need for capacity development, national and international governance, the requirement of an international enabling environment and special and differential measures for the international trade of SIDS.

In the way forward being considered at this Ministerial Meeting of the Asia Pacific region, it is also necessary to look at the preparations at the United Nations for the September 2005 World Summit. Some of the highlights of the preparations that are now well under way are:

- ?? The submission of the “In Larger Freedom” report by the United Nations Secretary-General to the General Assembly on 21 March 2005.
- ?? After this submission the General Assembly has been very active and has undertaken a number of pertinent measures.
- Discussed the Secretary-General’s reform proposals and held several informal consultations during April and May earlier this year. The informal consultations also took place in the shape of closed meetings divided into four clusters: Freedom from Want; Freedom from Fear; Freedom to Live in Dignity; and Strengthening the United Nations
- On 2nd June 2005 a high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS was held
- On 23rd and 24th June 2005 informal interactive hearings with representatives of NGOs, civil society and the private sector took place
- Then on 27th and 28th June 2005 the high-level dialogue on Financing for Developed was held.

The President of the General Assembly has also presented a draft outcome document for the World Summit, the latest revised version of which has been posted on the UN website².

The General Assembly expects to hold further consultations in the shape of the Second World Conference of Speakers of Parliament between 7-9 September, just before

² www.un.org

the opening of the 60th session of the General Assembly on 13th September and the High-level Plenary Meeting or the World Summit from 14 to 16 September 2005.

We can get a glimpse of the way forward from the draft outcome document circulated by the President of the General Assembly.

The draft paragraphs that may be of direct relevance to LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS contain the following:

- 1. We welcome the establishment of timetables by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance by no later than 2015 and to reach at least 0.5 per cent by 2009 and invite those developed countries which have not yet done so to make concrete efforts to establish timetables in order to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent; in addition, we urge those developed countries to achieve the target of 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance to least developed countries*
- 2. We commit to undertake measures to promote and sustain adequate and stable international capital flows to developing countries, particularly countries in Africa, the least developed countries, Small Island Developing States and landlocked developing countries, and to countries with economies in transition*
- 3. Further stress the need to consider additional measures and initiatives aimed at ensuring long-term debt sustainability through increased grant-based financing, cancellation of 100 per cent of the official debt of heavily indebted poor countries and significant reduction or cancellation of the debt of many heavily indebted least developed countries that are not part of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, as well as of low- and middle-income developing countries. Such initiatives should include efforts by IMF and the World Bank to develop a debt sustainability framework for low-income countries. This should be achieved without a reduction in resources channelled as official development assistance or other sources of financing available to developing countries, in recognition of the integrity of the multilateral financial institution.*

4. *Continue to assist developing countries, particularly small island developing States, least developed countries and African countries, in addressing their adaptation needs relating to the adverse effects of climate change.*

There is also a special mention in the President's draft of **“Countries with special needs.”**

39. *We reaffirm our commitment to address the special needs of the least developed countries and urge developed countries, developing countries in a position to do so and all relevant organizations of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, to make concerted efforts and adopt speedy measures for meeting in timely manner the goals and targets of the Brussels Programme of Action for the least developed countries for the decade 2001-2010.*

40. *We recognize the special needs of and challenges faced by landlocked developing countries and therefore reaffirm our commitment to urgently address those needs and challenges through the full, timely and effective implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and the São Paulo Consensus adopted at the eleventh session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. Such implementation should be quantified with a time-bound set of indicators to measure the progress.*

41. *We recognize the special needs and vulnerabilities of small island developing States and reaffirm our commitment to take urgent and concrete action to address those needs and vulnerabilities through the full and effective implementation of the Mauritius Strategy adopted by the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the Barbados Programme of Action and the outcome of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly. We further undertake, starting in 2006, to promote greater international cooperation for the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy through the mobilization of financial resources on a more predictable basis.*

These proposals in the President's draft are indicative of the "the way forward" that is being envisaged. There is a clear recognition for enhancing resources for development to the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, including through debt cancellations. The need to effectively implement the Programmes of Action for each of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged categories of LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS is also clearly recognized.

Again, in the case of the LDCs, the outcome of the World Summit will also be considered within the framework of the comprehensive review of the Brussels Programme of Action to be held at the 61st session of the General Assembly in 2006. In the case of the SIDS, the roadmap for the "operationalization" of the Mauritius Strategy is being put in place, and hence, the outcome of the World Summit will have a bearing on this. The Landlocked Developing Countries have been moving ahead towards implementing the Almaty Programme of Action and the outcome of the World Summit should give this process a further impetus.

The highest-level participation by Heads of State or Government at the World Summit will be critical to give the outcome a strong political stamp of approval. A clear endorsement of the need to implement effectively, and on a timely basis, the ingredients of the Programmes of Action for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS is vital for these countries to achieve the MDGs by 2015.

No stone must remain unturned to project the state of affairs globally in the 50 LDCs, the 31 landlocked developing countries and the 45 SIDS, 37 of which are UN member states. The international community must ensure that their voices are taken into account in the final outcome of the World Summit.

Comprehensive mid-term review of the Brussels Programme of Action, 2001-2010

After the World Summit in 2005, the LDCs will be preparing for the comprehensive mid-term review of the Brussels Programme of Action, and which will be held during next year's 61st session of the General Assembly, probably during the month of October 2006. The coming 60th session of the General Assembly will decide on the modalities for holding this event. Preparations for the review will be done at the national, regional and global levels.

At the national level, the LDCs, with the help of the UN Resident Coordinator system, will prepare brief national papers on the progress that they have made in fulfilling the seven commitments, the experiences and difficulties that they have encountered, and how they see the way forward. The national reports are expected to be ready by December 2005. After that the UN Regional Commissions have been requested to prepare their reports for their respective regions by February 2006. Following this, the Group of LDCs will hold a Ministerial Meeting in June 2006 in Cotonou, Benin after which the ECOSOC will also take up the matter during July 2006. It will also be necessary to hold consultations with non-governmental organizations, civil society, and the private sector so that their important inputs are taken into account.

This mid-term review of the Brussels Programme of Action should be able to provide added impetus to fulfil the seven commitments, which in turn will enable the LDCs to push ahead with achieving the MDGs.