



**Statement by
His Excellency Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom,
President of the Republic of Maldives,
at the High Level Meeting
on the Mid-term Comprehensive Global Review
of the Implementation of the Programme of Action
for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001--2010**

18 September 2006, New York

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Madam President, Secretary General Kofi Annan, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentleman:

The goal of the Brussels Programme of Action, which was agreed six years ago, was to advance the social and economic development of the poorest and the weakest segment of the international community. In the time since, the progress made has been very slow. Despite some achievements, much remains unfulfilled.

I would like to note the tireless efforts of **Benin**, as Chair of the LDC Group, and those of the UN High Representative, in pursuing the implementation of the BPOA.

Madam President:

While the national actions of the LDCs in themselves must be geared towards achieving the goals of the BPOA, these actions constitute only half of the story. The other half requires the realization of the support pledged by the donor community to ensure continuous development of the LDCs.

I regret to say that, often, certain realities are hidden behind a veil of excuses for not letting such support flow in the direction of those desperately in need of it. That is to say that, while the LDCs are striving to advance its development by exhausting domestic resources and their

mobilization, it is often charged by the donor community that adequate domestic effort has not been put in. This is not always the case.

Low per-capita income, poor public finance infrastructure and absence of capital accumulation all contribute to the domestic resource gap. Therefore, continued donor support is crucial for the implementation of the BPOA.

Madam President:

In 2008, my country will embark upon our smooth transition period. In 2011, we will graduate from the list of the LDCs. Despite significant obstacles to development, the Maldives has been able to achieve much by supplementing domestic effort with donor assistance.

The Maldives has already attained many of the **Millennium Development Goals**. Extreme poverty has been halved. Universal primary **education has also been achieved**. As for **the targets on reducing child mortality, attaining greater gender equality and improving maternal health**, **I am pleased to say that the Maldives is on target to achieving these goals as well**.

In this regard, the Maldives has come a long way towards ensuring that "only positive concrete processes and outcomes can sustain public confidence in the development partnership between the LDCs and their development partners".

However, we are still a small and vulnerable economy with a fragile environment. Our supply-side constraints persist due to the limited opportunities to expand our domestic markets.

Increased aid is necessary; but that would not be sufficient. **Rapid growth in trade and increased market access are crucial for sustainable economic development.**

Any failure of the current round of trade negotiations would inevitably undermine the backbone of the Brussels Programme of Action by crippling the possibilities of accelerated LDC growth in terms of enhanced world trade and global financial and investment flows.

Madam President, Ladies and Gentlemen:

The list of the LDCs keeps growing. With the high speed of globalization, the gap between the north and the south is ever increasing. Can the rich afford to help the poor? The answer is incredibly simple. As Jeffrey Sachs puts it, 'the question isn't whether the rich can afford to help the poor, but whether they can afford not to'.

I firmly believe that there is no better a time than now to "redeem the commitments" laid down in the Brussels Programme of Action.

Thank you.