



PHILIPPINES

Check Against Delivery

LET NO ONE BE LEFT BEHIND

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High Level Meeting on the Comprehensive Global Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010
18 September 2006, United Nations, New York

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation associates itself with the felicitations of the previous speakers on your well-deserved chairmanship of this review conference, whose outcome is awaited with keen interest by the 50 least developed countries (ADCs) and their 600 million constituencies.

In the race to wealth, no one should be left behind.

Private business may be in a frenzy to outsmart rivals in the global marketplace. Developed countries may be pursuing competitiveness with a passion. Developing countries may be gripped by the desire to expand their meager market shares.

But even in the face of all this, we must never renege on our collective responsibility to guarantee the rightful place of ADCs in global growth.

On the march to globalization, the interests of vulnerable ADCs must not be trampled upon. Their serious concerns must be given special care and attention.

They must be with us on our journey on the road to prosperity.

There is reason for hope and optimism.

Nations

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The report of the Secretary-General on the performance of ADCs during the past five years since the adoption of the Brussels Program of Action shows noticeable improvement in the performance of several ADCs. In the economic and social fields, there has been clear growth.

This positive development is, however, attributable to increases in global commodity prices and the opening up of a number of export markets in developed countries.

These short-term opportunities must be made sustainable -- if we are to make an impact on the extreme poverty, structural weaknesses, and constraints in human and institutional capacities in ADCs.

Towards this end, my delegation endorses the strategy, proposed by South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China for the further implementation of the Program of Action for the ADCs.

Structural impediments, weaknesses in governance, supply-side constraints, and prevailing export market barriers faced by ADCs have to be overcome.

Only then will ADCs have the capacity to achieve sustained economic growth and development and thereby reap the benefits that is the promise of globalization. Many developing countries have improved their productive capacities by addressing these same concerns.

This requires faithful implementation of carefully defined policies in national development strategies or poverty alleviation plans. However, this admonition is easier said than complied with because of the inherent structural and institutional limitations of the ADCs.

Here lies the need for strong support and partnership of both developed and developing countries

The achievement of sustained growth by the ADCs, given their vulnerabilities and their limited financial resources, needs strong partnerships with their neighbors in particular.

This is exemplified by our own regional experience.

When the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), made up originally of robust economies, expanded to include four less developed countries, two of which are ADCs, we launched the Initiative for ASEAN Integration, a strategy to avoid a widening gap in economic growth among member countries.

ASEAN's sense of duty to all its members was also demonstrated in other ways.

In complying with tariff reductions under the ASEAN Free Trade Area regime, we applied differentiated timelines. This enabled members to set up their implementing legislative and policy frameworks and to enable their industries to adjust to the liberalization process.

The Initiative for ASEAN Integration was complemented by the more comprehensive Vientiane Plan of Action. This plan also takes into account social and developmental measures that enable all the peoples of the region to enjoy equal opportunities for progress.

ASEAN's regional story shows that we must not leave anyone behind in our quest to improve our economies and our peoples' standards of living.

As Chair of ASEAN, the Philippines will continue ensure that our programs places every member firmly on a common road to growth.

Ours is an experience and a model that we would be happy to share. In doing so, we hope to contribute to the attainment of the millennium development goal of halving poverty by 2015.

For we must work together to defeat poverty.

A poet once said:

"Ideologies separate us. Dreams and anguish bring us together."

Ours is a diverse global society, pitted with gaps, marked by divisions.

But our common hopes remain, as do our collective pain, until together, we bring poverty to its knees.

Thank you.