

PRESS RELEASE

<u>Prime Minister Erdogan and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon</u> <u>to address UN conference on the least developed countries</u>

Poor countries bid to halt the cycle of poverty, as first major development meeting of the decade opens 9 May in Istanbul

(UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK, 5 May) Talks on a new ten-year programme for the world's poorest nations are underway as Heads of State, lawmakers, civil society organizations, the private sector and chiefs of international agencies gather in Istanbul, Turkey, early this month.

Negotiators for the least developed countries (LDCs) are looking to put in place measures for building infrastructure to attain economic self-sufficiency, push back poverty and create decent jobs in these 48 nations (33 in Africa, 14 in Asia and one (Haiti) in the western hemisphere).

Such steps would include continued LDC progress on economic reform, governance and tapping domestic resources.

Internationally, the most economically vulnerable countries in the world are looking for the world's larger economies to open up market access for LDC exports; to continue to increase development aid and better target it toward infrastructure and leveraging new investment; and to provide incentives for companies thinking of investing in LDCs.

Around 40 heads of State and Government have so far been confirmed for the UN's fourth global conference on the LDCs in as many decades, and 24 chiefs of UN and international agencies.

Second decade of 21st century a swing point for LDCs

With decade-long growth rates higher than the emerging market average, possession of a significant share of the world's strategic resources (petrol, metals, minerals and arable land), young workforces and growing buying power among consumers, the LDCs are attracting private sector interest. Among the features of the 9-13 May UN conference will be an LDC trade fair as well as a private sector forum and CEO summit on international business opportunities in these countries.

But the LDCs average a 50 per cent rate of extreme poverty, are victimized by deadly disease and climate change and remain highly vulnerable to political or external economic shocks.

A report released in late March by an expert panel appointed by the UN Secretary-General warned of continued marginalization of these countries. Chaired by former President of Mali **Alpha Oumar Konare** and former World Bank President **James Wolfensohn**, the panel said that continuation of a two-track world, with advancing developed and emerging market economies, on the one hand, and poor countries falling behind, would have serious security implications.

Rising food prices pose a severe challenge and an opportunity. Most LDCs are net food importers and one third of their populations are chronically malnourished. But if modern infrastructure is in place and local farmers have access to necessary support, they might benefit from firm prices and launch a turnaround in low-productivity agriculture.

The UN's Chief Executives Board (CEB), the highest level coordinating mechanism within the UN system and chaired by the Secretary-General, has taken the initiative to issue a joint statement supporting the Fourth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries and its outcome. The CEB statement will be issued on 9 May on behalf of 35 heads of UN-affiliated agencies and organizations, including of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization, and of UN Deputy Secretary-General **Asha-Rose Migiro**.

High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States **Cheick Sidi Diarra** has been appointed the Secretary-General of UN LDC IV.

For more information, contact Ricardo Dunn of the UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, dunn@un.org; or Conference Spokesperson Tim Wall, wallt@un.org, Charlotte Scaddan, scaddan@un.org, or Andre-Michel Essoungou, essoungou@un.org, from the UN Department of Public Information.

Or visit the Conference website at www.un.org/en/ldc/