Prime Minister of Nepal, Secretary-General of the United Nations, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, The President of UN General Assembly, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Guinea-Bissau, Excellencies, Distinguished Representatives of Civil Society, Distinguished Members of the Media, ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to Istanbul, the crossroad of the west and the east, and, the north and the south. I cannot think of a better location for the Fourth UN LDC Conference, which will bring together the LDC development partners, in other words, the northerner elite and the residents of the southern ghetto. As the coordinating host country civil society organization, Doctors Worldwide Turkey is honored to host you distinguished guests, and to see that “awareness” and “conscience” meet in our country on a global level.

There are many problematic areas posing an obstacle for “sustainable and equitable development” in the Least Developed Countries. Energy issues, food and economic crises, gender discrimination, climate change, threats to environment and human health due to unhealthy conditions of industrial production, war and civil war are just a few of those areas. Although governments, parliaments, international organizations and institutions strive to take measures and develop solutions for these problems, considering that in the center of the development process is the society and the individual, we believe that sustainable and equitable development cannot be made possible without the contribution of the civil society.

The basic principal of the development process is that it descends from the bottom to the top. And that makes the participation of the civil society in the process inevitable both from the view of the LDC governments and of the development partners. Bringing in the rich experiences and knowledge of the society to the process, civil society organizations contribute both to generating policies and monitoring their implementation.

In the final analysis, development is for the society and its core, the human individual. No development that is not for the good of humanity can be legitimized by hiding it behind the curtain of making contributions to development in the LDCs. That is exactly where the civil society plays a vital role through its independent, objective and free character. As many similar examples have been observed in the past and present, welfare enhancing policies and implementations against human values cannot survive under the monitoring of a healthy civil
society. The civil society must do its best to ward off development processes implemented without first realizing the basic and indispensable criteria such as justice, peace, ethical values, and protection of human and environmental health, and without taking into consideration the society’s priorities and demands.

Dynamics served as the engine of development have existed through the ages. Today, especially in the LDCs, civil society must be central to sustainable development. Through its presence at the social levels, civil society has the ability to convey the experiences, concerns and priorities of ordinary people to decision-making mechanisms. The other most important roles of the civil society in the LDCs include making sure the society is sensitive to governmental policies, encouraging people to participate in the development process, and educating the individual and society within this context. In addition to that, the civil society has a significant role in monitoring the LDC governments and their development partners with regard to their commitments and policies, holding them responsible and evaluating them in the eye of the international public.

Beside the fact that the LDCs, most of whom have the richest natural resources in the world, have not been able to use these resources self-sufficiently for over a century, the number of these countries has even doubled in the last forty years. This situation stands before us as a shame of the international community. In the globalizing world, it is self-evident that no matter how far they are from each other, countries and societies interact with each other, and when the resources are not shared and used in an equal and healthy way, humanity as a whole will suffer from it. Within this context, in no way the LDCs can be left to their fate. Their problems are the problems of humanity and the world as a whole.

Since the colonization of today’s LDCs started, our old world has never found peace. Unfortunately, discourses such as “global conscience” and “global justice” have turned out to be lip service, and commitments have not been fulfilled. As part of the north-south dilemma, not only the LDCs were left to their fate, but also colonialism, directly or indirectly, has always continued to exist. In this post-modern system of colonization, the most important instruments are the provoked wars and civil wars, the transfer of natural resources at giveaway prices, and local administrations bogged down in corruption. On behalf of Doctors
Worldwide Turkey, a global civil society organization providing development assistance, mainly as medical and humanitarian aid, worldwide and especially in the LDCs, I would like to share some views with you:

“A world without LDCs” will no longer be just a distant dream if justice, peace, human rights and real democracy replace the dirty games played over uranium in Niger, diamond in Sierra Leone, political hegemony in Afghanistan, oil in Sudan, regional conflict of interest in Somalia and ethnical discrimination in Rwanda. When the global conscious comprehends that ontological existence comes before political existence, the international community will find the chance to honor its debt to the LDCs. If the northerner elite called the “development partners” can sleep comfortably even though they know that because of their own wealth, 12% of the world’s population go to bed with an empty stomach every night, and if they can invest in missiles, nuclear weapons and defense systems a fortune enough to eradicate the whole concept of LDC, it is not possible to talk about neither a global conscience nor global justice in this world.

Today, it is in our hands to do something for the downtrodden of the world. Let us all join hands to raise the voice of the global conscience from Istanbul. Let us give precedence to the shared values of humanity over our political and economic goals. Let us pay our historic debt to the LDCs, who are imprisoned in the southern ghetto and abandoned to their fate. Let us cooperate to present an equitable and sustainable development model to these countries, and to eliminate the artificial barriers standing in development’s way. Let us make decisions together to change this brutal order of the world, which makes the rich richer, and the poor poorer. As parliaments, governments, the private sector, intelligentsia, umbrella organizations and the civil society, let us all renew our oath and join forces for “a world without LDCs”.

Let the Fourth UN LDC Conference be a milestone for a development model based on justice, freedom, transparency, democracy and participation.

Once again, I would like to respectfully greet and welcome all of you to our country. I wish you all a productive, fulfilling and effective conference.

Thank you very much.