

**Informal interactive hearings of the General Assembly in preparation for UNLDCIV
1st April 2011**

**Opening statement by Ambassador Jarmo Viinanen, Permanent Representative of Finland to the UN,
Chairman of the Preparatory Committee**

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the President of the General Assembly for hosting this very important event. It is a great honor to address this distinguished audience as Chair of the Preparatory Committee for the Fourth UN Conference on LDC's.

Civil society is a key stakeholder in LDCIV and I particularly look forward to hearing practical experiences, ideas and concerns from the ground, on what works and what doesn't. Civil society is one of the three tracks of the preparatory process, along with parliaments and the private sector, and will have a prominent role in Istanbul itself. I'm sure that our dialogue today and a strong civil society engagement in the whole process in general will be fruitful and beneficial to a successful outcome.

The Fourth UN Conference on LDC's will be a historic opportunity to renew our partnership for development of the LDC's and to improve the quality of lives of the people in these countries. We must make effective use of this opportunity.

During the preparatory process, many things have been said about the new Programme of Action. It should be ambitious, forward looking, comprehensive, result-oriented, it should be focused and realistic. The key to me is that the new Programme of Action will help free our fellow women, men and children in LDC's from extreme poverty.

Let me say a few words about the negotiations on the draft Programme of Action that I have the honor to lead together with my colleagues from Turkey and Ethiopia.

The second Preparatory Committee begins next Monday morning. As we are still far from agreement, we have a very challenging week ahead of us. We have to try to find things that unite us and not things that divide us. My co-chairs from Turkey and Ethiopia and I are committed to facilitate negotiations to a successful outcome, work day and night to achieve a meaningful Programme of Action. Making as

much progress as possible next week is crucial as concluding the negotiations well in advance of the Istanbul conference is essential for highest level participation.

During the last few weeks Member States have on a nearly daily basis in informal consultations on the initial draft Programme of Action. It has been encouraging to see the high level of interest and active engagement. Now we are in a stage where we have to move on step further and start real negotiations. Late yesterday night my co-chairs and I have circulated a text which reflects our ideas of where we think middle ground could be found. Our text is a compromise proposal for the first three sections including a revised introduction, with objectives and principles, a review of implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action as well as a section on the renewed partnership for LDC's development.

We sincerely hope and assume that this could be seen as a basis for our work from Monday onwards, for this part of the draft. As for the rest of the Programme of Action, the action part, it might be necessary to have another round of consultations on the basis of the original draft, but my co-chairs and I are ready to come forward with compromise proposals if needed as we go along.

The key questions that we have to address are on the one hand what is the added value, what is the additionality in the Istanbul Programme of Action, what needs to be done – and on the other hand, who is responsible for what, what roles do different partners have to play in LDC's development, and how do we reflect the changes and new opportunities in the international development context that have taken place since 2001.

Negotiations in the development field at the UN often get stuck on politicized concepts and fear of moving beyond "agreed language". Very often these politicized concepts have nothing to do with peoples' everyday life in LDCs or other developing countries. We here in New York seem to be caught in shadow fencing on words and terminologies with no connection or impact on the ground.

We have to be able to do better than this. We owe it to the children, women and men of the least developed countries. This is not the time for petty politics but for constructive engagement. This is the time to define and commit ourselves to policies and support measures that will help the LDC's overcome the multiple development challenges they face.

In our revised draft which I mentioned earlier, we state that civil society should be fully involved in policy dialogue, ensuring the inclusion of different perspectives in national development strategies and programmes. Civil society can truly complement government and the private sector the implementation

of the Programme of Action to be adopted in Istanbul. We hope that this message captures the feeling of all Member States on how civil society is a key contributor to LDCs' development.

Thank you Mr. President.