

Madame President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

Let me begin by expressing my appreciation to you, Madame President, on the effective way and manner you are guiding the work of ECOSOC. I am confident that under your able stewardship, this Substantive Session will be a resounding success. Allow me also to commend your predecessor, Ambassador Gert Rosenthal of Guatemala, for successfully leading ECOSOC last year.

Madame President,

The theme for this segment is very important and timely. We should therefore approach it with all the seriousness it deserves. In this connection, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report before us.

Madame President,

Namibia associates itself with the statement made by the distinguished Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Madame President,

As we all know, the Brussels Programme of Action adopted on 20 May 2001, embodies a global commitment to address the plight of LDCs, namely, poverty eradication. These commitments had raised hopes for the people in the LDCs, but, four years down the road, these hopes are gradually fading. We are not here to re-negotiate those commitments, Madame President. We should focus our attention on how to effectively mobilize resources and create an enabling environment to attain them. Only then can we give hope and fulfill the aspirations of the more than 700 million people who live in LDCs.

Madame President,

We are concerned that since the adoption of the Brussels Programme of Action, the number of LDCs has increased. We are also concerned that the current GDP growth rate in many LDCs is even worse than it was in 2001. Both the Brussels Programme of Action and the Millennium Development Goals have set a target of halving extreme poverty by the year 2015. But, as stated in the Secretary-General's report, that target is unlikely to be met in many developing countries, especially in most LDCs. What is even more worrying is the fact that if the current trend continues, the number of people living under abject poverty will increase by 2015. This will be a stark contrast to commitment number one of the Brussels Programme of Action, that of fostering a "**people centered policy framework**".

Madame President,

As agreed in the Brussels Programme of Action, the major responsibility for its implementation lies with the LDCs. However, it is evident in the reports before us, that the challenges faced by the LDCs are too enormous. These include lack of capacity to mobilize domestic resources. Furthermore, many of the LDCs are either landlocked, small islands or emerging from conflicts. These challenges would hardly leave room for creating a domestic enabling environment for sustainable development.

Additionally, most of the problems faced by LDCs such as commodity price volatility, agricultural subsidies and other trade distorting policies, limited access to markets and unfair multi-lateral trading system originate from the actions of their development partners. Hence the need to honor international commitments in support of LDCs as promised in Brussels.

Development partners committed themselves to mobilize external resources through increased Official Development Assistance, Foreign Direct Investment, debt relief, coherence and harmonization of aid policies, among others. As we now know, resources shortfall is the major impediment to the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action in the LDCs.

Madame President,

We commend the LDCs for progress being made towards domestic resources mobilization and the creation of an enabling domestic environment. We also note efforts being made by the development partners towards increased Foreign Direct Investment, Official Development Assistance, debt relief, etc. However, these efforts are still not commensurate with the challenges faced by the LDCs. A lot more needs to be done, especially by the development partners.

It is against this background that the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report merit our serious consideration. The international community should consider making a greater part of its aid to the LDCs in the form of grants. The issue of debt cancellation should also be seriously considered as provided for in the HIPC Initiative. The international community should also consider better ways and means for a smooth transition of those countries graduating from the LDCs category.

Madame President,

Perhaps the greatest challenge faced by the LDCs as well as other developing countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, is the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other infectious diseases. We can therefore, not talk about sustainable development if we do not address this problem seriously. The countries that are heavily affected by this pandemic deserve the attention and generous assistance of the international community.

Finally, Madame President, as the international community prepares to undertake a review of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals in 2005, it is the hope of my delegation that the outcome of this High-Level Segment will greatly contribute to that process, accelerate the mobilization of adequate resources and create a better environment, at all levels, for the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action.

I thank you.