

9 May 2011

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Joseph Deiss,
President of the 65th Session of the General Assembly,
at the 4th United Nations Conference on the Least Developed
Countries**

Minister,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor for me to be with you today for the opening of the 4th United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. I thank the Government and the people of Turkey for hosting this conference with such warm hospitality.

Fighting poverty and improving sustainably the living conditions of the poorest must be a central concern for the international community at the beginning of the 21st century. The 2015 deadline for reaching the Millennium Development Goals lies only 4 years ahead of us. We must do the utmost to keep our promise.

The General Assembly, during its 65th session, is dedicating significant attention to development issues. Let me recall here that our session opened, last September, with the High-level plenary meeting on the Millennium Development Goals. The international community clearly reaffirmed its commitment to eradicate extreme poverty and to achieve the MDGs by 2015 and to step up its efforts towards these goals.

The specific challenges and constraints met by the Least Developed Countries in reaching the MDGs were highlighted during a side event that also took place in September in New York. I said it at the time, and I will repeat it today: our success will be measured against our capacity to achieve the MDGs in the Least Developed Countries. There is a special effort to be done for these countries.

We need to accelerate progress towards the MDGs and to ensure that results are sustainable. I am convinced that, for so doing, framework conditions that are conducive to investment, to value addition and job creation are a must. Economic growth will drive and sustain development in the least developed countries.

The LDCs are often described as the poorest, weakest and most vulnerable segment of the international community. They indeed face significant structural problems, they have been hardly affected by the three recent global crises – the economic, food and energy crises. They furthermore again risk to be particularly hit by the current surge in oil prices. The Least Developed Countries are also disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change.

In spite of these development constraints, some Least Developed Countries harnessed their potential over the last decade and recorded, before the crisis, strong economic growth, allowing for an improvement in living standards and a reduction of extreme poverty. It is important to stress that much of their development success can be attributed to the implementation by themselves and their development partners of the commitments and development framework outlined in the Brussels Program of Action.

But, much too often, success remains fragile. Growth is mainly driven by extractive industries and commodities, which are sectors with few linkages to the rest of the domestic economy, limited job creation and high exposure to external shocks. To pave the way for sustained, inclusive and equitable growth in LDCs, it is essential to strengthen productive capacities and diversify economic activities.

The Conference that opens up today offers a unique opportunity to make a real difference for the development of the Least Developed Countries. I am confident that we can achieve this objective. We – the international community – must reaffirm our commitment to the development of the Least Developed Countries; and we must base this commitment on a renewed and strengthened partnership for development.

The Istanbul Program of Action will be instrumental in this regard. The Program must empower the least developed countries to transform their economy and society, by helping to create an enabling national and international environment for social and economic development and enhancing productive capacities. To be credible, the Program has to acknowledge the tremendous changes in the nature of the actors, opportunities and challenges of today's global economy.

Which are the national strategies needed to enhance productive capacities? There is no 'one size fits all' model. The Least Developed Countries are a much too heterogeneous group. But there are some prerequisites, whose importance has been highlighted by the experience and lessons learnt in other countries. In particular, the quality of institutions and policies at the national and regional levels matter. Rule of law, respect of human rights and democracy must be strengthened. The fight against corruption has to be intensified. Fundamental rights, including property rights, must be guaranteed and sound market structures must be put in place in order to enhance investment, foster productive capacities and create jobs. The importance of all these elements was clearly highlighted during the informal thematic debate on productive capacities in LDCs that I organized in New York on 11 March. Let me thank here his Excellency Cheik Diarra for his active participation in this debate as well as the many of you that attended the debate and that are here today as well.

Our effort to develop the productive capacities in the Least Developed Countries has to take into account the issue of sustainability, in its social dimension thanks to the creation of decent jobs, which will allow people to live in dignity.

In this regard, we have two important events ahead of us at the General Assembly: the Youth conference which will take place in July in New York and which will be an excellent opportunity to reflect on how to empower youth and strengthen its participation in the effort to achieve full

employment and eradication of poverty. The other one is the High-level meeting on HIV/AIDS that will take place on 8-10 June in New York and which will allow us to review progress and chart the future course of the global AIDS response. Your attendance at high level will be key for the success of these events and for reinforcing the social dimension of sustainability.

But the environmental dimension of sustainability is very relevant, too. In this respect, moving to low carbon economies will be an important pathway to sustainable development. I am convinced that green economy offers many opportunities for economic activities, job creation and improved living conditions in the least developed countries. Appropriate national and international conditions will have to be put in place. I will organize a thematic debate on the concept of green economy in New York on 2 June with the view to better understand the concept and its potential.

Today, in our globalized world, more than ever, an international environment supporting the development effort of the Least Developed Countries is needed. The Istanbul Program of Action must be seen in the context of a renewed and strengthened partnership for development. The international community must rally behind the LDCs that are committed to undertaking the necessary reforms. Official development aid, which for many Least Developed Countries remains the major source of financing, must support national development strategies and strengthen private sector development, investment and trade. The declining trend of ODA and engagement of traditional development partners in some of these areas has to be reversed.

At the same time, new trends and realities must be taken into account. The potential of emerging economies must be harnessed and benefit to the development of the poorest. South-South cooperation has already greatly contributed to stimulate investment, create jobs and mobilize domestic resources in the Least Developed Countries. South-South cooperation should be further encouraged in the Istanbul Program of Action.

We must also ensure, with a view to foster policy coherence for development, that the international environment for trade, investment and technology transfers is conducive to the diversification of the economies of the Least Developed Countries. In particular, the successful conclusion of the Doha development round, the extension of preferences for duty free and quota free access for all the products of the Least Developed Countries and the adoption of investment agreements are key to support their development effort. This is another aspect that clearly came out of our thematic debate in New York.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Eradicating poverty and reducing vulnerability in the Least Developed Countries is a duty that we have towards the million people living in these countries. But this will in turn contribute to making the world safer, more prosperous, more dynamic, more democratic and more united. Today, maybe for the first time in history, we have the resources and the know how to make this happen. We shall then act, without further ado and my strong wish is that the Istanbul Program of Action will be help us in our endeavor.