

**Consultation of Civil Society with Member States
2nd Preparatory Committee Meeting
for the Fifth United Nations Conference on the
Least Developed Countries (LDC5)**

Wednesday July 28, 2021

**Speaking notes by Roberto Bissio, coordinator of Social
Watch**

Thank you Madame Co-chair,

I am Roberto Bissio, coordinator of Social Watch, which is a global network of civil society coalitions that monitor the implementation of international commitments.

Together with Third World Network, we have sent to the co-chairs detailed comments on the zero draft. We hope the secretariat will make it available in the stakeholders section of the website soon, as detailed references are impossible in four minutes.

<https://www.socialwatch.org/varios/20210725-TWN-Social%20Watch-Submission-on-LDC5-Zero-Draft.pdf>

Madame co-chair,

The LDC category was created, forty years ago, not to divide developing countries but to identify the most urgent and pressing situations, so as to ensure a minimum acceptable standard of living for every woman and man in the planet. That standard was enshrined in 1948 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. If that goal is still seen as ambitious, even when it was a very basic requirement of minimum decency... if a fifth UN summit on the LDCs is still needed at all, it is because some member states did not meet their part of the contract.

The deal was summarized by Robert McNamara, then president of the World Bank, as follows, and I quote ““if the governments of the developing world (...) are prepared to exercise the political will to assault the problem of poverty in the countryside, then the governments of the wealthy nations must display equal courage. They must be prepared to help them by removing discriminatory trade barriers and by substantially expanding Official Development Assistance.” (end quote)

The LDCs met their part of that contract, they went through painful structural adjustment and liberalization, either voluntarily or because of strict conditionalities imposed on them. But their so called “development partners” never met their commitments. ODA never reached the required levels, their damaging fishing and agricultural subsidies were renamed but

never lifted. When you remember that one third of the LDC population lives with under \$1,90 a day you should remember also that every European cow gets two dollars a day of subsidies. And that destroys food systems and agriculture in LDCs, but also contributes to climate change... which is an additional burden on the LDCs that do nothing to create it.

And then there is vaccine hoarding, which increases inequalities even more and has been called a “moral outrage” by Doctor Tedros Adhanom, director of WHO. What happened with the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities” that should be guiding multilateralism and international cooperation?

Where is the essential good faith when the development partners, instead of meeting the targets they themselves committed to, unilaterally change the way they count ODA? Inflated “grant components” of commercial loans are now added, and equity investment is also added, without deducting the profits they derive from those investments. As a result some donor countries had their ODA figures inflated by up to 40% from what they would be with the old accounting methods. (See <https://www.globalpolicywatch.org/blog/2021/06/24/mismeasuring-foreign-aid/>).

And similar accounting creativity is applied to the \$100 billion a year promised for climate actions or when “net zero” is offered, instead of actually reducing emissions in the North.

You can find the details in our joint submission. Let me just finish by saying that civil societies, both from the Global South and the Global North are holding our governments to account. It is high time that the promises made are promises kept.