



STATEMENT BY

**THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
H.E. MR. JAN ELIASSON**

AT

**THE OPENING OF THE INFORMAL
INTERACTIVE HEARINGS WITH
REPRESENTATIVES OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL
ORGANIZATIONS, CIVIL SOCIETY
ORGANIZATIONS AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR**

**UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS
NEW YORK
22 JUNE 2006**

Mr. Coordinator of the Group of LDCs,

Mr. Under-Secretary-General,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to extend a warm welcome to all of you to these General Assembly informal interactive hearings with non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector.

We meet here today to prepare for the High-level Meeting on the midterm comprehensive global review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010, also known as the Brussels Programme, which will take place on 18 and 19 September 2006 in New York.

The representatives of non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector come from different parts of the world. Some of you have traveled from far to participate in today's hearings. I thank you for your commitment and spirit of solidarity. Today is the time for mobilization of human and material resources to seriously face and deal with the plight of the starving, sick and vulnerable in the world. We must see the suffering – and act on it.

I am pleased that you have accepted our invitation to engage in a dialogue with representatives of Member States on the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action - a programme that commits all partners to improve

the human condition of over 600 million people in the 50 Least Developed Countries who are confronted by extreme poverty.

At the World Summit last year, our leaders reaffirmed their commitment to this objective. They urged all Member States and all relevant organizations of the UN system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, to make concerted efforts and adopt speedy measures for meeting the goals and targets of the Brussels Programme of Action.

Most recently, in Cotonou (Benin), LDCs Ministers also renewed their resolve to fulfill the seven commitments of the Brussels Programme of Action and to improve the living conditions of their peoples.

Materializing these objectives represent a collective responsibility embodied in the UN Charter's principles of human dignity and equity for all. It is all the more urgent to act now. We all know that, if the current trends persist, the majority of the LDCs will not meet the Millennium Development Goals or the targets of the Brussels Programme of Action.

A successful implementation of the Programme of Action will critically depend on our effective review process. In this work, I highly value the contribution of non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector in this process.

You bring to our deliberations the reality of the world; a world where millions of children, women and men are still overwhelmed by extreme poverty and rampant disease.

The global campaigns to cancel debt, increase Official Development Assistance and expand trade opportunities for LDCs owe much of their relative success to the advocacy efforts of civil society. These campaigns have demonstrated the strength of civil society in focusing attention on the issues that affect poor people in poor countries.

But much more is needed if we are to counter the adverse effects of extreme poverty, prevent the marginalization of LDCs from the world economy, and accelerate sustainable economic growth and development in the LDCs. These are achievable objectives – but only with unrelenting support and effective implementation by all concerned partners.

Continuous civil society engagement in the implementation of the Brussels Programme is therefore crucial. Here I would like to thank representatives of non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector who participated in the work of the Task Force which was set up in preparation for today's hearings.

Despite limited resources, which prevented all members of the Task Force to meet, they have been able - through teleconferences and e-mail - to bring the idea of the hearings to fruition.

I would also like to thank the Government of Norway, the Office of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Population Fund for providing resources for participation of representatives from the LDCs.

I hope that today's hearings will help strengthen the partnership with non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector to fight

extreme poverty in the LDCs. This will also enable them to better prepare themselves to face the challenges of globalization.

We all look forward to inter-active and constructive discussions on how to bring about a more effective implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action.

We owe this to the millions of people trapped in extreme poverty in the LDCs – all of us deserve a life in dignity.