



BANGLADESH ON BEHALF OF THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

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**Statement by Mr. Md. Mustafizur Rahman, Charge d' Affaires
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At the Substantive Session of the Economic and Social Council
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Madam President,

It is a matter of great satisfaction seeing you presiding over the proceedings. We are confident that you will lead our deliberations to meaningful conclusions. Let me also thank Under-Secretary General Mr. Sha Zukang for presentation of the reports.

I have great honour in speaking on behalf of the Least Developed Countries. We fully endorse the statement made by the distinguished representative of Sudan on behalf of the G77 and China. I would therefore, limit my intervention on some issues specific to the LDCs.

Madam President,

Please bear with me as I present the most disturbing picture of public health situation in the LDCs.

One third of deaths in the world – some 18 million people a year or 50,000 per day – are due to poverty-related causes.

Every year more than 10 million children die of hunger and preventable diseases – that's over 30,000 per day and one every 3 seconds. In LDCs, one out of every 10 children dies before the age of five.

Malaria, together with HIV/AIDS and TB, is one of the major public health challenges undermining development in the LDCs. Malaria kills an African child every 30 seconds. In sub-Saharan Africa, where many LDCs are situated, there are currently more than 4.1 million people with AIDS who are in immediate need of life-saving anti-retroviral drugs. In addition, the LDCs have to tackle the new diseases like Avian Flu and Swine Flu without having the capacity and technology to produce the necessary vaccines.

According to the UNICEF's State of the World's Children Report 2009, [and I quote], "Based on 2005 data, the average lifetime risk of a woman in a least developed country dying from complications related to pregnancy or childbirth is more than 300 times greater than for a woman living in an industrialized country. No other mortality rate is so unequal." [Unquote]. This is often termed "the greatest health divide in the world".

Between 1990 and 2005, maternal mortality in LDCs has reduced from 900 to 870 per 100,000 births. At this rate, we shall be able to reach the relevant MDG target by the year 2215 and not by 2015. We are lagging behind by merely two hundred years. The LDCs are far from reaching the Internationally Agreed Development Goals (IADGs), including MDGs. This situation is further aggravated by the current global financial and economic crisis which has degenerated into social and in some cases triggered political crises.

Madam President,

It is indeed regrettable that the dire situation of the LDCs has not been reflected in the reports prepared by the Secretariat. I make particular references to two major documents E/2009/50 and E/2009/53, prepared for the consideration of the high-level segment. We wonder whether this is an error of omission or commission! We expect a clarification from the Secretariat in this regard.

Madam President,

The least developed countries are paying the most for the crises which are not of their own making. Coming at the heels of the food crisis and fuel crisis, the global financial and economic crises have devastated the most vulnerable economies of the LDCs. Years of development gains have been wiped out in the span of months. Millions in LDCs have been pushed back to abject poverty.

The crises have far-reaching ramifications in the social and human domains of the LDCs. It has resulted in loss of employment both at home and abroad, exports, incomes, savings, remittances, social welfare, affecting every façade of life. The crisis compels the LDCs to divert their scarce resources from economic and social development programmes to programmes adopted to cope with the immediate adverse impacts of the crisis.

Such a grave situation necessitates immediate, collective and forceful actions at all levels. Delay in tackling the underlying problem means a more protracted economic downturn and even greater costs. The vast majority of the world's poor in the LDCs have extremely limited capacity to cope with the crises. Their vulnerability is also exacerbated by climate change. These countries will need urgent support from the international community on a sustained basis commensurate with the impact of the crisis.

The LDCs do not have the necessary financial capacity and institutional arrangements to counter the fallout of the crisis through measures which should include pursuance of a robust economic growth rate, creation of jobs for our people, ensure delivery of core services including health and education, development of infrastructure and expansion of the social safety nets. These LDCs with high initial poverty and low fiscal capacity are in most critical need of external financial assistance.

The measures that we need to adopt for immediate recovery should include

- i. Restoration of the three critical global public goods essential to economic growth: market confidence and economic stability, a well-functioning financial system, and an open trade regime;
- ii. Maintaining critical investments in infrastructure, education and health;
- iii. Adoption of countercyclical policies and programme to compensate for the fall in private demand; and
- iv. Protection of the poor and the vulnerable through expansion of the social safety nets.

Madam President,

We feel that even if a mere one percent of the bail-out package is earmarked to the developing countries to meet their needs for ODA over and above the normal flow, particularly to support food security, human development and social protection in LDCs – that would result in a sea change on the ground. We hope the G20 will hold well on their promises made in London.

Madam President,

The LDCs must enjoy full flexibility and space in determining their own macroeconomic policies that can create jobs, reduce poverty, and meet health and education goals. Such flexibility would enable them to effectively manage and regulate their domestic economic policy in light of their national development strategies.

Standing in the face of the biggest challenge of our time, Madam President, it would be prudent for us to act together. We must realize that our failure to reverse the economic recession now has unleashed a social recession which is far more difficult to contain. We need to have a critical look into what went wrong. We must design our policies and set partnerships in motion in a way that would correct the dysfunctional aspects of globalization give the process of globalization a development dimension and a human face where equity, fairness and wellbeing of the poor will reign supreme.

I thank you.