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UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL

**REMARKS AT LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES
HIGH-LEVEL MEETING
New York, 18 September 2006**

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you as the General Assembly begins a new session.

This mid-term review of the 2001 Brussels Programme of Action is an occasion for stocktaking and somber reflection. Over the past five years, least developed countries have experienced higher economic growth, greater exports and larger investment inflows. They have also made some progress towards several human development goals, including reducing maternal and child mortality and increasing universal primary enrolment.

Yet, despite significant progress by some LDCs, their gains as a group have been insufficient to meet the goals agreed to in Brussels. And they have had minimum impact where it is most needed: in the fight against extreme poverty.

The limited data available on recent poverty trends is not encouraging. It suggests a negligible decline, and even some increases, in income poverty. Indeed, right now LDCs are considered to be the least likely group of countries to meet all the Millennium Development Goals, including the goal of reducing poverty by half by 2015.

And in an unprecedented reversal of historical trends, life expectancy is declining in several LDCs that are most affected by HIV/AIDS and civil strife.

This is hardly news to all of you. After all, just this summer in Cononou, your representatives acknowledged both the weak implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action, and strongly reaffirmed the need for its full implementation.

To do so we must accelerate and expand our efforts. First, by further securing development on the stable bedrock of democracy, human rights and good governance. Second, by making globalization work at least as much for the poor as for the rich.

To prosper in today's competitive economy, all countries need, in the first instance, to mobilize their own resources, and attract investment from abroad. Their ability to do that depends, in large part, on the quality of their governance.

Least developed countries must, for example, continue to improve their institutions and strengthen rule of law. And if LDCs are to eradicate poverty and promote human development, we need to do there what we do anywhere else, and that is to stress democratic governance as one of the main foundations of progress.

Such governance means ensuring that the poor have a real political voice. And it means strong, transparent institutions that are capable of providing the services and protections people need most -- not just health care and education, but also personal security and access to justice.

But let us be clear: if national action must lead the way, international support must light the path.

For if globalization is to have meaning for citizens of the least developed nations, then LDCs must have secure, predictable market access. They must have further debt relief. And they must have more and better development assistance.

Recent progress on external debt relief needs to be sustained so that the debts of all LDCs are reduced to levels that prevent their being an impediment to development.

At the same time, the rising volume of development assistance must rise further. There is still a ways to go before all donor countries attain the 0.2 percent of gross national income target established by the Brussels Programme of Action. Yet increased ODA remains imperative if LDCs are to fight poverty and build the social, institutional and other tools they need to compete in the global economy.

Ultimately, it is from the global trading arena that many of the most durable gains will ebb or flow.

As it stands now, the global economy is an uneven playing field. Subsidies and non-tariff measures for agriculture in developed countries, for example, continue to act as a disincentive to agricultural production and exports in LDCs, and work at cross-purposes with ODA.

To address this imbalance, least developed countries need secure, predictable access to markets. They need duty- and quota-free access to all developed economies, without exception, by 2008. They need the reduction, and elimination, of all non-tariff barriers to their exports. They need simplified and harmonized rules of origin and trade procedures for their exports. And they need a greater voice in International Financial Institutions and multi-lateral standard setting-bodies.

Till now, LDCs have generally benefited from the limited outcomes of the Doha Trade Agenda. Yet further trade negotiations will likely erode the preferences currently available to them. That is why, as new export opportunities are opened up, many poor countries need external assistance to make use of them.

As this happens, the United Nations will continue to help LDCs take advantage of more open markets. As your allies, we will do all within our capacity to contribute. Working together with developed economies and donor nations, I believe we can make up for lost ground, and achieve the progress Brussels envisioned.

Thank you very much.