INSIDE:
LDC IV, Rio+20, Partnerships and Emerging Challenges...
Cheick Sidi Diarra Shares Highlights Of His Five-Year Tenure

UN and World Bank Urge Greater Partnerships for LDCs

LLDCs Prepare for a 10-Year Review of the Almaty Programme of Action in 2014
Interview with Cheick Sidi Diarra
Outgoing Under Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States

With his term as United Nations Under Secretary-General drawing to a close, Ambassador Cheick Sidi Diarra shares with us the highlights of his five-year tenure.

RICARDO DUNN: Ambassador Diarra, could you touch briefly on the recently-concluded United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), which took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. At the Conference, expanding and deepening partnerships amongst a variety of state and non-state actors was considered of vital importance. What is UN-OHRLLS view on the need for such partnerships?

AMBASSADOR DIARRA: Well, you are absolutely right about partnerships emerging as a key tool in the broader debate on sustainable development during the Conference. But I should point out that while delegates and participants endorsed this, there has for some time been an established consensus on the need for strategic alliances. If you recall, a major innovation of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC IV), which was held in Istanbul last year, was the parallel engagement with a number of stakeholders which included Member States, parliamentarians, the private sector and civil society organizations. This was an ambitious endeavour, but in a fundamental way it defines the perspective of UN-OHRLLS and its engagement with its partners. At the heart of this principle is the recognition that a multi-stakeholder approach is required, and necessary, in order to take the development agenda of least developed countries forward. I should add that with this principle of inclusivity, UN-OHRLLS has since embarked on an extensive outreach campaign to reach out to the inter-governmental bodies, UN system organisations and other international organisations.

How would you reflect on your role, over the past five years, as chief advocate for least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS)?

In my capacity as High Representative, my primary preoccupation since 2007 has been to spotlight the development challenges facing the three groups of countries at the highest political level. I believe, in this regard, that UN-OHRLLS has been successful, with the latest tangible manifestation of this being the outcome of the LDC IV Conference. Over the past five years, the Office has consistently sought out key opportunities at the global, regional and national level to substantively contribute to high-level policy discussions. These interventions have resulted in not only elevating the specific obstacles facing the development of the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS for global consideration but, more importantly, have helped assist in shaping the responses needed to address these challenges. It is also important to acknowledge that official development assistance for the LDCs has risen significantly in recent years – reaching $44 billion in 2010 and accounting for 0.11 percent of the GNI of DAC members. However, ODA is still below the 0.15/0.2 percent target. Even more worrisome is that preliminary indications suggest that ODA has started declining in 2011. This trend should be reversed, while also ensuring that a growing share of ODA goes to productive-capacity development, which means development of infrastructure base, including energy and human capital formation.

With regards to trade, although market access for LDC exports has improved, non-tariff barriers, restrictive rules of origin and tariff erosion have limited the effectiveness of preferential schemes extended to LDCs, and the same applies to SIDS and the LLDCs. But I do think that with regards to the group of landlocked developing countries, UN-OHRLLS has recently made some key connections with the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Union Commission in order to finalise an Intergovernmental Agreement and Plan of Action on the Trans African Highway.

Another concrete expression of UN-OHRLLS’ advocacy efforts has been the initiative that promotes consultations between United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) in the Pacific SIDS region with Pacific SIDS Permanent Missions at the United Nations. UN-OHRLLS’ facilitation of this consultation allows UNCTs, whose mandates are usually nationally and regionally based, an
opportunity to consult directly with Pacific SIDS Permanent Representatives and Missions. UN-OHRLLS is now looking to expand this model of cooperation, coordination and consultation with the Caribbean SIDS region as well.

An equally important in-road made by UN-OHRLLS has been its outreach to parliaments, through the Inter Parliamentary Union, which I believe ought to be considered in all global processes. The same holds true for the work we have undertaken with the private sector and civil society; LDC IV saw some 500 business leaders in attendance, many of whom were keen to explore the LDC market landscape. The collaboration between business and government in least developed countries is of enormous potential, and I’m confident that we have laid a solid foundation for its continuation.

The LDC IV conference, in Turkey last year, is deemed as the single most ambitious event of your tenure. What are some the highlights of the Istanbul Programme of Action, which emerged from that global event?

Indeed, the Conference had brought together more than 8000 participants that including 36 Heads of State, 200 parliamentarians, 96 Ministers and 60 heads of United Nations Programmes, Agencies and Funds, and other international organisations. Despite the unfavourable global economic environment, the conference resulted in the adoption of an ambitious and bold political declaration, and a comprehensive Programme of Action, with 8 priority areas for action and an emphasis on productive capacity-building. For instance, commitments related to productive capacity-development include fostering investment in infrastructure and agriculture, undertaking an analysis with the aim of establishing a technology and science bank, technology and innovation mechanisms, and providing concessional start-up financing for least developed countries’ firms investing in new technologies. I believe the progress that we achieved in Turkey was driven by national and international efforts, and those of the UN Nations system. I think that the Istanbul Programme of Action is an exemplary blueprint to provide the LDCs with ample guidance to exit from the least developed category in the coming years.

Given that efficient follow-up and monitoring remain crucial for the successful implementation of the three Programmes of Action related to the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, what is your assessment of this aspect of your work, and do you have any recommendations for your successor in this regard?

Certainly, effective and efficient follow-up and monitoring mechanisms at the national, regional and global levels to assess the implementation of commitments and actions contained in all of three of the action plans for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, are critical. In the IPoA context, for instance, LDCs have made a strong commitment to enhance transparency and combat corruption by making information on aid quantities, sources and uses publicly available. In addition, development partners have also re-committed to fulfilling their aid commitments and enhancing the quality of aid by strengthening national ownership, alignment, harmonization, predictability, mutual accountability, transparency, and result orientation, but I will even go further and emphasize that states monitoring and follow up should not focus only on goals and targets, but also on actions and their impact in order to strengthen the principle of mutual accountability, in my view, a key component for effective and successful implementation of all programmes of action.

Focusing on the group of landlocked developing countries and the scheduled 10-year review of the Almaty Programme of Action in 2014, could you give us a snapshot of how these countries are performing economically?

The economic performance of the LLDCs reflects the direct and indirect impact of the geographical situation in which they find themselves. As a group, the LLDCs experienced a decrease in economic growth from 5.8 per cent in 2008 to 3.6 per cent in 2009. Furthermore, in 2009 exports and imports also decreased and remittances, an important source of income in many LLDCs, also fell. Most notably, in recent years, especially due to the economic crisis, the number of people in extreme poverty increased in many LLDCs since it led to job and income losses, placing at risk the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. In addition, in 2010 FDI inflows to LLDC decreased 12 percent and this in view of the fact that LLDCs receive only 4 percent of the total FDI flows for developing countries as recognised in the World Investment Report 2011.

But with regard to trade, it seems that LLDCs in Europe are doing much better in mitigating the consequences caused by their geographical handicap compared to African and Asian counterparts. Why such a glaring difference?

Well, the LLDCs in Europe are surrounded by major developed markets and their sea-borne trade accounts for a relatively small part of their external trade. Their export is mainly high value added products and their distance from the seaport is relatively short. While in Asia and Africa, the distances involved in most cases are excessive. For instance, Kazakhstan has the longest distance from the sea (3,750 km), followed by Afghanistan, Chad, Niger, Zambia and Zimbabwe with distances from the nearest seacoast in excess of 2,000 km. Transit time for goods of LLDCs is extremely long because of the distance, difficult terrain, road and railway conditions and inefficiency of transit transport.

What are the impacts on international trade?

As a result, LLDC continue to face constraints in participating in international trade. The proportion of merchandise exports of LLDC to the total world exports has remained below 1 percent. LLDC exports fell by 42 percent from 2008-2009. The lack of access to the sea and remoteness from major markets, inadequate transit facilities, cumbersome customs and border crossing procedures amongst other result in high transport and trade transaction costs, undermining their efforts to build their productive capacities for example.

What recommendations have you made to address these concerns?

In the annual report of the Secretary-General we make recommendations to improve the transit time and reduce the paperwork and cumbersome red-tape. Additionally, we organize workshops on a regular basis with other institutions and partners like the World Bank to share best practices. There is of course a special publication of the ‘Doing Business’ report dedicated to the LLDCs. Also, I should mention that an investment forum for LLDCs was held in 2008. More recently, an agreement establishing an International Think Thank for LLDCs was adopted by Ministers of Member States, with the full support of the UN-OHRLLS. The think tank will provide a centre of excellence for high-quality research and policy advice for LLDCs, with a focus on economic growth and poverty reduction. It will help spotlight the special challenges that LLDCs face in integrating in the world economy. It is expected that the think tank will be operational very soon, with a dedicated secretariat.

Now, let’s talk about the Small Islands Developing States in the global economy. As we all know, energy is central to nearly every major challenge and opportunity the world faces today, be it about jobs, security, climate change, food production or increasing incomes; access to energy for all is essential. Yet this access to energy is unequally distributed, both between and within nations. This is particularly true in developing nations and particularly challenging for the SIDS. What advocacy efforts have you taken to implement the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA)?

Well, first, over the past five years UN-OHRLLS has continued to strengthen its capacity to better fulfill its SIDS mandate through the full and effective implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable development of Small Island Developing States. For instance, UN-OHRLLS has been developing five advocacy platforms. These platforms are centered on the following themes: coastal and marine resources, biodiversity, energy, transportation...
For instance, the 2010 General Assembly High-level review of the MSI identified shortcomings in the institutional support for small island developing states as well as other constraints to the full and effective implementation of the Mauritius Strategy and the Barbados Programme of Action, to submit a report that puts forward concrete recommendations to enhance the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy and refocus efforts towards a results-oriented approach and to consider what improved and additional measures might be needed to more effectively address the unique and particular vulnerabilities and development needs of SIDS. In the meantime, UN-OHRLLS continues advocacy for the SIDS, to forge partnerships with UN system entities and inter-agency level, other intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, academia and other institutions. Over the past five years the number of such partnerships, which focuses on SIDS issues, have progressively increased. In fact UN-OHRLLS continues advocating for the MSI and BPOA to be better mainstreamed in the UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF) that the UN Country Teams (UNCTs) develop with SIDS on the ground.

Does Rio+20 and its eventual outcome document also impact the process of implementation of the BPOA and MSI?

Yes, particularly at the global level. For instance, the CSD which was the global monitoring mechanism for both the implementation of the BPoA and MSI will be replaced by the high level political forum as agreed in Rio. The General Assembly will be meeting to decide on the modalities and structures of this new high level forum. UN-OHRLLS will be following closely the discussion on the General Assembly, and strongly believes that implementation at the regional and national level should remain key.

After five years at the head of an Office that has an advocacy mandate for the vast majority of UN Member States, what do you think are some of the outstanding challenges which you would like to see UN-OHRLLS take up?

I think UN-OHRLLS has grown from strength to strength, especially in the way it does business. With an extremely small staff, the Office has undertaken an enormous responsibility and I am extremely proud and honoured to have led such a competent and committed team of UN Secretariat staff. However, I feel that in order to fully realise the potential of the Office, serious consideration ought to be paid to bolstering the substantive human resources to better serve its constituencies.

I believe that as High Representative I have put the Office and the work it does on a solid footing which would allow it to both consolidate and execute its mandate. One of the key tools the Office now has at its disposal is the solid partnership built up over the past five years with Governments, UN System, Parliaments, Private sector, Academia and Civil Society Organizations. These collaborations should be continued and creatively exploited in order to achieve the best possible result for the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states.

---

UN and World Bank Urge Greater Government and Business Partnership to Help World’s Poorest Nations

The world’s poorest nations can accelerate economic growth by leveraging their comparative advantage, United Nations and economic experts said recently. During an academic round-table held at Columbia University in New York City, and sponsored by the UN, World Bank and Columbia University, leading experts focused their attention on prospects for economic growth and structural change in the forty-eight least developed countries (LDCs). Since the LDC category was defined by the United Nations in 1971, just three countries have ‘graduated’ to developing country status: Botswana, Cape Verde and Maldives.

The event came on the heels of the recently-adopted Istanbul Programme of Action for the LDCs, which was adopted by UN member states last year in Turkey. The 10-year action-plan seeks to address the structural handicaps of the LDCs in a bid to eradicate chronic poverty and improve livelihoods. Governments agreed in Istanbul that bolstering productive capacity remained key to the economic transformation of the LDCs.

United Nations High Representative for the
strategy, which attracts the start-up of new infrastructure of high-income countries, but steer away from replicating the industrial economist, however, warned that the LDCs should continue to pose severe constraints to development in these countries.

In what he referred to as ‘new structural economics’ Lin encouraged governments in the LDCs to consider the dual approach of upgrading both ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ infrastructure, pointing out that World Bank research suggests that if Bangladesh improved its business environment just halfway to level of India it could see its trade increase by about 38 per cent. This is comparable to a 26% reduction in the value of current tariffs on goods from Bangladesh. The World Bank economist, however, warned that the LDCs should steer away from replicating the industrial infrastructure of high-income countries, but instead implement a comparative advantage strategy, which attracts the start-up of new businesses in industries that are in line with the economy’s comparative edge.

He further recommended that governments collect and provide much-needed information that reduces the risks for firms to invest in new technologies.

“I am convinced that, by following their comparative advantage, low-income countries facing high unemployment can seize the bonanza of the 85 million manufacturing jobs China will shed in the coming years because of fast rising wages for unskilled workers. This type of new dynamic, which is embedded in my theory of New Structural Economics that I outlined today, is highly relevant to the UN’s agenda,” Lin said.

Other experts making statements in the panel discussion were Frannie Léautier, Executive Secretary of the African Capacity Building Foundation, Léonce Ndikumana, Andrew Glyn Professor of Economics at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and Aaditya Mattoo, Research Manager, Trade and International Integration, at the World Bank.

Léautier said, “The biggest challenge facing African countries is how to translate economic growth into development outcomes and jobs, and adapt to new vulnerabilities amid commodity-price shocks and continued distress in global financial markets.”

Andrew Glyn Professor of economics at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Léonce Ndikumana, shared Léautier’s sentiments and noted how rising inequality threatened to destabilize economic gains made in Africa over recent years.

Aaditya Mattoo outlined trade policy priorities for LDCs and the global financial crisis, and its challenges. “World Bank research shows trade policies can bring significant gains if they address non-tariff barriers, such as regulatory environment, standards harmonization, improvements to the business and removing barriers in the services sector.”

There was agreement that increasing decent employment in the LDCs was key towards alleviating poverty in the LDCs. Panelists said that implementing the Istanbul Programme of Action required focused action in key areas, with emphasis on the state in promoting change, mobilizing resources, and expanding trade opportunities.

New Director appointed at UN-OHRLLS

The office of UN-OHRLLS recently welcomed their new Director, Ambassador Heidi Schroederus-Fox, of Finland.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has appointed Ambassador Heidi Schroederus-Fox as Director of the office of UN-OHRLLS, the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States at the UN headquarters, in New York.

From 2010 to 2011 she served as Ambassador, Head of Policy Issues in the Cabinet of the President of the 65th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. Most recently Ambassador Schroederus-Fox was Deputy to the Facilitator handling negotiation tasks concerning the 2012 Conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. Ambassador Schroederus-Fox has been employed by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland since 1988. She has served in Finland’s diplomatic missions in Paris, Washington, Tel Aviv, Pretoria and New York.

Ambassador Schroederus-Fox brings to the position an extensive knowledge of the UN, and a deep appreciation for the UN’s unique role supporting its member states, while upholding the high ideals and expectations of the UN Charter, declarations and international conventions. As Ms. Schroederus-Fox notes: “the UN provides a truly democratic forum through which different countries’ concerns can be addressed; and through its programmes and agencies provides practical support to help member states meet a wide array of needs, including crisis recovery, poverty reduction, health and education enhancement, gender equality and building sustainable livelihoods. UN-OHRLLS sits at the interface of the UN’s multiple roles, and I look forward to working with our colleagues in the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS to help strengthen their voice at the UN, and expand their access to UN support and services.”

UN-OHRLLS undertakes advocacy and mobilises international support for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). It also coordinates UN support and monitors the implementation of the programmes of action for the three groups of countries.
LLDCs Prepare for a 10-Year Review of the Almaty Programme of Action in 2014

CHAIRMAN CALLS FOR GREATER SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION

MediaGlobal’s Nosh Nalavala interviews Ambassador Saleumxay Kommasith, Permanent Representative of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic to the UN and Chairman of the Group of LLDCs.

Nosh Nalavala: Ambassador, as the Chairperson of the LLDC Group, what is your long-term vision for the Group?

Ambassador Saleumxay Kommasith: As Chairman of LLDC I have outlined the following objectives that LLDC need to attain:

• Firstly, LLDC should continue to profile its special development needs and problems, which now no longer limit themselves to just the issue of transit transport or a lack of access to the sea. The special needs and problems of LLDCs have a direct link to the issue of sustainable development, regional and international integration. This is the issue that I as a Chair of the Group try to profile in the international forums.

• Secondly, I would continue to focus on harnessing international support to LLDC in all aspects such as capacity building, ensuring effective implementation of international legal framework, in the area of trade.

• Thirdly, I consider that South-South cooperation plays a crucial role in addressing the special needs and problems of LLDCs. It not only complements North-South cooperation, but it has a great impact on sustainable development of LLDCs as most of the transit countries of LLDCs are developing countries. Therefore, I would strongly advocate an enhanced South-south cooperation.

• Fourthly, as a Chair, I would like to ensure a successful outcome of the Ten-Year Review Conference of the Almaty Programme of Action to be held in 2014. To this end, over the coming two years, the Group should focus its energy to undertake preparatory activities in order to provide inputs to the ten-year reviews conference.

• And fifthly, I would strongly promote the operationalization of the International Think Tank for LLDCs as it would help strengthen the capacity of LLDC.

While you do have an ambitious agenda, LLDCs face considerable challenges. How do you view them and plan to resolve them?

I think it is impossible to do away with the challenges that LLDCs face because the status of landlockedness would remain with them forever. But there is a way to minimize the impact of such challenges and this is through regional and international cooperation. Over the past years, implementation of Almaty Programme of Action LLDCs have been able to improve their socio-economic situation. I believe that since the challenge LLDCs face is not purely national problem, it depends on the cooperation from the international community, particularly transit neighbours and development partners, addressing such challenges would require extensive support from the international community and such international commitment should be reflected in the full and effective implementation of Almaty Programme of Action.

The General Assembly has decided to hold the comprehensive 10-year review of the Almaty Programme of Action in 2014. What is the main objective of this review?

The main objective of the Review is to take stock of the implementation of Almaty Programme of Action and identify new challenges and constraints faced by LLDCs in the coming years with a view to enabling them to meet international development goals as well as national development objectives. It would also aim to adopt a new development cooperation framework between LLDCs and their development partners for the coming decade.

Do you feel that the objectives have been fulfilled to a certain degree and implemented? And if not, is it time to develop a new strategic framework that is action-oriented and relevant for the next decade?

To some extent, I would say yes, because the implementation of Almaty Programme of Action has led to a number of bilateral arrangement between landlocked developing countries and their transit neighbours on how transit transport matters can be handled at bilateral level. This has very much contributed to addressing some of the challenges LLDCs face. However, there is still a number of areas that needs to be addressed. Therefore, given the new emerging issues stemmed from the global economic and financial crisis and new opportunity arrived, it is important for us to look into a possibility of adjusting our approach to addressing the issue of LLDC. In this context, the ten-year review of Almaty Programme of Action should provide an excellent opportunity to come up with a new strategy or approach towards the special needs and problems of LLDCs and I would like to encourage all partners to actively participate in the preparatory process.

In your opinion are LLDCs getting international support, or is the attention focused on LDCs and, now with the Rio+20 Conference, on SIDS?

I think LLDCs are considered an “aid orphan” vis a vis other vulnerable groups in the UN system. In the RIO+20 process LLDCs are seen less favourable as there is still a lack of understanding about the linkage between transit transport problems and sustainable development and climate change. It is important to understand that transit transport problems cuts across all social and economic sectors in LLDCs. Fifty per cent of landlocked developing countries are LDCs, so their problems are even exacerbated if LDCs face LLDCs’s challenges.

Could you please explain the preparatory process and the tracks that would be followed? Would LLDCs and transit developing countries be involved in the preparatory phase?

The preparatory process would involve three tracks: 1). Intergovernmental Track; 2). United Nations and other international and regional organizations Track, and 3), the Private Sector Track. The global review of the conference would be preceded by national, sub-regional and regional preparations. The process would involve all stakeholders such as LLDCs, transit developing
The global review of the conference would be preceded by national, sub-regional, regional and global level preparations. Could you explain this aspect of the preparatory process?

The preparatory process will consist of three levels namely national, sub-regional and regional, and international level.

At the national level, LLDCs are required to submit reports on the implementation of the APoA that would contribute to the enrichment of sub-regional and regional reports. All LLDCs are required to prepare their national reports reviewing the implementation of the Almaty programme since 2003. This review can be done through conducting consultations or meeting of all stakeholders at the national level.

At the sub-regional or regional level, consultations would involve regional economic communities in Africa, Europe and Asia and Latin America to assess progress made in implementing the APoA, identify key challenges and recommend appropriate corrective measures. Sub-regional reviews will be organized in the context of the regional reviews. At the regional level, the United Nations Regional Commissions would take the lead in the process of preparing and convening the Regional Reviews. The reviews would feed into the global preparations and outcome document. These will be held in 2013.

All inputs from the national and regional review will be fed to the international review, which encompasses the meeting of preparatory committee and the Ten-Year Review Conference. The Chair and the Group will provide support to the United Nations system and other stakeholders in undertaking intensive, focused and sustained advocacy to raise awareness on the critical challenges faced by LLDCs and the need for appropriate international support measures through pre-conference events at the global level. These will be held from this year up to the time of the conference.

Additionally, the global level preparations would include thematic pre-conference events and the sessions of the Inter-governmental Preparatory Committee. How do you see this process developing under your stewardship as Chairperson?

I believe that this preparatory process that includes consultations from the national level through international levels involving all stakeholders is a useful and essential exercise for the global review on APoA. In fact the process has already started. As we continue with this process, we would strive to get as much practical inputs as we can. The involvement of civil society and private sector in this process would be utmost important to our future action framework. Therefore, I would like to call upon all stakeholders to actively take part in this process.

---

General Assembly Working Group On LDC Smooth Transition Completes Its Work

The Ad Hoc Working Group to Further Study and Strengthen the Smooth Transition Process for countries graduating from the least developed countries (LDC) category, was established by the President of the GA in December 2011 in line with the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) provisions. The Working Group held a series of substantive meetings. It took stock of the current situation regarding international support for LDCs, as well as existing smooth transition measures. The co-chairs of the Working Group, Ambassador Jan Grauls, Permanent Representative of Belgium, and Ambassador Brian Bowler, Permanent Representative of Malawi, stressed the importance of gathering concrete recommendations on how to improve the smooth transition process.

During the substantive meetings, delegates benefited from the experiences of three graduated countries – Botswana, Cape Verde and Maldives – as well as of Samoa, which is currently preparing its transition strategy for the time after its graduation in January 2014. Presentations were also made by experts from UNCTAD, UNDP, DESA, WTO and the World Bank as well as from academia.

A representative of the Maldives, which graduated at the beginning of 2011, underscored the shortcomings of its transition process. He noted that although the country’s local economy was driven by a thriving tourism sector, it was inextricably linked to the natural environment and thus dependent on a fragile ecosystem. He added that, as a small island developing state (SIDS), the Maldives faced vulnerabilities that required greater recognition by the international community.

The Working Group also benefited from a dedicated briefing by two members of the UN Committee for Development Policy on its deliberations on how to strengthen provisions for a smooth transition from the LDC category.

“Clear transition procedures and transparent rules need to be established in all cases, including budget allocations for LDCs by multilateral organizations, LDC-specific technical assistance funds, caps and discounts to LDC contributions to the UN budget, just as it had been done with the LDC specific travel fund to attend GA sessions,” noted Ms. Mulu Ketela, CDP vice-chair.

Ambassador Gyan Chandra Acharya, Permanent Representative of Nepal, said, “For LDCs, graduation remains the overarching goal as stressed in the Istanbul Programme of Action. However, more support for transition strategies is needed. Given the difficulties faced by graduating countries, reducing uncertainty is crucial.”

Panelists and delegates agreed that strong partnerships and financial support were needed to prevent graduated countries from sliding back to their former status.

Professor Guillaumont, President of FERDI, Université d’Auvergne, recommended that other international schemes not specifically designed for LDCs and/or graduating countries, such as Aid for Trade, should be mobilized to prepare for the eventual loss of LDC specific support. He also advocated enhanced international monitoring of the transition process.

Recommendations contained in the report of the Working Group, adopted on 6 June 2012, include the following:

- Enhanced information sharing and understanding of available LDC-specific international support measures, including financial and technical support as well as trade-related measures;
- Active involvement of all development and trading partners, including UN system and emerging economies in consultations about transition strategies, for which preparations should start at an early stage;
- Increased support from the UN system for graduating countries;
- Development partners are encouraged to incorporate LDC criteria (GNI/pc, HAI and EVI) as a part of their aid allocation criteria so as to address the concerns of graduated countries still facing structural vulnerabilities.

For more information, visit: http://www.unohills.org/en/lkc/916/
Increased Investment and Technical Support Urged for Energy Services in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS

UN-OHRLLS and NGO Sustainability jointly convened a recent side-event on the role of clean and renewable energy in promoting a green economy in the context of poverty eradication and sustainable development in LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS.

In his opening remarks, Ambassador Cheick Sidi Diarra, High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, stated that “It is beyond doubt that access to energy cuts across all three pillars of sustainable development: be it social, economical or environmental.” He expressed satisfaction at about energy and sustainable energy being featured in the draft currently under consideration.

“The mantra ‘no development without energy’ may now need to be replaced with ‘no sustainable development without sustainable energy’,” he said.

Mr. Diarra called for increased investment and technical support in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS energy services that were delivered through approaches that are sustainable, that develop capacity and incentives underpinning affordability and efficiency, and that mobilise and optimise the contributions of governments, local communities, civil society and the private sector.

He also stressed the need to significantly increase their investments in sustainable energy services to improve prospects for realizing sustainable development and poverty eradication in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS. He also stated that innovative mechanisms such as SIDS-DOCK which promotes individual voluntary renewable energy targets for SIDS need to be supported.

Dr. George Assaf, Director of the UN Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) New York Office, highlighted some of the key global trends as essential background to understand the major challenges that confront LDCs and SIDS. At present, around 3 billion people still rely on traditional biomass for cooking and heating. And about 1.5 billion have no access to electricity. Of the 1.5 billion people, 80 per cent live in LDCs, in rural sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

“Despite the fact that SIDS has rich local renewable energy resources, the transition to renewable energy has been difficult. The cost of switching to renewable energy is a major barrier. As such, increased investment for small and decentralised renewable energy projects remain crucial,” said Dr. Assaf.

Ms. Elizabeth Press, of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), stressed that in the lead-up to Rio+20, and in the period that follows, the responses that could be adopted have to include practical, holistic solutions that recognise intrinsic connections between poverty reduction, climate change, food, water and energy security, and address these challenges in a manner that reflects the needs and opportunities of the 21st century.

During the ensuing discussion, participants considered, among other things, the bias towards urban centres in policy-making processes; the public-private partnership expansion for governments of LDCs; promotion of different renewable energy options; low prioritization of biomass energy; importance of public-private partnerships; and scaling up of best practices across regions.

In conclusion, Ambassador Diarra expressed the hope that the discussions would add value to the ongoing deliberations on the draft outcome for Rio+20.