

THE COMMITMENT



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UN-OHRLLS Casts Wider Net On Biodiversity, Tourism And The Green Economy In The SIDS

Interview With Zambia Ambassador, Lazarous Kaoambwe

Facilitating Trade Negotiations For LLDCs



United Nations

UN OFFICE OF THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

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On The Cover

A fisherman along the Wataboo Beach, in Baucau, Timor-Leste, casts a net to catch small fish. Coastal fisheries in SIDS, once abundant, have become scarce owing to overfishing by both artisanal and small-scale commercial fishing. Inadequate monitoring makes it difficult to quantify the overall damage to marine life from such activities.

PHOTO CREDIT: UN Photo/Martine Perret



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Mongolia Takes The Lead In Establishing First Think Tank

THINK TANK FOR LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

MediaGlobal News Bureau Chief Nosh Nalavala in conversation with **Enkhtsetseg Ochir**, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Mongolia to the United Nations

Transcription by La Shawn Pagán. Photo by Louise De Hemptinne

NOSH NALAVALA: *When was the Think Tank established in Mongolia for the LLDCs?*

ENKHTSETSEG OCHIR: In 2006 it was proposed that a Think Tank would be devoted to building the capacity of LLDCs and in providing research on issues. When the UN Secretary-General came to visit Mongolia in 2009, we launched it. The multi-lateral agreement itself was adopted in September 2010 by the foreign ministers of landlocked developing countries, and it was open for signatures and ratification by these countries. Since then we have seven signatures.

Will all the LLDCs participate in it?

It is a process that has just started. In the future all the LLDCs will accede to the agreement. We are still in the process of putting the think tank into operation.

What is the purpose of setting up the think tank and what will it accomplish, eventually?

Most of the LLDCs are small countries with limited capacity, limited human resources to actively participate in multi-lateral negotiations. The idea was to equip the diplomats, the representatives with top-notch research and justification that would help with the multi, bi and tri-lateral negotiations without limiting the decision-making approach.

In 2009 the UN Secretary General talked about analytical capacity of LLDCs. What did the Secretary General mean by “analytical capacity”?

I believe he meant it to be like other Think Tanks, ‘analytical’ meaning, based on the elements and research, to have an analysis of what’s happened – for example for countries like Mongolia, we have been holding negotiations with our (including bi and tri-lateral) neighbours, on private transportation. Private

transportation costs are enormous, from 7 to 9 percent of our budget.

Because of being landlocked?

Yes, because of being landlocked, (as well as) because of transit either through Russia or China. So private transportation costs are enormous. We need to ease the burden and put those resources to better use, for public ratification, for health, for education purposes. So we have been holding these trilateral negotiations with both our neighbours.

When your president was at the General Assembly last year, he mentioned the Think Tank helped Mongolia reach the Millennium Development Goals. Could you please elaborate on that...

The ultimate focus is to help the efforts of LLDCs achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, plus resolving human development, human mortality, maternal mortality, child mortality, health issues.

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Enkhtsetseg Ochir, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Mongolia to the United Nations

How is Mongolia doing with the MDGs?

We are working on that – the latest report by the government has the evaluation that we have 66 percent of our MDGs on track and it could be achieved by 2015.

How has climate change affected Mongolia and what are you doing about it?

Climate change has impacted Mongolia immensely – if you take the average temperature warming, our researchers conclude that in the last 60 years, the temperature warming has occurred twice faster than average on the global level. Also all the lakes are disappearing.

Do you have an issue with deforestation also?

Yes, both the government and states are taking measures to stop (this). There is a law in Mongolia – legislation to include environmental rehabilitation. ■

For SIDS, Tourism Is Largely Centered On Vulnerable Coastal And Marine Resources

MediaGlobal News Bureau Chief Nosh Nalavala interviews **Taleb Rifai**, Secretary-General of the UN World Tourism Organization

NOSH NALAVALA: *Tourism is today a major economic sector and one of the mainstays of international trade. As one of the most successful export sectors in the world, international tourism has become the main economic activity for many island nations. This is particularly true for small island developing states. Yet, the island states are most vulnerable to harsh economic conditions? Do you see a way out for these islands?*

Taleb Rifai: Given their size and geographic dispersion, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) often find it hard to compete within the international marketplace. In tourism, however, most SIDS enjoy a strong comparative advantage, namely in their natural resources and climate, and tourism is therefore a proven development option that greatly favours their integration in the international economy.

Over the last decade, the number of international tourists visiting SIDs increased by 12 million to reach 41 million in 2010, generating exports valued at US \$45 billion in 2010. For many island states, tourism is today their principal economic activity in terms of income, employment and foreign exchange earnings, accounting in some cases for up to 25 percent of national GDP.

In times of economic crisis, island states are especially vulnerable, in part due to their reliance on international trade. Yet tourism again provides a safety net. The sector has been extremely resilient throughout the crisis, growing steadily since the end of 2009 and many countries around the world, including island states, have seen their tourism economies grow healthily.

The challenging global economic conditions resulting from globalization has impacted the Small Islands Developing States. Do you feel that the developed countries do not understand the constraints of the SIDS?

The SIDS share certain economic and social vulnerabilities as a result of their often limited resources, remoteness and isolation from major

markets and these vulnerabilities have no doubt been heightened by the global economic crisis.

Thanks to the work of the United Nations system, however, the shared challenges faced by small islands are evermore present in the international development discourse. Just recently, the President of the UN General Assembly called for extra attention to be paid to the SIDS and increased support for the Mauritius Strategy in light of the challenging economic conditions. There is more work to be done; yet I truly believe the constraints of the SIDS are increasingly recognized.

At a conference in New York you mentioned that SIDS have a high level of leakages. What exactly did you mean in relation to tourism to these island states?

A leakage in the tourism sector refers to when a significant part of tourism earnings “leak out” of the national economy, through imported goods and services or as a result of the repatriation of profits by overseas resort developers, for example. Tourism leakages in some islands reach as high as 56 percent.

The extent of these leakages influences the economic benefits received by the local population, making it critical for islands to devise policies to mitigate these leakages. It is a major responsibility of governments to devise adequate policies, such as stimulating local investment in specific areas with a view to satisfying tourists’ needs with locally produced goods and services, as well as encouraging foreign investors to use local products and human resources.

Environmental degradation, particularly that of the SIDS marine and coastal zones, due to activities associated with the tourism industry, have placed coastal ecosystems under significant and at times overwhelming pressure. Do you see tangible solutions to these problems?

If not properly planned and managed, tourism development runs the risk of destroying the very natural resources on which it depends for its



Taleb Rifai, Secretary-General of the UN World Tourism Organization.

success. This is especially the case for the SIDS, where tourism is largely centered on vulnerable coastal and marine resources. Yet the answer cannot be to reverse or even halt tourism development. Millions depend on tourism for their livelihoods and millions more for their everyday needs.

Instead, sustainability needs to be a primary consideration from the very beginning of any tourism development, as long advocated by UNWTO. With the adequate policy framework from government, and environmentally friendly practices and innovation from the private sector, the sector can in fact be instrumental in environmental conservation. Indeed, research is increasingly pointing to tourism as an economic sector that preserves land and wildlife from other, less land-friendly, industries.

At the same time, new technologies are providing real solutions to environmental degradation. The challenge now is to find the funding and the will to implement them. Given their particular vulnerabilities, especially in the face of climate change, UNWTO has long been calling for SIDS to be provided with the adequate financial means and technical expertise to do so.

We must recall that the international community has long acknowledged the vulnerabilities of the SIDS – at least since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, in 1992. The international community needs to commit itself to urgently increasing international cooperation to support those efforts, particularly through increased financial resources, capacity-building, transfer of technology and know-how, and increased participation of SIDS in international economic decision-making.

UNWTO has launched an innovative framework for achieving sustainable development – the creation of the Steering Committee on Tourism for Development in late 2010 with 8 other sister agencies working in tourism (ILO, ITC, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNIDO and WTO). What is the purpose of this committee and what do you see it accomplishing on the road to Rio+20?

The UN Steering Committee on Tourism for Development (SCTD) brings together nine UN agencies and programmes to coordinate their tourism-related work. By coming together, the

agencies are able to provide over 50 services to support developing countries in areas such as sustainability in tourism development and increasing the poverty reduction impact of tourism. As such, the SCTD represents a major opportunity to make tourism work for development in a more effective manner.

The SCTD also aims to raise international awareness of tourism as an instrument for development and increase support for its mainstreaming in national and international development and poverty reduction strategies. The Committee has already secured tourism's

recognition in the Plan of Action coming out of the 4th United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. It is important to note that many SIDS are also LDCs. In fact, the two countries graduating from LDC status over the last decade (Cape Verde and the Maldives) were SIDS and tourism was crucial in allowing them to do so.

The SCTD is now looking to RIO+20 as a unique opportunity to place tourism within the sustainable development agenda, for the benefit of countries worldwide, and especially for SIDS. ■

The Gender Dimension Of Education In Post-Conflict African Countries And LDCs

Roundtable meeting stresses the need to continue providing education in humanitarian situations

A high-level Ministerial Breakfast Roundtable took place on 6 July 2011 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland and was hosted by OSAA, UN-OHRLS and UNESCO. Mr. Cheick Sidi Diarra, Special Adviser on Africa and the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, and H.E Lazarous Kapambwe, the Ambassador of Zambia to the United Nations and President of ECOSOC chaired the discussions.

The range of participants, included Ministers, Permanent Representatives, and high profile government officials as well as representatives of the UN system and civil society. Discussions focused on access to and quality of education as well as institutional and financial constraints that hamper the ability of post-conflict African countries and LDCs to improve access and quality of education. Participants also highlighted recommendations on ways to improve gender equity in education and to ensure that education contributes to peace, security and development.

The significant progress in improving access to education in African countries and LDCs was applauded, but participants noted that these countries continue to lag behind other developing countries and the rest of the world. They also highlighted that girls and women, particularly those living in rural areas, are at a particular disadvantage compared to their male counterparts.

Discussions also pointed to the non-academic factors that affect entry, attendance and



UNICEF students.

achievement, particularly that of girls. These factors include the provision of food, safe drinking water and improved sanitation, and social and cultural attitudes. While there was an agreement that access to education entails the notion of free and universal education, the Roundtable Breakfast discussants also recognized that such a notion encompasses expanded and better educational infrastructure.

Besides access to education, participants stressed how another challenge faced by many African countries and LDCs is one of ensuring that the quality and relevance of education and training meet acceptable standards. They indicated that the limited number of well-trained teachers, the high absenteeism among teachers – especially in rural areas – and the lack of education materials, among other things, acted as fetters to adequate learning outcomes and skills development.

With regard to the relevance of education and training, the Roundtable highlighted the

importance of having the content of education match the needs and requirements of the job markets. This is all the more relevant in countries emerging from conflict, where the success in tackling youth unemployment determines the success with which these countries enter irreversibly a path of lasting peace and development.

Participants celebrated the recent adoption by many African countries and LDCs of constitutional provisions that guarantee the right to education for all children. However, they also highlighted the challenge of translating these provisions into enabling legal frameworks and policies that would guarantee an equal access of all children, including girls, to education.

The Roundtable underscored the magnitude of the resources needed to bring about substantial progress in access and quality of education along with promoting gender equity. The current levels of resources devoted to education were considered insufficient. They noted, for instance, that education accounts for a tiny share of humanitarian aid. Some participants reported, however, that a number of donor countries have recently committed to channelling additional resources to the sector in the coming years.

Participants considered ongoing fiscal tightening in major donor countries a major hurdle to bridging the financing gap in the sector and recommended that alternative sources of finance to the traditional sources, especially innovative source of funding, be explored. ■

Way Forward For The Istanbul Programme Of Action



The United Nations Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS), on 28 June 2011, met with United Nations agencies and a number of Member States and experts in a Brainstorming Meeting on the way forward for the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) for Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

With a view to undertaking a concerted and coordinated approach in the implementation of the IPoA, the meeting discussed a comprehensive roadmap in an interactive manner. Seventy participants from 25 agencies, as well as 18 Member States that included six Least Developed Countries attended the meeting.

The brainstorming session kicked off with opening remarks by Mr. Cheick Sidi Diarra, the Under-Secretary-General, Special Adviser on Africa and High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States; Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya, the Permanent Representative of Nepal and Chair of the Global Coordination Bureau of LDCs and Mr. Ertuğrul Apakan, the Permanent Representative of Turkey.

Mr. Diarra expressed confidence that all stakeholders would remain engaged in the implementation and follow-up process. Mr. Acharya stressed the key roles of LDC governments, their development partners and the UN system in ensuring that the goals set out in the IPoA were implemented and that these would bring forth fundamental transformation in the LDCs. Mr. Apakan underscored the need to mainstream the IPoA and to ensure the active involvement of the key actors, including parliaments, the private sector and domestic-led entrepreneurs.

An introduction to the Istanbul Programme of Action was presented by Mr. Diarra; highlighting its salient features. With an emphasis on building a critical mass of viable and competitive productive capacity in agriculture, manufacturing and services; diversification; infrastructural development, enhanced investment; a vibrant civil society and private sector as well as structural transformation, the ambitious document set as an overarching goal the enabling of half of the LDCs to meet the criteria for graduation by 2020. The IPoA represented a shared vision and common aspiration of LDCs and their development partners based on commitments,

accountability and partnership.

Among the value additions and key deliverables of the IPoA Mr. Diarra highlighted the following:

- Commitment by the countries of the South to support the effective implementation of the Programme of Action;
- Active engagement of civil society, private sector and parliaments in the implementation and follow-up;
- Commitment by the development partners to integrate the PoA into their respective national cooperation policy framework and by LDCs into their development strategies;
- Doubling the share of LDCs exports in global exports by 2020 and the commitment to ensure timely implementation of duty-free, quota-free (DFQF) market access, on a lasting basis, for all LDCs;
- Strong reaffirmation of fulfilling the official development assistance (ODA) promises by 2015 and agreement on reviewing the ODA commitment for further enhancing resources to LDCs after 2015;
- Enhancing the share of assistance to LDCs by the development partners for Aid for Trade;
- Adopting investment promotion regimes by the development partners;
- Strong emphasis on technological innovation and technology transfer to LDCs, including development partners' commitment to provide enhanced financial and technical support for this sector;
- Developing risk mitigation strategies for crisis mitigation and resilience in LDCs;
- Strong call for the establishment and full operationalization of the Green Climate Fund and pledges by the development partners to promote and facilitate clean development mechanism projects in LDCs;
- Extension of existing travel-related benefits to delegates of the graduated countries for a period appropriate to their development situation;
- Ensuring mutual accountability of LDCs and their development partners for delivering their commitments undertaken under IPoA;

UN-OHRLLS pledged to vigorously pursue the implementation efforts in a coordinated and

coherent manner, engaging all tracks involved in the preparatory process, namely inter-governmental track, parliamentary track, civil society organizations track, private sector track and UN coordination track.

Mr. Diarra stressed that mainstreaming the Istanbul Programme of Action in the development strategies of LDCs, development cooperation frameworks of the development partners and the programme of work of the UN system organizations and other international organizations were vitally important.

UN-OHRLLS, as part of its core mandate, would strive to fully mobilize and engage all parts of the United Nations system in seeing through the implementation of the IPoA.

Katharina Gassner, Senior Economist of the World Bank made a presentation on Infrastructure Development in LDCs. She highlighted the large infrastructure investment needs of low-income countries (LICs), in particular with regard to financing infrastructure necessary for rapid growth (such as roads, ports, reliable electricity grid, etc).

Identifying efficiency gaps and low economies of scale as major impediments, she suggested increasing efficiency through increasing cost recovery or prioritizing public investments to overcome the first and to undertake more regional projects to overcome the latter.

Mr. Alim Abdul, UN-OHRLLS and Mr. Qazi Shaukat Fareed, Special Adviser to the Director-General of UNIDO gave presentations on Science, Technology and Innovation. Mr. Abdul reminded the meeting that a key decision in the IPoA was the establishment of a Technology Bank as well as of a Science, Technology and Information supporting mechanism in order to improve LDCs' scientific research and innovation base and help them access and utilize critical technologies. Mr. Fareed emphasized that the development of LDCs had to be through a process of modernization and that energy – including access to it and its efficient and sustainable use – played a particularly important role in that process.

Mr. Javier Molina Cruz, Liaison Officer, FAO Liaison Office in New York shared his insights on Agriculture and Rural Development in LDCs. He suggested that FAO's contribution to the implementation of the IPoA would include two important aspects: a focus on small farmers, food security and the contribution to poverty reduction, and the sustainable management of land, forests,

fisheries and agricultural resources aiming at the improved quality and safety of food.

Miss Annet Blank, Head of LDC Unit of the World Trade Organization made a presentation on Market Access Issues and Aid for Trade. She reaffirmed that the level of political commitment to a successful conclusion of the Doha Round remained strong and that Member States continued to place development at the heart of the negotiations.

For the WTO Ministerial Conference in December 2011 (MC8), Director-General Mr. Pascal Lamy had explored the possibility of a so-called LDC Plus package, which could be adopted by Members at MC8. A consensus seemed to be emerging, in keeping with the IPoA, that priority should be given to LDC issues such as Duty-Free, Quota-Free, including Rules of Origin, the LDC Services Waiver – allowing WTO Members to provide better treatment to services and service providers from LDCs, without having to grant the same treatment to other WTO Members (this was hoped to spur the services industries of LDCs) and a step forward on making world trade in cotton less distortive.

Enhancing the quality and quantity of ODA to LDCs – a presentation by Simon Scott, Head of the Statistics and Monitoring Division, and Yasmin Ahmad, Senior Policy Analyst, Statistics and Monitoring Division of the OECD, provided the following background information: Aid to LDCs had doubled since 2000;

- LDCs received about a third of all aid in 2008-2009;
- Per capita aid to LDCs was higher than to other income groups;
- The United States of America had been the most generous bilateral donor to LDCs since 2000;
- Smaller donors provided a larger share of their bilateral aid to LDCs;
- Only nine DAC countries had met the 0.15 per cent of GNI target for aid to LDCs in 2009;
- The International Development Association (IDA) and EU institutions (all in grant form) had been the key multilateral donors;
- That aid went mainly to social sectors (education, health, water supply) and not so much into economic and infrastructure production.

The China representative underscored the importance of adequate and predictable financing to implement the IPoA and achieve the targets set therein. With respect to promoting South-South cooperation, he mentioned that one half of China's aid went to LDCs and that his country would

significantly increase aid to LDCs in the coming years. The representative from Ethiopia raised a concern with respect to the decreasing flow of ODA to productive sectors in LDCs, a key priority area of the IPoA.

Miss Jo Elizabeth Butler, Officer-in-Charge and Deputy Director, Africa, LDCs and Special Programmes and Mr. Michael Clark, Inter-Regional Adviser made a presentation on Promoting investment regimes for LDCs where they underscored that FDI had not been able to overcome structural impediments to development, the most important of which remained the low level of productive capacities.

The Deputy Director, Special Unit on South-South Cooperation of UNDP, Ms. Inyang Ebong-Harstrup, made a presentation on Supporting, in the context of South-South Cooperation, the effective implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action by developing countries. She discussed some of the key priority areas of the IPoA where South-South cooperation's impact could be demonstrated including productive capacity-building, agriculture, food security and rural development, human and social development (particularly tertiary education in science and technology), social protection in LDCs, mobilizing financial resources for development and capacity-building, and promoting good governance.

Robert Jenkins, Associate Director, Policy and Programme Guidance of UNICEF made a presentation on Achievement of MDGs by 2015, and to make further significant progress by 2020 in LDCs.

Mr. Jenkins reminded delegates that significant acceleration was needed for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be met. More than 75 per cent of the LDC's population still lived in poverty and nearly 40 per cent of young child deaths (MDG 4) occurred in LDCs. Showing data for many of the MDGs, the presenter pointed out factors leading to a disadvantaged status were poverty, gender, ethnicity, disabilities and others.

Mr. Oumar Diallo, Economic Affairs Officer, UN-OHRLLS shared his insights on Building national risk mitigation strategies in LDCs to reduce their vulnerabilities to economic shocks. The speaker argued that the purpose of national risk mitigation strategies was to reduce the level of exposure of LDCs to shocks and also to allow LDCs the capacity to cope with the effects of the shocks. Risk mitigation strategies could be at both the micro and macro level and could focus on either the short or medium term.

The meeting then heard presentations by Ms. Susanna Wolf, Senior Programme Officer, UN-OHRLLS and Ms. Jo Elizabeth Butler,

Officer-in-Charge and Deputy Director, Africa, LDCs and Special Programmes, on Graduation and smooth transition process of LDCs. It was pointed out by Ms. Butler that the eight priority areas of the IPoA reflected, to a certain extent, the three criteria used to identify LDCs and the means to improve performance against these criteria:

- (i) Low-income.
- (ii) Human assets weakness.
- (iii) Economic vulnerability.

Presenting the draft Road Map for the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action, Mr. Sandagdorj Erdenebileg, Acting Director of UN-OHRLLS, drew participants' attention to two important features of the Road Map: the multi-stakeholder approach guiding its structure and content and its broad direction. He emphasized that multiple stakeholders and vehicles would carry out a large spectrum of activities, both substantive and operational. He then went on to discuss the specific components of the Road Map, including various activities that could be undertaken in each cluster.

In his closing remarks, Mr. Diarra expressed appreciation for the fruitful discussions and useful insights of all participants and the common commitment demonstrated to see through the implementation of the IPoA. He was encouraged by the fact that many UN departments and organizations had already committed to mainstreaming the IPoA in their work programmes and invited others to do the same.

Turning to the most urgent actions ahead, he underlined the need for the following:

- Institutionalization of the IACG mechanism to ensure an inclusive and participatory approach in support of the LDCs by the UN system in the follow-up activities, including in monitoring and evaluation of the IPoA;
- Mainstreaming of the IPoA into national development strategies and aid strategies;
- Strengthening of the regional component in the implementation and follow-up;
- Establishment of a working group on indicators to monitor the implementation of the objectives, goals and targets of the IPoA;
- Establishment of a Task Force to work on the terms of reference for the joint gap and capacity analysis with the aim of establishing a Technology Bank and Science, Technology and Innovation supporting mechanism;
- Keeping all groups of stakeholders, especially parliaments, civil society and the private sector engaged in the implementation of the IPoA. ■

The Global Significance Of Small Island Developing States

Still greater international support needed to conserve and protect the vulnerable ecosystems of SIDS

This fall, UN-OHRLLS convened a special event focusing on the Global Significance of SIDS, Biodiversity and the Importance of Community-based Partnerships at the UN Headquarters, in New York. Chaired by the High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, Mr. Cheick Sidi Diarra, the event featured presentations by Dr. Eleanor J. Sterling, the Executive Director of the Centre for Biodiversity Conservation at the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) and Dr. Christopher Filardi, the Pacific Director, at the Centre at the AMNH.

The event sought to contribute to the ongoing discussions in the Second Committee on Sustainable Development of SIDS and to the ongoing dialogue in the lead-up preparations to Rio+20.

Although Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are renowned for their species diversity and endemism, due to the small size, isolation and fragility of island ecosystems, their biological diversity is among the most threatened in the world. Deforestation, coral deterioration, habitat degradation and loss, and the introduction of certain non-indigenous species are the most significant causes of the loss of biodiversity in SIDS.

The nature of traditional, often communal land and marine resource ownership in many island countries requires community support for the conservation effort. Without that local support and commitment and the opportunity to integrate sustainable income generation into the conservation effort, even the most highly studied and well-planned conservation area will not be sustainable.



Palau Islands (Photo Credit: Reuters)

Several SIDS have promoted community support for the conservation of biological diversity and the designation of protected areas by concentrating on increasing awareness of the significance of biodiversity conservation. This is particularly important in SIDS where traditional resource ownerships are being practiced.

Mr. Diarra stated that the special event was an opportunity to reinforce the notion that SIDS are, in fact, renowned globally for their species diversity and endemism. He also reaffirmed that due to their small size, isolation and fragility of island ecosystems, SIDS biodiversity is among the most threatened in the world. As such, SIDS will continue to count on international support to protect and conserve their unique biodiversity.

SIDS themselves, said Mr. Diarra, despite their limited space, have taken the initiative to protect their threatened biodiversity. He praised the leadership role that SIDS had themselves assumed to protect their unique environment, and called for international support to compliment these efforts.

Mr. Diarra also underlined that initiatives to conserve and protect vulnerable ecosystems would not be successful without the requisite local

support and commitment. He expressed the hope that the discussions will make a contribution to the 66th GA resolution on SIDS sustainable development as well as the ongoing dialogue in the preparations for Rio+20 next June.

In her opening remarks, Her Excellency Ambassador Williams expressed her support of the initiative by Mr. Cheick Sidi Diarra and UN OHRLLS to place this important focus on the importance of SIDS biodiversity. She highlighted the fact that islands are home to a rich biodiversity heritage and that there is an inextricable link between this heritage and SIDS' own unique cultures.

Ambassador Williams underscored the dependence of the island peoples on natural resource assets in their socio-economic development aspirations. She highlighted the utilization of these resources in the eco-tourism sector in particular and called for the continued support of partners in the development of industries such as eco-tourism. She also welcomed the further cultivation of partnerships in the area of biodiversity conservation and protection in SIDS.

Dr. Sterling of the AMNH gave an overview of the work that the Museum was undertaking in SIDS around the world and highlighted why the Museum focused small islands biodiversity stating that SIDS biodiversity has a lot to offer to the scientific community. However, she also stated that there is a high extinction rate in SIDS.

Dr. Filardi stated that their work and research

“SIDS will continue to count on international support to protect and conserve their unique biodiversity.”

in SIDS have resulted in some fascinating findings that would call for a paradigm shift in our understanding of SIDS biodiversity and their significance to global biodiversity. He described islands as engines of biodiversity. He stressed that the experiences in SIDS can be a bellwether for other nations and biodiversities around the globe. He presented a case study on the work the Museum had been doing in Solomon Islands. He highlighted the notion of co-creation as a fundamental part of the partnership programmes they have embarked upon on the ground.

During the open discussions, Switzerland

asked what the linkage could be between the global and local processes, referring to the Rio+20 global process now underway.

Australia highlighted the importance of the health of the coral reefs to SIDS and the short timeline estimates that have been projected for their destruction if no serious focus was given to the coral reefs.

Fiji also highlighted the importance of the oceans and its unique biodiversity and highlighted that the Pacific SIDS are looking to push the notion of a "Blue Economy in the lead-up to Rio+20.

The AMNH stated that there were examples of good workable partnerships already in place and offered GLISPA as an example of such partnerships. It also highlighted the need for global policies to influence national policies in a positive way.

OHRLLS recalled that the Rio+20 Secretariat was accepting submissions from Member States and stated that perhaps the PSIDS may want to put in a submission on the issues they feel should be included in discussions leading-up to Rio next year. ■

Ministers Discuss Ten-Year Review Of Almaty Programme Of Action

General Assembly to decide on a 2013 Conference

The Tenth Annual Ministerial Meeting of Landlocked Developing Countries was held 23 September 2011, in New York, in the sidelines of the 66th session of the General Assembly general debate.

Chaired by His Excellency, Mr. Jorge Lara Castro, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Paraguay, in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of LLDCs, the meeting was attended by delegates, including Ministers and representatives, of the following Member States: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Malawi, Mongolia, Nepal, Paraguay, Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Representatives from the Office of the President of the General Assembly, the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation of UNDP, UNESCAP, UNECLAC and the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States also attended.

The Communiqué adopted by the Ministers called for the accelerated implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and, inter alia, for:

- Assistance by the development community to LLDCs to implement policy measures to strengthen and broaden their productive capacities and enhance value addition to their exports in order to be able to reap available trade opportunities and to enable LLDCs cope with multiple external shocks and to mitigate the impact of new and emerging challenges;

- Provision of financial, technological and capacity-building support to enable LLDCs to address the impacts of climate change;
- The inclusion in the agreement on trade facilitation in the final outcome of the Doha Development Round of binding commitments ensuring freedom of transit, strict limits on fees, charges and formalities and transparency as well as common standards for documentation requirements;
- A successful outcome of the UNCTAD XIII Conference, placing development at the centre of the global agenda, to achieve inclusive and sustainable growth for developing countries
- Aid or Trade flows to give adequate consideration to the special needs and requirements of landlocked developing countries;
- Increased support for infrastructure development including closing of the missing links;
- UN-OHRLLS to further its efforts in the promotion of an African transport infrastructure intergovernmental agreement,



Almaty Declaration and Almaty Programme of Action cover.

- particularly for the Trans-African Highway;
- The General Assembly to decide on the convening of the comprehensive ten-year review conference of the Almaty Programme of Action in 2013, in accordance with paragraph 49;
- UN-OHRLLS to coordinate the preparatory process for the review. ■

“ *The Tenth Annual Ministerial Meeting of Landlocked Developing Countries was held 23 September 2011, in New York, in the sidelines of the 66th session of the General Assembly general debate.* ”

IPU Raises Greater Awareness Amongst Parliaments Towards LDCs

MediaGlobal News Bureau Chief Nosh Nalavala interviews **Anders Johnsson**, Secretary-General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

NOSH NALAVALA: *At the 125th IPU Assembly in Switzerland in October 2011, a number of issues were discussed. However, the least developed countries and issues of climate change were centre. Over the years parliaments have not advanced the LDC agenda. What do you attribute this to?*

ANDERS JOHNSSON: Fundamentally, I believe that there has been an almost complete lack of knowledge in parliaments, both in the north and the south, of the LDC agenda. The LDC Conferences and their outcomes have at least until recently been processes in which parliaments have not taken part. The IPU has tried to change this logic in the last couple of years and we have succeeded, I believe, in raising greater awareness in parliaments of the least developed countries on what is at stake and what they can do to advance the LDC agenda.

Does IPU have a clear mission in engaging developing countries? And as a follow-up, and did IPU's participation in Istanbul bring about any tangible results?

For the last two years we have been working with LDC parliaments to have them identify what they can do to advance the LDC agenda. They provided very focused and substantive input into the preparation of the Istanbul conference and this is reflected in the Istanbul Plan of Action. Like no other outcome of a United Nations Conference, this document extensively identifies

the critical role parliaments in those countries must have in implementing the Action Plan. So yes, to me it is very clear that the IPU must now continue to support the LDC parliaments as they take on the challenging task of ensuring ownership, transparency and accountability throughout the implementation phase.

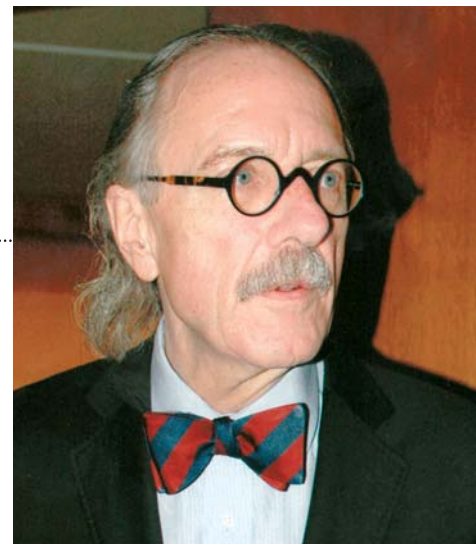
LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS are facing tough economic times. Women and children particularly feel the brunt. How can parliamentarians alleviate this dire situation?

The IPU is committed to help parliaments do their part in pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals. We are therefore encouraging them, and assisting several LDC parliaments in the process, to reach MDGs four and five that relate to child and maternal health.

At the Assembly, the UN Secretary-General said, "As we look to next year's United Nations' Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio, I count on you – Parliamentarians everywhere – to help drive progress." Do you see signs of progress, especially in the area of climate change, and a prominent role by parliamentarians?

I think you will find, as a general observation, that members of parliament – politicians – are generally ahead of the curve. They're drivers of change and we see this time and again at IPU Assemblies where our members frequently advocate positions that have yet to be adopted

“*The IPU has tried to change this logic in the last couple of years and we have succeeded, I believe, in raising greater awareness in parliaments of the least developed countries on what is at stake and what they can do to advance the LDC agenda.*”



Anders Johnsson, Secretary-General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

by States. We must not forget however, that the multilateral negotiating processes are inter-governmental processes where the executive holds the pen. Parliamentarians can influence what they write by holding the executive to account in parliament. We encourage them to do that. We also encourage them to be present at these events so that they can get a first hand view of what is going on and better hold government to account and be ready to implement what hopefully has been agreed. In parallel to this, and I believe partly as a result of what we have done so far, we see today greater legislative activity in many parliaments in relation to for example climate change issues. Several dozens of parliaments are today very actively examining the existing legislative and regulatory framework in their country from a climate change perspective, both so as to reduce CO₂ emissions and to adapt to the consequences of inevitable changes in the climate.

The IPoA highlights, in several instances, the essential role that parliaments are called on to play to ensure its effective implementation. It underscores parliaments' oversight role and their contribution to enhanced good governance and strengthened democratic processes. Is this dialogue taking place, especially in LDCs?

Yes it is. Maybe not everywhere, and possibly not to the extent we would wish, but yes it is happening. There is a steady and I believe irreversible trend in developing countries' parliaments to assume a greater oversight role, to hold government to account, fight corruption and provide more space for political dialogue.

How effective is parliament in ensuring that international commitments are implemented at

the national level in developing countries?

There is a huge implementation gap everywhere. Time and again States commit themselves to do certain things through UN General Assembly resolutions, Conference outcomes, Treaties and Conventions, etc. Far too often, there is scant follow-up and little implementation. Parliaments can do a lot to seek to remedy that, but they cannot replace the executive. They can seek to hold it to account and many parliaments are doing that. They increasingly also take a more direct interest in the international mechanisms that have been set up to monitor implementation. Parliaments in many developing countries are today much more attentive to these processes. They argue forcefully, for example, that development policies have to be debated in

parliament and development aid has to be included in the budget and government held to account for its use. However, many of the commitments depend upon a partnership between the north and the south so that funds are also made available to implement international agreements. That will require greater attention by parliaments in countries in the north. I am not convinced that they are equally attentive to that.

The concept of sustainable development is often confused with that of environmental sustainability, but it is in reality a broader and more complex construct that is premised on the merging of the environmental, social and economic dimensions into a single policy approach. The sustainable development agenda relates to both developed and developing

countries and by and large remains today mostly unrealized. Parliamentarians have long been concerned with this agenda. Do you see their attitude changing in the run up to Rio+20?

The issues of the sustainable development agenda are of course debated in parliaments everywhere. Whether members of parliament will be influenced by the preparations for Rio+20 is another matter. We know that some parliaments are. They have held debates and elaborated policy positions that they want their respective governments to defend during the preparatory process. Some of them have communicated these views to the IPU and we have made a submission to the negotiators that incorporates much of this work. Still, they constitute a relatively small minority and most parliaments remain, I am afraid, largely untouched by Rio+20 so far. ■

Greater Role For Think Tanks To Monitor Implementation Of Istanbul Programme Of Action For LDCs



New monitoring body strives for a credible, evidence-based and policy-oriented assessment of the promises contained in the IPoA.

Eight think tanks and academic institutions from LDCs and partners, at a meeting last September, established an independent monitoring mechanism for the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) in consultation with OHRLLS, DESA/CDP Secretariat and UNCTAD.

Partners of LDC IV Monitor are the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) in Bangladesh, Centre for Applied Economic Studies (CREA) in Senegal, Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF) in Tanzania, Foundation for International Development Study and Research (FERDI) in France, Galatasaray University (GSU) in Turkey, International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD) in Switzerland, as well as the Commonwealth Secretariat (ComSec) and OECD Development Centre (DEV).

In order to ensure its meaningful realisation, the IPoA now needs to be followed up by the identification of delivery tools for specific targets, the provision of necessary financial and non-financial resources, and a strengthened monitoring mechanism. This is felt particularly

in view of the relatively weak implementation and monitoring mechanisms of the Brussels Programme of Action (BPoA).

Hoping to fill this lacuna, the think tanks and academic institutions from LDC and partner countries established last September an independent partnership to assess the implementation of the IPoA over the coming decade. The new body, called LDC IV Monitor, will draw its strength from the demonstrated expertise and capacity of its members, undertake policy research, organise dialogues, and carry out outreach activities covering the key issues laid out in the IPoA.

Already prior to the UNLDC IV Conference in Istanbul, through joint programmes in Dhaka, Geneva, New York, London and Istanbul, members flagged their inputs to help develop specific elements in the IPoA.

In the years to come the proposed independent initiative will aim to complement the official follow-up and review mechanism of the IPoA, in line with the IPoA's mandate. The IPoA calls upon UN-OHRLLS to "continue awareness raising and advocacy work in favour of

LDCs in partnership with the UN, parliaments, civil society organisations, media, and academia."

Working outside the official intergovernmental process, LDC IV Monitor will provide credible, evidence-based and policy-oriented assessment of the state of delivery of the promises contained in the IPoA. It will strive to enhance the transparency of the Istanbul follow-up process, promote accountability by development partners, agencies and national governments, and foster efficiency in the graduation of LDCs.

The work of LDC IV Monitor will be selective, not attempting to provide a comprehensive coverage of all areas, goals, targets and actions mentioned in the IPoA. The partners will produce a variety of publications culminating in biannual reports. Moreover, to validate the findings and disseminate the outputs through a multi-stakeholder approach, several consultation processes will be held in the form of expert group meetings, dialogues and conferences.

The website www ldc4monitor.org will launch soon. ■

The SIDS Tourism, Biodiversity And Culture Nexus In Context Of The Green Economy

Carefully planned tourism could allow SIDS to play a bigger role in the international economy

The gathering, which took place on 27 October 2011 at the UN Headquarters, in New York, was chaired by the High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, Mr. Cheick Sidi Diarra, and featured a presentation by the Secretary-General of the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Mr. Taleb Rifai.

It aimed to contribute to the ongoing discussions in the Second Committee on Sustainable Development of SIDS and to the ongoing dialogue in the lead-up preparations to Rio+20.

Both the 1994 Barbados programme of action for SIDS and its 2005 Mauritius Strategy for Implementation highlight the importance of Tourism for SIDS. Tourism has contributed much to the development of SIDS and, as one of only a few development options for those small States, will continue to be very important for their future growth. It could also stimulate the development of other sectors.

Tourism has been a successful way to foster development and fight poverty in the SIDS. In the last decade, the number of international tourists visiting SIDS destinations increased by 12 million to reach 41 million in 2010. At the same time exports generated by international tourism grew by almost \$20 billion to a total of \$45 billion last year.

However, if not properly planned and managed, tourism could significantly degrade the environment on which it is so dependent. The fragility and interdependence of coastal zones and the unspoilt areas on which eco-tourism is dependant upon call for careful management. One of the special tourist attractions of SIDS is the distinctiveness of their cultures. The diversity and fragility of their environments are reflected in the diversity and fragility of their cultures. The protection of the former is an important condition for the protection of the latter.

Capital investment in tourism, particularly for the necessary infrastructure, is costly. There is usually great competition for land resources among tourism, agriculture and other land uses.



High Representative Cheick Sidi Diarra at SIDS event on biodiversity.

Large increases in tourism and the overdevelopment of tourism in particular areas or in whole islands could be environmentally and culturally disruptive and detrimental to other valuable sectors, such as agriculture.

It is imperative, therefore, that the development of tourism be carefully planned, particularly in relation to compatible land uses, water management, coastal zone management and the development of parks and protected areas. Tourism, like all forms of development in the coastal zone, needs to be carefully integrated within the existing cultural and environmental constraints and opportunities present within SIDS. Eco-tourism, linking areas of high ecological value to low-impact tourism, may present important and environmentally sustainable opportunities for tourism development in SIDS.

The unique biodiversity of SIDS as well as the diverse cultures of SIDS inhabitants have been the main attraction for tourists that choose to visit SIDS. This is obvious from the many tourism marketing campaigns that have been centred on coastal resources, including beaches, the ocean, as well as the unique SIDS flora and fauna.

For SIDS the tourism, biodiversity and culture nexus is not an abstract concept.

“These linkages, with their challenges and complexities, reflect the reality that is often played out on a daily basis by various actors and stakeholders, including policy makers, private sector businesses, civil society, and resource owners in SIDS,” said Mr. Cheick Sidi Diarra, the High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

Mr. Diarra indicated that the international tourism receipts as percentage of exports in the SIDS had averaged some 40.1 percent in 2007 and was at that time trending on an upward trajectory, having increased from 35.5 percent

in 2003.

“Cultural tourism is an effective means by which national, regional and international appreciation of indigenous island arts and popular culture can be generated,” said Mr. Diarra. The role that cultural tourism can play in support and strengthening of cultural industries and enhancing local cultural confidence was also highlighted.

In her opening remarks, the chair of the AOSIS, Her Excellency Ambassador Dessima Williams, Permanent Representative of the Mission of Grenada, expressed her support of the initiative by Mr. Diarra and UN-OHRLLS to place this important focus on the nexus of biodiversity, culture and tourism especially during our critical preparations for the upcoming Rio+20 summit.

Ambassador Williams stated that it was imperative that we focus on ways in which SIDS' unique culture and vast biodiversity can help to boost SIDS tourism sectors to consequently accomplish the three goals of sustainable development. She expressed the belief that sustainable development, climate change adaptation and cultural development should be approached within one multi-dimensional framework that is absorbed into the national developmental plans of all SIDS countries.

UNWTO Secretary-General, Mr. Rifai, stated that nowadays tourism is a major economic sector and one of the mainstays of international trade. It contributed directly to 5 percent of the world's GDP and employed one in 12 people globally and accounted for 30 percent of the exports of services. He also commented that nowadays there is no place on earth that humans cannot get to.

He stated that tourism was no doubt one of the sectors in which most of the SIDS presents a strong comparative advantage. As such, it was a sector that can allow them to take a bigger role in the international economy.

He also stressed that another challenge facing small islands is their inevitable dependence on air travel. Being by nature insulated and, in many cases, situated in remote places, tourism in islands depends much on availability and costs of air transport. He noted that the trend towards a decline in the cost of air travel registered in recent decades has strongly benefited the growth of tourism to SIDS.

However, increasing taxation on air travel, for fiscal purposes or connected to climate change mitigation measures, has become a perilous issue

for the development of tourism in the SIDS, and thus for their economic and social progress. The Air Departure Tax out of the UK is a case in point.

On the matter of Sustainable Development and Climate Change, Mr. Rifai pointed out that with its strong link to nature and climate, tourism is a highly climate-sensitive sector. At the same time, it is a contributor to climate change accounting for an estimated 5 percent of the total GHG emissions, mainly from transport and accommodation.

Moving towards Rio+20, in 2012, and Barbados+20, Mr Rifai stated that UNWTO has launched an innovative framework for achieving sustainable development – the creation of the Steering Committee on Tourism for Development in late 2010 with 8 other sister agencies working in tourism (ILO, ITC, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNIDO and WTO) is an opportunity to make tourism work for development in a more effective manner. ■

Least Developed Countries Struggle For Gender Equality

*In an interview with MediaGlobal News Bureau Chief Nosh Nalavala, **Ambassador Lazarous Kaoambwe**, Permanent Mission of Zambia voices his thoughts on gender parity in primary education and its long-term negative effects*

Transcription by La Shawn Pagán. Photo by Louise De Hemptinne

NOSH NALAVALA: *At the ECOSOC High Level segment Ministerial roundtable in July this year, the gender dimension of education in post-conflict African countries and LDCs was discussed. Of the countries that have an unbalanced ratio of primary enrollment among boys to primary enrollment among girls, 18 are African countries and 16 are LDCs. This means that the overwhelming majority of countries that are yet to meet the goal of gender parity in primary education are in Africa and among LDCs. Do you see this changing in order to meet the MDG goals?*

AMBASSADOR LAZAROUS KAOAMBWE: We have only four years to fulfill the MDGs and in the current climate of economic depression the chances of us, particularly the least developed amongst us, of reaching the MDG targets in the field of education are being threatened.

They are being threatened because the commitments that the developed countries had undertaken are not being fulfilled and are not likely to be fulfilled; without them we will not be able to get on track. It's important to understand why there has been this unbalance.

There are some factors, which have nothing to do with resources, but rather with culture and attitudes towards girls in the target countries and the difficult choices that poor families must make

in relation to whether or not it is beneficial to educate the boy or to educate the girl.

In poor countries that have been devastated, for instance by HIV/AIDS, the girls are increasingly viewed as caregivers to the parents who are no longer able to work because they have advanced cases of HIV/AIDS. Often in cases where they have been orphaned, the girls take the responsibility to care of their siblings.

You mentioned commitments made by developed countries and that in these 10 years the commitments have not been met. What are you expecting the developed countries to do?

In the LDCs, we must constantly educate our girls and our communities about the value of education, the dangers that are posed by HIV/AIDS and about issues relating to sex. Many of the casualties are girls that become pregnant because they did not have access to knowledge about sexual health, and even where they had this knowledge they were too poor to gain access to resources like family planning and condoms.

They are also working under societies that believe they need to get married and that the ultimate objective of a girl is to get married. As soon as there is interest from a potential partner, parents will force girls to get married. Sometimes this is a reaction to poverty because there is a bride price or dowry system.



Ambassador Lazarous Kaoambwe, Permanent Mission of Zambia.

More LDCs than ever before are working to build democratic governance. Their challenge is to develop institutions and processes that are more responsive to the needs of ordinary citizens – including women. Governance is among the most strategic areas for women empowerment and gender mainstreaming, but women have long been under-represented at all levels of governance – as voters, candidates, party leaders and elected officials. In your term as ECOSOC President do you visualize a change and are you working towards that change in tangible terms?

We are not just doing a favour to our women by mainstreaming gender and bringing them into the

continued on page 14

government structures in the numbers that they deserve. No society can be governed without utilizing the resource those women present. It is in the interest of society that we mainstream gender; we empower women and enable them to participate as effectively as people in the governments of the country.

Within ECOSOC, when we discussed this issue in July, a number of workshops, a number of activities and events brought to the attention of the member-states the importance of women as a resource and the need for us to look at the political constraints against the participation of women.

Are more women entering into the political field and is increasing evidence of this in Zambia for instance?

Yes and no. For instance, in Southern Africa, there is a protocol that says there must be a minimum of 50 percent of women in decision-making portfolios, including in parliament. But we are in democracies that state that everybody is free to stand as a potential representative – but not enough women are standing up for elections due to social factors.

But things are changing?

Of course, change is the only constant, so things are changing but they are not changing fast enough. Society loses when such a huge percentage of people are not represented.

Governments are doing what they can to bring out legislation that empowers women, but the traditions are slow in changing, the attitudes are slow in changing, even where there's legislation in place. In Zambia, for instance, legislation is there for equal access to all resources.

Women and men living in poverty rely heavily on natural resources for food, fuel, shelter, medicines and livelihood, and are disproportionately affected by environmental degradation and lack of access to affordable energy, water supply and sanitation services. Do you see LDCs strengthening policy and regulatory frameworks to protect and enlarge poor women's access to natural resources?

Yes, at least in terms of government policy and legislation. But the capacity of the government to succeed is linked to the capacity of the government to make enough resources available to provide alternatives.

For instance, land degradation and electrification of rural areas are still big challenges. Seventy percent of energy produced is



In the LDCs, we must constantly educate our girls and our communities about the value of education, the dangers that are posed by HIV/AIDS and about issues relating to sex. Many of the casualties are girls that become pregnant because they did not have access to knowledge about sexual health, and even where they had this knowledge they were too poor to gain access to resources like family planning and condoms.



used by the mining industry, only 30 percent is distributed for customer consumption. In most of the rural areas we are not able to extend electricity because of the lower incomes, and we have privatize the energy sector.

The private companies who are seeking profit do not see profit in extending service to rural areas because they are going to cover huge distances and they would require huge amounts of infrastructure to reach the remotest parts of our country.

Also they are going to communities that are not sufficiently wealthy and are therefore unable to pay for the kind of service that will be provided by hydroelectric power.

Are any funds towards climate change issues coming from the governments?

Both adaptation and mitigation funds are coming from the government. But the government in an LDC has very limited capacity to generate resources and to raise sufficient revenue to cover the many needs that a country has. Which means that most of the programmes that are supposed to go into reforestation and mitigation are not being funded.

So there is a huge shortfall of resources. We go back to the issue of commitment. How much was committed at Copenhagen and how much actually has been funded?

Globally, women make up nearly half the 37.2 million adults aged 15 to 49 living with HIV. And in sub-Saharan Africa, 57 percent of those living with HIV are female. In Zambia, young women are three to six times more likely to be infected than men of the same age group. Could you outline the steps your government is taking to combat HIV among women?

We have established specialized clinics that are much more gender sensitive, where women can

go and get information free of charge in their respective communities. They can also get free basic health services such as HIV testing, counseling and ARVs. We are doing that, but there are basic assumptions for that programme to succeed. One of these assumptions is that you should have sufficient offices spread throughout the country because the areas where the pandemic is most devastating are usually the poorest ones, those that are a distance away from the main cities.

Is that changing?

It is changing yes. The incidents of HIV/AIDS fell from almost 25 percent down to 12.5 percent. But, still that not enough. If the resources were more readily available to us, we could bolster many of the programmes that have been found to be lifesaving.

Ambassador, where are you expecting the resources to come from, the Global Fund perhaps?

Yes. We are getting and expecting more from the Global Fund, and we are hoping that we receive funding from many other members of what we call cooperating partners.

Is the South-South cooperation working out?

It is. We have bilateral programmes with emerging economies: China, Brazil and South Africa. But, still these resources are not enough because many of the people affected cannot subsidize the medicines and the programmes; they cannot pay for themselves. So basically we have to give these services free of charge. ■

Trans African Highway Network

Intergovernmental agreement on the Highway sought

The expert group meeting on the validation of the report on regional norms and standards for the Trans African Highway Network and its draft intergovernmental agreement was held at the UN Conference Center in Addis Ababa from 19 to 20 September 2011.

In his opening statement, Mr. Stephen Karingi, Director of the Regional Integration, Infrastructure and Trade Division (RITD), welcomed experts on behalf of the Executive Secretary of the UNECA. He highlighted the importance of the TAH for African development, and the need for an Intergovernmental agreement to facilitate its implementation. He expressed his appreciation of the quality of the collaboration involving AUC, UNECA, UNECE, UN-OHRLSS, and UNESCAP.

Mr. Karingi reminded delegates that this was one of the oldest regional integration projects, dating back to the 1960s. He emphasized that although progress has been made, there was still room for improvement on the physical network as well as for the harmonization of technical standards and norms as requested by the African Ministers of Transport.

Mr. Sandagdorj Erdenebileg, Acting Director in the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, cited statistics regarding trade and high transport costs which limit Africa's Development. These weaknesses are exacerbated by the absence of a supportive legal framework, which should provide technical standards for the road, route signage and the development of transport infrastructure in a coordinated manner.

Reminding participants that the first decade of the Almaty Programme of Action is coming to a close, Mr. Erdenebileg called for Africa's input into the regional review of the Programme before the Global Review Conference that will take place in 2013. In conclusion, he assured the meeting that the Office of the High

Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States would continue to support African member States to elaborate and conclude an intergovernmental agreement on the Trans-African Highway, so as to enable African landlocked developing countries reap benefits from international trade.

In his opening address, Mr. Aboubakari Baba Moussa, Director for Infrastructure and Energy of African Union Commission, stated that the lack of harmonized technical standards, road signage and inadequate road infrastructure is holding back Africa's economic growth, and reducing firms' productivity especially in landlocked developing countries. The adoption and implementation of the intergovernmental agreement on the Trans-African Highway can assist the Landlocked Developing Countries in overcoming the current physical impediments and in unlocking their potential to generate higher levels of social and economic development. It will also result in the accelerated implementation of the PIDA programme, for which it will be a modest but useful component. Mr. Baba Moussa concluded his statement by assuring that his department would do its best to submit the outcomes of the meeting through the adoption process of African Union.

UN-OHRLSS made another presentation on the benefits of the intergovernmental agreement based on the study carried out by UN-OHRLSS. The presenter Ms. Gats Mutangadura, Economic Affairs Officer, emphasized that the agreement will increase intra-African trade, which is currently estimated to be only nine percent of the global trade. Landlocked countries, in particular, will be able to benefit from increased trade. The adoption of the agreement will also attract foreign direct investment, which is vital for stimulating economic and social development in the continent. She further stressed that the agreement will lead to the coordinated development of the TAH and resource mobilization. She suggested that there is need for close and effective institutional mechanisms to support the negotiation, adoption and implementation of the intergovernmental Agreement on TAH. The presenter indicated that African Governments would require technical support for acceding to the agreement and promoting its early implementation.

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) representative indicated that the Intergovernmental Agreement is a catalyst for regional and coordinated development of major transport infrastructure, utilizing regional infrastructure for cross-border transport is a good practice and he expressed the



Trans West African Coast Highway.

readiness of UNESCAP to provide support to the development of the Trans-African Highway.

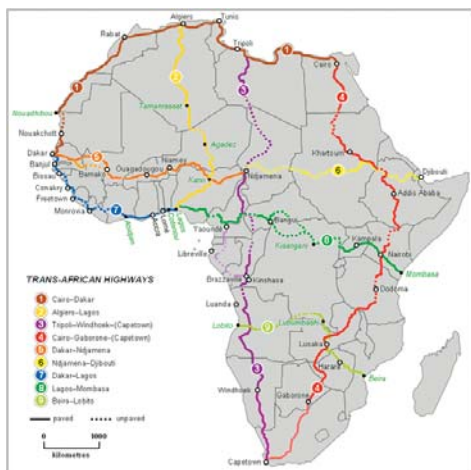
The need for a champion among member States to lead the process was identified as an important aspect in the progression of TAH. Examples from Asia and Europe were used to illustrate how specific countries took the lead in the projects and others followed. Using this approach, the report recommended that Champions could proceed once they are ready and others could follow as when ready. This is a logical approach given differences in the levels of development of countries and their resource endowments.

To illustrate the importance of a champion to lead the TAH process, the experts were informed about the Presidential Infrastructure Champion Initiative launched in 2010 under the leadership of the South African President, to spearhead infrastructure development. Under this initiative, a committee of eight countries has created task teams to work on seven priority projects. This is in addition to the work under PIDA with its Priority Action Plan, Resource Mobilization Strategy and Implementation Plan.

In the ensuing discussions, experts cautioned against advocating for the highest possible road standards and norms as a minimum given the differences in the levels of development of African countries. Other countries could find the lofty standards impossible to meet. Instead, the experts suggested that the standards should be between minimum and desirable, giving countries a range within which to operate.

A representative of the Economic Commission for Africa presented the draft intergovernmental agreement on the TAH that had been inspired by the experience of UNESCAP and UNECE. Participants suggested that the report needs to be consistent in using the concepts such as region, sub-regions, TAHs, regional and sub-regional roads, African States and African Union Member States. The definition of the TAHs network should be left in the annexes and the relationship between sub-regional roads and the TAHs clearly highlighted. The agreement should also be linked to pertinent UN resolutions on infrastructure development and other UN initiatives especially in the African LDCs, landlocked and transit countries.

It was suggested that the agreement should also be sent to the UN Secretary General. ■



Aid For Trade Initiative

Greater Trade Facilitation For LLDCs

The Permanent Mission of Paraguay to the United Nations and the Office of the High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS brought together development practitioners, experts and policy makers to examine the latest developments in the Aid for Trade initiative and the multilateral trade negotiations, with specific focus on trade facilitation, and how these could positively impact on the LLDCs' efforts to make their trade flows smoother, cheaper and faster.

His Excellency Mr. Antonio Dos Santos, Permanent Representative of Paraguay to the United Nations, chaired the meeting in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of LLDCs. Mr. Cheick Sidi Diarra, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, acted as moderator. In his welcoming remarks, Ambassador Dos Santos stressed that the panel's topic had been chosen with great care and attention, since increasing the participation of LLDCs in world trade was without any doubt among the highest priorities of their countries.

LLDCs, Mr. Diarra noted, found themselves on an inherently disadvantaged development path due to their lack of access to the sea, coupled with remoteness from major markets and difficult topography. He recalled that in 18 LLDCs the per capita GDP was well below \$1,000. "The persistence of such low per capita incomes in these countries has resulted in a vicious circle where transport infrastructure investment is not viable, owing to too little demand for transport services and, simultaneously, less economic activity takes place because of inadequate infrastructure," Mr. Diarra said.

With less domestic revenue available for investment into the social sectors required to attain the MDGs, high transaction costs and inefficiencies constituted important barriers to trade and foreign direct investment and thus to economic growth and poverty reduction, and they remain the main reasons behind the LLDCs' continued marginalization within the global economy.

Mr. Diarra pointed to the fact that notwithstanding some improved export performances, the LLDCs' share of world trade in goods hovered below one percent. While widespread transit transport policy reforms had reduced border delays and inefficiencies, he called for strengthened efforts to be made by LLDCs, in cooperation with the transit developing countries and with the support of their development partners, in order to increase their participation in world trade.

His Excellency Mthae Anthony Maruping, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Lesotho to the UN and other international organizations in Geneva, Chairman of the Committee on Trade and Development of the World Trade Organization and

also President of the 58th session of the UNCTAD Trade and Development Board, identified the progress made and the challenges and opportunities ahead for LLDCs to increase their participation in international trade.

"Trade is one of the major vehicles of strong, sustained, and inclusive economic growth leading to sound and sustainable socio-economic development, which should result in poverty reduction and human development," said Mr. Maruping. Given the small size of most LLDCs, he argued that export-led growth still represented the most credible economic growth strategy, since the domestic market was often too small to sustain meaningful growth.

Mr. Shishir Priyadarshi, Director of the Development Division of the World Trade Organization and a long-time friend of the landlocked developing countries, provided a detailed background to the Aid for Trade initiative as well as an update on its implementation. He stressed that AFT had held up well despite the global economic turmoil, with commitments reaching nearly \$40 billion in 2009 – a 60 percent increase over the average for the first half of the decade. The increased funding was not diverted from other forms of assistance.

Mr. Priyadarshi noted that AFT commitments to LLDCs had boomed, from an average of \$4.1 billion in 2002/05 to \$7.8 billion by 2009, now accounting for just under a fifth of all AFT commitments. However, even though close to 20 percent of all AFT flows go to LLDCs, much more could be done. He indicated that Aid for Trade had made tangible results on the ground since 2005 when it was established. Some of the tangible results of AFT to LLDCs include: a regional project in East Africa improved transit times at the border from three days to three hours and an Asian Development Bank project helped cut travel time between Lao PDR and Vietnam from 10 to 12 hours to 2 to 3 hours; border crossing times dropped from 487 minutes to 151.

He also drew attention to the fact that LLDC-specific projects as well as broader-trade facilitation efforts featured prominently in the case story exercise. He reported that at the Third Global Review of Aid for Trade, held in July 2011, no fewer than 96 of the 275 case stories submitted – over a third – were either specifically about LLDCs or submitted by LLDCs themselves, without mentioning the great number of stories concerning trade facilitation assistance that included LLDCs among the beneficiaries. He encouraged LLDCs to be even more proactive in submitting their case stories.

Some key lessons learned from the AFT initiative implementation so far pointed to country ownership at the highest political levels and effective intra-



Shipping storage containers await transport.

PHOTO CREDIT: UNESCAP

governmental co-ordination as critical factors for success. Active local stakeholder participation (including the private sector and civil society) in preparation and implementation of AFT projects was also crucial, as well as adopting integrated approaches combining public and private investment with technical assistance. Finally long-term donor commitment and adequate and reliable funding were considered essential. Mr. Priyadarshi concluded that the demand driven nature of the AFT initiative required LLDCs to push in all forums – regional and multilateral.

The Program Coordinator of the Trade Facilitation Facility of the World Bank, Mr. Dominique Njinkeu, made a presentation on the topic of the WTO Negotiations and the World Bank. His presentation highlighted the trade facilitation activities being undertaken by the World Bank under its Trade Facilitation Facility. He indicated that the aim of the WTO trade facilitation negotiations is to raise the profile of trade facilitation in national and regional development strategies; build the capacity of stakeholders; connect Geneva and capitals; and focus on implementation. A core component to the WTO negotiations is trade facilitation needs assessments at national and regional levels.

In line with the WTO negotiations, he indicated that the Trade Facilitation Facility supports implementation of the gateway reforms aimed at harmonizing customs and border procedures. He stressed the need to work towards the objectives of gateway reforms, to harmonize customs and border procedures, in order to facilitate, simplify and secure External Trade Transactions for LLDCs.

The activities of the project include: developing a trade information portal, streamlining declarations to reduce processing time and administrative errors and improve operational efficiency and the quality of trade statistics, and designing and implementing a Business Change Management program with joint controls and a common IT platform. The Facility has supported selected gateway operations including Douala for Cameroon, Chad and CAR; Congo Brazzaville, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon; Congo Basin; Pointe Noire for Congo, DRC, CAR, Cameroon; Tema for Ghana, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger; Cotonou for Benin, Niger, Burkina, Nigeria and Durban for SADC. ■