



United Nations Office of the High Representative for the
Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing
Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-
OHRLLS)

Report of the Sixth UN-OHRLLS Workshop of LDC Focal points

22-23 July 2009, Geneva, Switzerland

I. Opening

The UN-OHRLLS workshop of LDC national focal points on the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for the least developed countries took place on 22 July 2009. It was attended by over 60 participants, including more than 30 national focal points as well as representatives of LDC missions based in Geneva¹. A number of United Nations system agencies and other international organizations such as IOM, UNCTAD, WTO, IPU as well bilateral partners such as Turkey attended the workshop. The Deputy Director General of the IOM also attended the workshop. The workshop was opened by Mr. Erdenibileg, who on behalf of Mr. Cheick Sidi Diarra, Under Secretary-General and High Representative and for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS welcomed the participants to the workshop. The objective of the workshop was to strengthen national capacity for effective policy implementation, follow-up and monitoring of the Programme of Action for LDCs for the Decade 2001-2010. This year workshop took an even greater importance given the impact of the ongoing financial and economic crisis, whose effects were heavily felt in the LDCs as well as the preparations for the Fourth United Nations Conference on LDCs at national, regional and global level. Mr. M. Enayet Mowla, Chargé d’Affaires of the Permanent Mission of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh to the United Nations in Geneva and Chair of the LDC Coordination Bureau also made opening remarks. He stated that one of the objectives of the workshop was to provide an opportunity for participants to exchange views and to learn from each other on effective policies for mitigating the effect of the crisis on LDCs. He added that the workshop will also serve to strengthen the capacity of national focal points in undertaking comprehensive appraisal of the BPOA and identifying lesson learnt that could be taken into account in formulating future priorities for LDCs in the Post Brussels period.

II. Impact of the Global Financial and Economic Crisis on LDCs

¹ See the list of participants

The opening remarks were followed by presentations. The morning session was devoted to the impact of the financial crisis on the least developed countries. Four presentations were made in the morning, including presentations by UN-OHRLLS, IOM, UNCTAD and WTO. This was followed by general discussion.

In the first presentation, *Mr. Kavazeua Katjomuise*, Programmer Officer at UN-OHRLLS introduced OHRLLS report on the impact of the ongoing global economic and financial crisis on LDCs. The report argues that the impact of the global economic crisis on the LDCs is multifaceted, and it will affect different countries in different ways, depending on the mode of integration of the particular LDC in the global economy and the structure of its domestic economy. The report highlights a number of channel through which the crisis is impacting on LDCs. These include reduced exports owing to the decline in demand, coupled with decrease in commodity prices, falling investment inflows as well as decline in migrant remittances, tourism receipts and potentially declining official development assistance. The way the LDCs are affected by the collapse of World trade critically depends on the nature of their trade specialization. Broadly speaking, African LDCs are primary commodity exporters, with more than 90 per cent of their merchandize exports as a group consisting of primary commodities. Manufacturing exports specialization is by and large confined to a few Asian LDCs such as Bangladesh, Bhutan and Cambodia, where over 70 per cent of exports is composed of labour intensive manufacturing products in textiles, clothing and footwear. The report shows that prior to the crisis, LDCs had shown improved economic performance, with growth averaging over 6 per cent over the period 2001-2007. However, the global financial and economic crisis is likely to affect growth and poverty reduction, as well as the attainment of the goals and targets of the Brussels Programme of Action for the least developed countries for the decade 2001-2011.

In her presentation, *Mrs. Annet Blank*, Head of the WTO LDC Unit focused on the impact of the global financial and economic crisis on LDC trade performance, and how the multilateral trading system could support LDC' recovery. The global financial and economic crisis is having an adverse negative impact on LDC trade performance. To the

extend that recovery in recent years was driven by buoyant export growth, largely on account of increased demand for LDC's commodities, the crisis was affecting LDC through decline in demand for their exports coupled with a decline in commodity prices. As result, trade taxes, which constitutes an important source of revenue for LDCs have been affected significantly. She further stated that, reduction in trade finance affected LDCs capacity to export. Regarding what the WTO is doing for supporting LDC recovery, she argued that, concluding the Doha Round of trade negotiations was critical to global economic recovery. She said that, the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) remains the stimulus package that many of WTO Members, including LDCs urgently need. However, she argued that trade opening will not be sufficient for helping developing countries recover from the crisis. In order to fully reap the benefits of an open trading system, poorer countries need an accompanying Aid for Trade package to address their supply-side constraints and boost competitiveness. She further said that for the LDCs, the instrument to generate aid for trade is the Enhanced Integrated Framework for Least Developed Countries. She said that the EIF is now fully up and running and the first two projects, for Sierra Leone and Yemen have been approved. The EIF will assist LDCs in addressing trade policy issues and related supply-side constraints.

Mrs. *Meera Sethi*, Senior Regional Advisor for Sub-Sahara Africa with the IOM, examined the implications of the ongoing global financial and economic crisis on migration and remittances to LDCs. She stated that LDCs are active participants in international migration with remittance flows to LDCs estimated at U\$15.6 billion. As such, the global financial and economic crisis will undoubtedly have a significant negative impact on LDCs. She stated that migrants were often the worst hit during crises because they were in less secure contractual arrangements. Furthermore, they are over-represented in less skilled jobs which are particularly hard hit by the economic crisis, and are often subjected to discrimination in hiring, wage reduction and lay offs. She presented empirical evidence showing that some migrants from LDCs have lost their jobs and returned to their country of origin since the onset of the crisis. According to Ms. Sethi, remittances to developing countries are expected to fall by 7-10% in 2009. She said that the particular impact on remittances-reliant economies like Lesotho, Samoa, Haiti and

Nepal could be illustrated through return of migrants, increase in unemployment and informal sector, increase poverty and inequality level, including gender inequality, and instability in fragile states. Regarding IOM's work in this area, she mentioned the International Migrant Remittances Observatory for LDCs whose aim is to enhance understanding of migration in LDCs through strengthening capacities in developing regulatory framework.

In her presentation, Mrs. *Kozul Wright* introduced UNCTAD's LDC report 2009, titled "The State and Development Governance". The report situates the role of the state in the context of the ongoing global financial and economic crisis. It argues that the magnitude and the impact of the crisis necessitated a fundamental rethinking of the current development model. It attributes the global financial crisis to the inherent weaknesses in the neo-liberal paradigm which has characterized economic policies over the last three decades. This has been amplified by laxity of financial regulation in advanced economies. The report argues that the crisis should be grasped as a turning point in the development path of LDCs. To overcome their structural constraints to development, the report argues for reexamination of the role of the state in development, highlighting policy orientations in three major areas:

- Prioritizing productive capacity development;
- Building new developmental state; and
- Ensuring effective multilateral support for LDCs.

III. Preparations for the Fourth United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries

The afternoon session was devoted to the preparations for the Fourth United Conference on LDC. In his presentation, Mr. *Sandagdorj Erdenebileg*, Chief, Policy Development, Coordination, Monitoring and Reporting Services at OHRLLS provided the substantive mandate for the conference, informing the participants that the General Assembly in its resolution 63/227 decided to

convene the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries at the highest level in 2011.

The conference will be preceded by country and regional reviews, to be organized by ECA and ESCAP. Both the country and regional reviews will form important inputs into the UNLDC IV. The main purpose of the country-level preparations is for national governments to bring together country-level development stakeholders to engage in a forward-looking comprehensive appraisal of the implementation of the BPOA with the support of the relevant UN system partners. In this context, he urged participants to organize country reviews and to prepare country reports assessing the implementation of the BPOA, highlighting achievements, challenges, lessons learnt. He further stated it was crucially important that the country report also identify priority issues for the next programme of action. In organizing country reviews it was also important to ensure broad-based participation and involvement of all stakeholders, including private sectors, civil society organizations and others. The national review would culminate in a result-oriented analytical national report. The element of the report would include inter alia: (i) introduction, (ii) national development planning process, including key social, economic and political trends; (iii) assessment of the progress and challenges in the implementation of the BPOA by commitment; (iv) Impact of the global financial and economic crisis and policy responses; and (v) conclusion and way forward. The report would also highlight challenges and lessons learnt in the implementation of the BPOA. It should also provide policy recommendations on priority actions that the Fourth UN Conference on LDCs should address to facilitate sustainable development of LDCs.

With respect to the regional review meetings, two meetings would be organized, one for Africa and Haiti and another for the Asia Pacific region and Yemen. In addition to assessing the implementation of the BPOA for the region, the regional reviews would also provide an assessment of the adequacy of existing mechanism for monitoring and following-up on the implementation of the BPOA at the regional level.

He further informed the meeting that the General Assembly also decided to convene an intergovernmental preparatory committee towards the end of 2010 and/or early 2011 with no more than two meetings.

In his presentation, Mr. *Mussie Delelegnarega*, Economic Affairs Officer, Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes (UNCTAD)

Focused on the contribution of UNCTAD to UNLDC IV. He stated that from its very inception UNCTAD has supported LDC development agenda and advocated for their special and differential treatment since its early days. It was an earlier work of UNCTAD on The Differing Characteristics and Stages of Development of Developing Countries that led to the establishment of the group of LDCs by the General Assembly in 1971. Since then, UNCTAD has been at the forefront of advancing the trade and development interests of LDCs through its research, policy analysis, technical cooperation and consensus-building functions. It has successfully galvanized the support of the international community in assisting LDCs and contributed to global consensus building on policies and specific measures required to address the developmental challenges and problems facing LDCs. For instance, UNCTAD served as focal point for the last three United Nations Conferences on LDCs, leading to the adoption of the Substantial New Programme of Action (SNPA) for LDCs for the 1980s, the Paris Programme of Action for the 1990s and the Brussels Programme of Action for the decade 2001–2010.

With respect to specific role that UNCTAD could play, Mr. *Mussie Delelegnarega* stated that to the extent that regional-level preparatory process would highlight successful cases and best practices in the region that could be replicated in other less successful countries within and across the regions, it was important that country and regional-level preparations be supplemented by case studies in selected countries and on key sectors that are of trade and development interest to LDCs.

The third presentation sought to update participants on the state of preparations of the regional reviews meetings. Mr. *Amr Nour*, Chief of the Regional Commission Office in

New York informed the meeting that the joint AU-ECA Conference of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development at its last meeting mandated ECA to work with OHRLLS in organizing the meeting. He further stated ECA has indicated that it would organize the meeting in the context of the Commission session next year, although no specific time-frame had been set for the convening of the meeting.

With regard to the Asia-Pacific Regional review meeting, Mr. Nour informed the meeting that ESCAP Committee on Macroeconomic Policy, Poverty Reduction and Inclusive Development would consider an agenda item on the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action by the Asia-Pacific LDCs: Progress, obstacles encountered and the way forward. Asia LDCs would be invited to share their experiences on the implementation of the BPOA and propose priorities for the next POA. This event will feed into the High Level Dialogue on the Brussels Programme of Action, slated for January/February 2010. The outcomes of the two meetings will then be presented to the ESCAP Commission session in Incheon in April/May for its consideration.

The last presentation was devoted to the involvement of national parliaments in Country level preparations. Mr. *Martin Chungong*, Director, Division for the Promotion of Democracy at IPU started by providing a rationale for engaging parliaments in the country review process. He stated that parliaments should be involved in the process of negotiating and adopting decisions at the global level so as to bring the voice of the people and facilitate the implementation of internationally negotiated decisions. Furthermore, parliamentary involvement in global processes provides legitimacy to international-decision-making processes.

He further informed the participants about the IPU guide on Mobilizing parliamentary support for the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, which has been prepared jointly with UN-OHRLLS. The guide will be distributed to national parliaments, UN Resident Coordinators and LDC focal points. He said it was crucial for LDC focal points to establish contact with the national parliaments so as to deepen parliamentary engagement in country review process.

IV. Discussion

Participants thanked UN-OHRLLS for organizing the workshop and expressed appreciation for the quality of presentations made. They highlighted how their own countries were impacted by the ongoing global financial and economic crisis and expressed concern that not much resources were devoted to LDCs. They emphasized the need for strengthening capacities of LDCs to enable them implement effective policies to counteract the impact of the global economic and financial crisis.

The representative of IOM expressed their commitment to organize a pre-conference event on migration and remittances. The pre-conference event could also be used for launching the observatory on remittances.

On the preparation for the Fourth United Nations Conference on LDCs, participants further underscored the following:

- The need for UN-OHRLLS to forward all correspondences on the 4th UN Conference already sent to national authorities to the focal points to ensure effective follow-up;
- The need to establish time-line for the convening of the Africa regional review meeting to ensure timely preparation for the meeting;
- Presidential and parliamentary elections are planned in a number of African LDCs in the fourth quarter of 2009, and this may affect timely organization of national reviews. Therefore, UN-OHRLLS may wish to consider extending the deadline for the submission of national reports to early 2010;
- UN-OHRLLS should prepare a consolidated calendar of activities related to LDCs in general and the Fourth UN Conference planned for 2009-2010 and share this with focal points;

- Apart from UNDP resident coordinator system, sub-regional offices of the United Nations Regional commissions, where they exist should be mobilized to support country level preparations within their sub-regions;
- For the preparation of the Africa regional review, ECA should work closely with the African Union Commission and NEPAD;
- The LDC ministerial meeting during the forthcoming session of the General Assembly could be used for raising awareness among LDCs on the preparations for the Fourth UN Conference on LDCs;
- UN-OHRLLS may wish to consider undertaking missions to LDCs to raise awareness on LDC IV similar to what was done for UNLDC III,
- There was a need to ensure synergy between national and regional reports on the implementation of the BPOA. Therefore, regional commissions should take into account findings of national report in the preparation of regional reports.

V. Closing

In closing the workshop, Mr. *Erdenebileg* thanked participants for the active participation in the workshop. He said he was particularly impressed with the quality of the interventions as well as their commitment and enthusiasm towards LDC IV. He also conveyed the High Representative appreciation to UN agencies and other international organizations' contribution to the workshop and national focal points. He emphasized the importance of timely preparation of country reviews, which would form input to the outcome of the regional review meetings as well as the global conference and its outcome. He assured participants that OHRLLS would be working closely with national focal points and regional commissions to ensure successful national and regional reviews.

Participants of the 6th National Focal Point Workshop on 22 to 23 July

Name	Position	Country
2009		
1. Mr. Abdul Wassay Haqiqi	Senior Adviser to the Minister of Economy, Ministry of Economy	Afghanistan
2. Mr. Mario Contantino		Angola
3. Mr. Mosharraf Bhuiyan	Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finances	Bangladesh
4. Mr. Agossou 5. Ahoussoubemey Edwige Roseline	Diplomate/Attache, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Benin to the United Nations	New York
6. Ms. Tenzin Wangmo	GNH Commission	Bhutan
7. Mr. Amadou Diallo	Chief Service, Ministry of Economy and Finance, General Director for Cooperation	Burkina Faso
8. Mr. Emile Sinzumusi	Director General for Planning and Prospective, Ministry for Planning and Reconstruction	Burundi
9. Mr. Pagnathun Theng	Deputy Director General, Ministry of Planning	Cambodia
10. Mr. Lamin Dampha	Director, Ministry of Trade, Industry and Employment	Gambia
11. Mr. Chaikou Yaya Diallo	Technical Counselor, Ministry of Cooperation and African Integration	Guinea
12. Mr. Jackson Bien-Aime	Second Assistant, Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Haiti
13. Mr. Andrianiaina Bretino Raharinomena	Principal Advisor, Relations with International Institutions, Ministry of Economy and Industry	Madagascar
14. Mr. Priscilla Kandoole	Economist, Ministry of Economic Planning and Development	Malawi
15. Mr. Mamounou Thoure	Deputy Director, International Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Mali
16. Mr. Lafdal Ould Abeih	Deputy Director, Multilateral Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Mauritania

17. Mr. Agonias Antonio Macia	Head of Department, Ministry of Industry and Trade	Mozambique
18. Mr. Zaw Htun	Deputy Director, Foreign Economic Relations Department, Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development	Myanmar
19. Mr. Mani Bhattaraj	Under-Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Nepal
20. Mr. Iro Souley	General Director for the Sectoral Programmes, Ministry of Economy and Finance	Niger
21. Ms. Noumea Simi	Assistant Chief Executive Officer, Coordination and Debt Management	Samoa
22. Mr. Saleumxay Kommasith	Director General, Department of International Organizations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Lao
23. Mr. Camara Djibril	Technical Counselor, Ministry of Economy and Finance	Senegal
24. Ms. Abie Elizabeth Kamara	Senior Planning Officer, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development	Sierra Leone
25. Mr. Samuel Wara	Principle Planning Officer, Ministry of National Planning and Aid Coordination	Solomon Islands
26. Mr. Yassin Eisa Mohamed	Director of External Resource Directorate, Ministry of International Cooperation	Sudan
27. Mr. Fortatus Mbiro	Senior Economist, President's Office, Planning Commission	Tanzania
28. Mr. Okaye Komlanvi	Ministry of Cooperation	Togo
29. Mr. Michael Olupot-Tukei	Assistant Commissioner, Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development	Uganda
30. Mr. Ibrahim Sharafuddin	Director of UN Organization, Ministry of Planning and	Yemen

	International Cooperation	
31. Ms. Pamela Kasese	Deputy Director, Ministry of Finance and Planning	Zambia
32. Khondker M. Talha	Counsellor	Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to UN in Geneva