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Newly-appointed High Representative underscores his priorities for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS

UN-OHRLLS Advocacy and Outreach Officer, Ricardo Z. Dunn interviews the Under Secretary-General and High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, Gyan Chandra Acharya

Ricardo Z. Dunn A few months after assuming the post of Under Secretary-General and High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, what is your initial assessment of where these groups of countries stand in relation to their development efforts?

USG Gyan C. Acharya Generally speaking, there has been incremental progress across the board within these groups of countries whether it is in the field of human and social development or general economic growth. More specifically, evidence points to a reduction of the general level of poverty in many of these countries, some of which have also made impressive gains towards achieving specific MDGs, related to child and maternal mortality, education, gender empowerment and sanitation.

But uneven progress, persistence of extreme poverty and hunger and growing inequality is a matter of concern to us all. Their continued vulnerability to internal and external shocks including new and emerging challenges, such as climate change and recurrent food crises, and global volatility have hampered their speedy structural transformation. The international community is aware of the need for capacity enhancement, institution building and resources for rapid and sustained progress in all the areas in these vulnerable countries.

I should also point out that there remains a great deal of concern about the fundamental structural constraints and lack of inclusive and higher level of growth, which is indispensable to break the vicious circle of poverty and underdevelopment in many of these countries. This is particularly important as they start from a low baseline. Those in conflict or in post conflict situations face further institutional capacity and stability-related challenges.

The Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) for LDCs adopted at the Fourth UN Conference in 2011 has looked at the challenges of the LDCs in a holistic manner and has come out with a forward looking, ambitious and comprehensive outcome document as a global consensus on their challenges and opportunities. It has also called for a strong and enhanced global partnership for development of the LDCs. It has rightly recognised that development and progress of the people in LDCs in today’s globalised and integrated world is not only a moral imperative, but that it is also important for strengthening long-term stability, peace and security at the global level. Furthermore, it stresses mutual accountability, which means that national will and leadership for inclusive and sustainable development would be as critical as coherent and enhanced global support measures for LDCs.

A key issue that remains vital to the LDC development agenda is structural transformation through building productive capacity including infrastructure and energy, human and social development, and building resilience. We would like to see the LDCs moving in that direction with a view to meeting the criteria for graduation from the LDC status at the earliest.

We have seen that several LDCs have started to align their development plans with the priority areas of action in the IPoA to spur sustainable development. Needless to say, it is imperative that this process receives not only broad support but strong political backing at the highest level. It is equally encouraging to see that development partners and the United Nations System have also started to integrate the provisions of the IPoA into work programmes and their respective development cooperation frameworks. We are closely monitoring implementation of the action-plan to ensure that we all move in tandem to have the maximum impact on the lives of people in LDCs.

These are some good signs of progress, but we cannot escape the present reality which is the recognition that the global economic system is under enormous pressure. In particular, traditional donor countries continue to face serious difficulties in terms of growth, employment and fiscal balances. The recent decline, in real terms, in overseas development assistance (ODA), continued deadlock in the Doha Round of trade negotiations and a decrease in the flow of foreign direct investment are of course matters of major concern to all.

I must, however, add that it is encouraging to see that despite domestic hardships, one bright spot in...
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development cooperation is that some key donors have maintained or increased support to LDCs, even though the collective development assistance channelled to the LDCs as a percentage of GNI slightly reduced in 2011. We will, of course, strengthen our advocacy efforts to urge global partners not to reduce the allocation of ODA to the LDCs, as they are disproportionately affected by a myriad of challenges, and are highly dependent upon official development assistance for promoting their core development efforts. On trade related issues, we are glad that LDCs are on the expansionary phase of the volume of trade, even though there remains much room for improvement to reflect the full potential of LDCs in terms of their share of international trade through enhanced market access and building supply side capacity.

Let me now turn to the situation of landlocked developing countries (LLDCs).

Due to their inherent geographical difficulties related to lack of direct access to seaborne trade, the LLDCs find themselves on a disadvantaged development path. That is compounded by the remoteness from major international markets, small domestic markets that are highly vulnerable to external shocks, cumbersome transit procedures, high transport and transaction costs and inadequate transport infrastructure. These challenges not only affect their economic growth, but have major ramifications for social and environmental aspects of development, including poverty reduction and the achievement of the MDGs. As a result many of the LLDCs are also among the poorest countries in the world. There are many studies which have shown that landlockedness reduces GDP growth in these countries by 1.5 to 2 percent annually.

The United Nations Conference convened in 2003 in Almaty, Kazakhstan adopted the Almaty Programme of Action to be convened in 2014 as decided by the United Nations General Assembly provides a good opportunity for the international community to strengthen its partnership and support for LLDCs. The Conference will undertake a comprehensive appraisal of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, share best practices and lessons learned, and identify obstacles and constraints encountered as well as actions and initiatives needed to overcome them. As it will have the participation of all LLDCs, transit countries and development partners and institutions, the conference will formulate and adopt a new development partnership framework for the next decade to support the LLDCs to improve their integration into international markets, and achieve increased and sustained economic growth that is crucial for the betterment of the lives of the people in LLDCs.

Now, talking about the small island developing states (SIDS). Their fundamental challenge has been environment and development. The Barbados Programme of Actions and the Mauritius Strategy (MSI) brought forth their vulnerabilities to the global stage. This was also evident from the Rio+20 conference outcome. SIDS’ vulnerabilities largely stem from their narrow resource base and markets which deprives them of the benefits of economies of scale; high cost of energy, and infrastructure because of distance, little resilience to natural disasters and fragile natural environments. Many of these are inherent SIDS vulnerabilities. As a result, SIDS in general have not achieved sustained and high levels of economic growth. Furthermore, exposure to global environmental challenges of most SIDS have worked against efforts towards sustainable development and improving the livelihoods of their citizens in a sustained and inclusive manner. Sea-level rise and ocean acidification are questioning their very survival and long-term development of the people who are dependent upon marine resources for food and livelihood. Therefore climate change issues and the ecosystem of the oceans are of primary importance to them.

In the face of these challenges, SIDS have made efforts to build resilience and promote sustainable development, including through raising awareness and mainstreaming sustainable development principles into national development strategies, establishing protected areas, including marine, coastal and terrestrial, with strong leadership in protecting biodiversity, adopting strategies for promoting renewable energy.

In order to comprehensively look at the challenges as well as opportunities of the SIDS and create a coherent global partnership framework to deal with their issues in a holistic manner, we are focusing on the 2014 Third International Conference on SIDS to be convened in Samoa. A series of national and regional preparations will be convened in 2013. It is very important that it is being held before the initiation of the post 2015 development agenda as well as the before the deadline of a climate change agreement by 2015. The 2014 conference will involve assessment of the MSI, a call for renewed political commitment, and strengthening of global partnership. SIDS will continue to depend on the enhanced support of the international community to meet current internationally agreed goals and future targets. It is incumbent upon the international community to make sure that the concerns and expectations of one of the most vulnerable groups like SIDS are taken into account in the global development process in an effective manner.

RD You were closely involved in the 2010 Millennium Development Goals mid-term review process and the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. How do you see these conferences from the perspective of the development process?

GA Both the MDGs and Rio+20 processes are important for all, but particularly for the vulnerable countries, because of the enormity of their structural challenges and capacity constraints. All of these countries have abundant human and natural resources and great development potential which they would like to realise with the support and cooperation of the global community. What is important about these global conferences is that they have successfully focused our attention on the most critical development
problems that our contemporary society faces in an inclusive and unified manner. Such a focus is essential to inspire and mobilize global as well as national actions to rapidly address these issues in a spirit of global partnership and multi-stakeholder approach. In the early twenty-first century with so many path-breaking innovations and enormous global prosperity around the world, the people in the vulnerable countries should not go through traditional historical development processes while being mired in poverty. They should be able to leapfrog into a new equitable and sustainable development path and thus rapidly escape from the poverty trap.

The MDGs have a great focus on human development side, which is critical for the development process of any country. MDGs have helped the formulation and implementation of effective collaborative action for fighting poverty, saving lives, promoting education, ensuring gender empowerment and its mainstreaming into development process. Some of the MDGs have been met at the global aggregate level which is an encouraging sign for all. However, the vulnerable countries will not meet many of the MDGs. Therefore, we need to consolidate collaboration to complete the unfinished agenda and at the same time set objectives and targets to cope with the new and emerging issues that are threatening our common future. The new global development paradigm needs to prioritize these most vulnerable groups of countries with a view to supporting them in their efforts to get out of poverty traps on a sustainable basis with strong, inclusive and sustainable growth. It also needs to promote sustainable use of our natural resources to ensure a better future for the posterity and build resilience for long-term sustainable development in the broadest sense. This leads us to the Rio+20 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It has rightly put poverty alleviation at the centre of sustainable development and has called for a holistic and integrated approach to sustainable development by promoting social equity, economic growth and environmental protection in a coherent manner.

We are all working on the twin tracks of post-2015 development agenda and the SDGs. We are trying to support these processes along three pillars namely social-human development, economic growth-productive capacity, environment-climate change, with an overarching perspective of eradicating poverty through strengthened international development partnership.

Such a comprehensive approach can contribute to effectively addressing the challenges of millions of people left behind by the forces of globalization. In doing so, we are working closely with the Member States, UN system organizations, private sector, civil society and academia.

RD You have given us the broad sweep of the status of the vulnerable countries and the global conferences to address development challenges. Can you elaborate further on the current global development discourse including the development of SDGs and post 2015 development agenda from the point of view of the vulnerable countries?

GA This is a very important issue that you have raised. All the vulnerable groups of countries have their own situation-specific challenges, which have been captured by the respective outcome documents emanating from the dedicated UN conferences. Their implementation is critical to ensure focussed attention and support for progress and development in these countries. But to fully grasp their prospects, we also have to look at the overarching global development architecture. As I have said earlier, if you look at the MDGs, all these vulnerable countries have made substantial progress in meeting many of the MDGs, however, as a group they are among those which are farthest behind others in meeting these goals. That begs a question. How do you deal with the persistence and severity of some of their challenges? How do you look at the structural difficulties in these countries? Therefore, we are all trying to analyse, monitor and evaluate the specific constraints in these countries and accelerate the progress and increase impacts with targeted and intensified activities. In the remaining years until 2015, we all would have to work to accelerate our efforts particularly in these countries to ensure greater progress in meeting these goals. Then the international community should see where we all stand and decide how to deal with the unfinished agenda by building on them.

Therefore one part of that post 2015 development agenda has to deal with the unfinished agenda. But the equally important aspect of the development challenges today has been the sustainability of our development model and rapid depletion of our natural capital. While poverty eradication has to be the central theme of development narrative, there is a need to look at it and environmental sustainability in a holistic way. They are not mutually exclusive; they should not be made so. They are in fact mutually reinforcing and that is palpable to many of the people especially those living in rural and coastal areas and near the sea, who interact intensely with nature on a daily basis in these countries. Water energy and food security are inextricably linked, so are conservation of biodiversity and other natural resources. They are all under stress. Therefore, human development, inclusive economic growth and environmental sustainability should be taken up in an integrated manner, keeping the fundamental interests of the people and planet together. People are part of the natural eco-system. A green growth strategy rooted in poverty alleviation will have to be at the front of the post 2015 development agenda. The most important thing is that this new agenda must be able to fully capture the concerns and interests of the most vulnerable countries and be responsive to the long term and sustainable development needs of the people. Because they are at the receiving end of the unsustainable patterns of development, the goals have to be integrated, measureable and ambitious, which we should be able to achieve with strong international support measures, particularly for those lacking capacity and resources. We should also look at the current development models of all countries, as a development model anywhere affects the prospect of development everywhere in an ever more integrated and globalised world with a common global space and public goods to be shared by all.

RD Circling back to donor support, what is your opinion on the current state of affairs given the global belt-tightening underway? More specifically, do you think that the commitments made at the international level will be fulfilled?

GA The economic woes of the developed countries are spilling over to all the countries through reduced revenues, a weaker demand for their exports and heightened volatility in capital flows and commodity prices. Contrary to early predications, the reality is that the vulnerable countries have not been immune to the impacts of the crisis. This means that the outlook for this group needs to take seriously the very real possibility of a more pronounced deterioration in the global economic environment, which would of course negatively affect all exporters through falling terms of trade, reduced foreign

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direct investment and trade barriers, while others may be affected by falling worker remittances. A decline in aid flows also may limit external financing options for LDCs and others in the future.

But let me also stress the decline in ODA appears to be a temporary phenomenon caused by the difficulties faced by donor countries. Recently, the international community has reaffirmed its ODA commitment in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in their efforts to achieve sustainable development and also in the context of effectively implementing the Istanbul Programme of Action. In my own contacts with the high officials of donor countries, I get assurances of continued strong support, because of their particular vulnerabilities. These are important signals that the development partners will do their part in honouring their commitments. We will continue to work towards that direction, because of the positive impacts of ODA on people in vulnerable countries and their continued dependence on it for major development works.

**RD** Eradicating poverty and bringing all the vulnerable countries into the mainstream of the sustainable development process seems to be a very daunting task. What would be the approaches of your Office towards attaining these goals? In short, what would be the focus of UN-OHRLLS in the near future?

**GA** The challenges are indeed daunting and the ambition quite high. But we cannot be less ambitious when so many people are trapped in grinding poverty and the vulnerable countries are faced with deep structural constraints and new and emerging challenges including environmental degradation and climate change. Perpetuation of deprivation in the midst of plenty is a recipe for disaster. Ambition helps us to set our goals clearly and focus our minds. That is how the international community has always looked at these issues. That is why the United Nations was created in the first place to work for an equitable, peaceful and prosperous global order for all based on some fundamental principles, even in the aftermath of unprecedented devastations of the Second World War. That is why peace and security, development and human rights have now been agreed as the three principle pillars of the United Nations and the new global order. We all owe it to the people living in these countries in such a difficult situation. They have pinned high hopes on the international community and they should rightly do so. Therefore, while setting our eyes high on an ambitious agenda, we have to build on and take pragmatic steps on the ground and work towards these goals. We have to go through the valleys and troughs and cross many mountains to reach the shining city upon a hill. The United Nations represents and should represent the voice of all, but more so of the most vulnerable. It is in these countries that the UN is continuously tested for more and better delivery.

The Secretary-General and the leadership at the UN are committed to bringing about long term sustainable change in the lives of the most vulnerable people around the world. As such, sustainable development has been defined as the first priority of the UN.

My office is going to focus on the following issues. First, the UN-OHRLLS will intensify its work on following up on the effective implementation of the group specific outcomes of the UN conferences. They are IPOA for LDCs, APOA for LLDCs and BPOA and MSI for SIDS. IPOA has to be implemented by the countries concerned, development partners and countries in the south through integration into the development process. Similarly, we are preparing for the LLDCs and SIDS conferences in 2014, and as such advocacy of their concerns and establishment of a new framework of development duly reflecting their issues and interests, will also be a major priority for this office.

Second, the Office will intensify its coordinating role within the United Nations system and outside with other financial and trading institutions to effectively pursue the issues of interest to the vulnerable countries. We would strongly encourage them to give due priority to the vulnerable countries in their programmes of action.

Third, it will promote the interest and concerns of these vulnerable countries by mainstreaming their concerns and principal issues into the global development agenda. Ensuring proper visibility of their concerns and articulation of their interests in the larger global development discourse alone will ensure coherence in the global policy setting and effectiveness of development impact in these countries.

Fourth, advocacy for comprehensive global support measures for these countries will be another critical work of this Office. These groups of countries are most dependent on the external support, because of the high level of poverty in proportion to their population, huge capacity constraints and lack of financial resources to deal with their enormous development challenges. ODA remains a critical resource base for these countries. Besides ODA, they are also looking towards all sources of financing to meet the growing challenges, both traditional and the new ones. A comprehensive approach to the resources will be critical to them, which means we will be looking at ODA, trade, investment, technology adaptation, remittances, domestic resource mobilisation and innovative financing in a comprehensive manner.

Finally, the Office will ensure that we facilitate the transmission and articulation of global policies to the national policy makers and projection of their national experiences at the global level. That is a very important process in these complex times, when global issues are increasingly becoming dominant in setting the contours of both development challenges and opportunities.

Mutual accountability demands that national will and leadership with poor development policies and programmes are critical. It also demands stronger support from the global community in a spirit of solidarity and partnership. At the end of the day, in the highly interdependent world of today, international development process is in the fundamental national interest of developed countries and emerging countries, as it is of the vulnerable countries.

Therefore in carrying out our mandated activities, we will be working together with all and look forward to a strong support and cooperation of all stakeholders for sustainable development in these vulnerable countries. It is through the collective contributions of governments, parliamentarians, private sector, civil society, academia and media that we will be able to achieve our common goals of shared prosperity around the world and, in particular, in vulnerable countries.
South Sudan: The Challenges of a Young Nation

A Profile by Toni Bacala, Correspondent, MediaGlobal News

Having gained their much sought-after independence in July 2011, South Sudan is now the world’s youngest nation. Though land-locked, the River Nile runs across its fertile terrains, and the country boasts of some 1.7 billion barrels of oil reserves and other natural resources that have been both roots of economic promise and civil disputes.

South Sudan has been at war with its northern neighbour since 1955, when modern Sudan broke free from its Egyptian and British colonizers. After decades of civil wars, the north-south conflict ended with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005, which included a self-determination clause for the Sudanese people to decide amongst themselves if South Sudan should remain a part of united Sudan. In 2011, a referendum declared South Sudan an independent state.

In spite of South Sudan’s peaceful secession from Sudan, clashes over oil revenues and transit fees forced South Sudan to shut down oil production early in 2012. While South Sudan produces the bulk of the regions’ oil output, its landlocked geography makes it dependent on northern export lines. The disputes have put the country’s economy and security in a tight bind as 98 percent of government revenues come from oil export.

Its oil reserve aside, South Sudan’s equatorial climate and generous rainfall make it one of Africa’s most fertile agricultural regions. According to US AID, 90 percent of South Sudan could be ecological zones. However, only 5 percent of the country’s 30 million hectares of arable land is being utilized for agriculture.

The majority of the population relies on subsistence agriculture, while other food supplies are imported from neighbouring countries. Last year, severe flooding and internal communal violence have displaced over 400,000 people, exacerbating local food production and availability.

The natural disasters and unexpected population movement brought along diseases that upset local livestock, staple crops and water resources. Nonetheless, South Sudan’s potential for agriculture-based business, particularly in the production of cereal, oilsseeds and cash crops, offer great opportunities for local farmers.

The international community has set its eye on boosting South Sudan’s productive capacity. The International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC) has initiated programmes on using modern agricultural technologies, and developing market-oriented strategies to transform subsistence farming into profitable agribusiness. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has assisted local governments in putting in place efficient tax systems to increase non-oil revenues.

At the onset of 2013, South Sudan was off to an optimistic start with a decline in inflation to 25 percent from 41 percent in 2012. Also this year the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) will implement a programme to enhance the quality of farming seeds and ease food security challenges. To diversify its economy after the disruption in oil production, South Sudan ventured into microfinance and mining of mineral reserves such as gold, uranium and copper.

But South Sudan’s path towards economic stability remains curtailed by the tight grip of poverty. Over half of its 9 million population lives in rural poverty. About 75 percent have poor access to health services and basic education. Infant mortality rate is high due to malnutrition and diseases such as malaria and pneumonia. Cross-border tensions have endangered a refugee population comprised mostly of women and children.

Last December 2012, South Sudan’s admission into the United Nation’s group of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) has kindled hopes to better facilitate the young nation’s struggle to be fully independent, economically and politically. Years of violence have taken a toll on South Sudan’s economic and social milieu.

Enduring solutions are needed for economic investment and humanitarian efforts to be sustainable, especially for the future of its large young population.
The Road to the Ten-Year Review Conference for Landlocked Developing Countries

Challenges facing the LLDCs

In 1776, Adam Smith observed that the inland parts of Africa and Asia were the least economically developed areas of the world. Two hundred and thirty-five years later, Paul Collier, Professor of Economics at Oxford University, in his book: “The Bottom Billion”, painted the same stark picture stating that “being landlocked and resource-scarce in a bad neighborhood makes development harder”.

Why do landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) face such persistent challenges? Smith argued that, due to the difficulty of trade, geographically remote areas have difficulty realizing gains to specialization and associated benefits. He based his analysis on the difficulty of land transportation over great distances—a problem that, despite huge technological advances remains today. High transportation costs typically place landlocked developing countries at a distinct disadvantage relative to their coastal neighbours when competing in global markets.

Collier argued that landlocked, resource-scarce countries have no single obvious winning growth strategy that will take them to middle-income status, so they need to be ingenious, in particular by promoting good trade policies both at national and regional levels, particularly with neighbouring governments.

The United Nations recognizes 31 landlocked developing countries, widely dispersed around the globe: 15 are located in Africa, 12 in Asia, 2 in Central and Eastern Europe, and 2 in Latin America. Despite their location on four different continents, all LLDCs share common problems of geographic remoteness (1606 km on average from the sea) and no direct maritime access, implying dependence on trade and transport systems in neighbouring and coastal countries.

While the globalization process has unprecedentedly interlinked economies, landlocked developing countries seem to be marginalized in the global markets. They are less integrated into the global economy than the average of other developing countries. The proportion of merchandise exports of LLDCs to the total world exports has remained low at just 1.2 per cent. The lack of access to the sea and remoteness from major markets, inadequate transit facilities, cumbersome customs and border crossings procedures amongst other results in high transport and trade transaction costs, undermining their efforts to build their productive capacities.
The United Nations support to landlocked developing countries

The United Nations recognized LLDCs as one of the group of countries with special needs and challenges, and LLDCs have been on the Agenda of the General Assembly of the UN since 1957 when Resolution 1028 (XI) on this issue was adopted by consensus. Since then, it has been on the agenda of the United Nations system-wide, including the General Assembly and other UN bodies, regional organizations, development partners and international organizations.

In 2001, the UN Secretary-General established the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States with the overall objective to assist and support the countries in special situation, including landlocked developing countries.

In addition, to address the constraints facing landlocked developing countries, the United Nations organized the first International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in August 2003. The Conference adopted the Almaty Programme of Action and the Almaty Ministerial Declaration.

The overarching goal of the Almaty Programme of Action was to foster the establishment of efficient transport systems in all landlocked developing countries based on mutually beneficial collaboration with transit developing countries and with the support of the development partners. Five priority areas were identified, namely: 1) fundamental transit policy issues; 2) infrastructure development and maintenance; 3) international trade and trade facilitation; 4) international support measures, and; 5) implementation and review.

Progress achieved in the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action

The landlocked developing countries continue to make notable progress in the implementation of the priority areas of the Almaty Programme of Action, and the international community strengthened its technical and financial support. LLDCs as a group recorded an average economic growth of 5.0 percent during the period 2003-2010. Furthermore, imports of goods and services increased from $43 billion to $158 billion from 2003 to 2010, and exports of goods and services increased from $50 billion to $142 billion during the same period. In addition, Official Development Assistance (ODA) receipts to LLDCs more than doubled during the period 2000-2010. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows to LLDCs increased since 2000, from $3 billion to $35 billion in 2011, nevertheless, LLDCs receive only 4.5 per cent of the total FDI flows for developing countries and transition economies, as recognized in the World Investment Report 2012.

Although there has been some progress in infrastructure development and maintenance, especially in the LLDCs of Asia, the percentage of paved roads, the principal mode of transport, remains low. Only 9 LLDCs have over 50 per cent of their roads paved and 8 have only paved between 20 and 49 per cent of them. According to research by the World Bank, the challenges with regard to transport infrastructure are not only physical deficits but also a lack of adequate soft infrastructure, mainly in logistics services. Markets need to be improved along with transport and transit corridors.

The Road to the Ten-Year Review Conference

In 2012, in its Resolution 66/214, the United Nations General Assembly decided to hold a comprehensive 10-year review conference of the Almaty Programme of Action in 2014. The conference will be preceded by national, regional and global, as well as thematic preparations. In addition, intergovernmental preparatory committee sessions will be organized prior to the conference.

The overall objectives of the Conference will be to: undertake a comprehensive appraisal of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, identify effective international, regional, sub-regional and domestic policies in light of the outcome of the appraisal, reaffirm the global commitment to addressing the special development needs and the challenges faced by the landlocked developing countries, and mobilize additional international support measures and action in favour of the landlocked developing countries.

The General Assembly designated the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS), as the United Nations system-wide focal point for the preparatory process. It has also invited other United Nations system organizations and regional organizations within their respective mandates, to provide necessary support and actively contribute to the preparatory review process and the comprehensive 10-year review conference.

Preparatory processes have started. In particular, UN-OHRLLS has prepared a roadmap that highlights activities to be undertaken towards the conference. Two interagency meetings have taken place – February 2012 in New York and November 2012 in Geneva – to gather commitments by partners regarding the organization of pre-conference events, publications, regional review meetings, as well as to ascertain contributions to the private sector track of the conference and its main priority areas.

The Conference is expected to gather more than 1000 high-level participants and experts from landlocked and transit developing countries, and their development partners, international organizations, including UN system organizations, international and financial institutions, private sector organizations and academia.
Post-2015 Development Agenda: Streamlining priorities of Least Developed Countries

The 49 least developed countries (LDCs) are among the most vulnerable Member States of the United Nations, due to widespread poverty, limited human capital, vulnerability to external shocks and limited productive capacity. On average they experienced relatively high GDP growth rates over the past decade and made some progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, though less than countries in other groups.

In addition, much of this growth was jobless and their economic structure has been mostly stagnant. Therefore their production and export structure is still highly concentrated, and they are dependent on aid. Their marginalization in the global economy is exacerbated by geographical handicaps, often including small size and remoteness. Thus they are disproportionately affected by the multiple crises, especially high and volatile food and energy prices and the effects of climate change.

LDCs and their special needs are highlighted in the Millennium Declaration, where particular focus is given to market access, debt relief and development assistance. Consequently ODA to LDCs as well as duty-free market access for LDCs are included in MDG 8.

The Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA), which was adopted in 2011, aims at achieving graduation from the LDC category through reducing structural vulnerabilities of LDCs and addressing new challenges to development, with a strong focus on structural transformation and the development of productive capacity. It reconfirms commitments to provide market access and to allocate 0.15 – 0.2 percent of GNI in ODA to LDCs.

While the MDGs were successful in focusing attention on the poor and have contributed to a greater focus on results, there are also a lot of challenges related to MDGs 1-7. These include the allocation of a large proportion of ODA towards social sectors at the expense of productive capacity including in agriculture. In addition, issues of inequality, quality, and inter-sectoral synergies have been largely neglected.

LDC populations have struggled against a series of crises, including a volatile spike in food prices.

How can the new development partnership give priority to LDCs?

LDCs have been disproportionately affected by the recent triple crises and the increasing impact of climate change. This has exposed their specific vulnerabilities to global shocks and natural disasters. Despite the special attention given to LDCs, they are among the groups that recorded the slowest progress towards reaching the MDGs. High incidence of poverty — with over 50 percent of the population living below $1 a day in LDCs —combined with high dependence on external finance and low capacity to cope with the related challenges highlights their vulnerability.

Thus the new global partnership needs to prioritize the LDCs with a view to support them in their efforts to leave their poverty traps. It also needs to focus on building resilience for long-term sustainable development in the broadest sense.

Another reason for focusing on LDCs is the expected poverty dynamics for the coming years. While a large number of the poor currently live in middle-income countries, it is expected that within a few decades a much larger proportion of the poor will live in LDCs. This is largely attributable to their slower progress towards poverty reduction and higher population growth. Recent research shows, that in a few decades absolute poverty will again be concentrated in
low-income countries, mainly in LDCs. Reversing these trends requires scaling up of international support in favour of LDCs and fully implementing the commitments already made.

At the same time the development landscape has changed with the emergence of new donors, including foundations, and an increasing role for South-South cooperation. Meanwhile developing countries have become equally important trading partners and investors in the most vulnerable countries. Other financial flows, including FDI and remittances have increased relative to ODA, but for LDCs – unlike most other groups of countries – ODA is still the most important inflow of capital.

With respect to international support measures it is important to note that most LDCs are still highly aid dependent both with respect of the share of ODA in government expenditure and in terms of access to foreign exchange. For LDCs the share of ODA in recipient country GNI was 6.9 percent. For several countries the level of debt has also increased recently and thus they will need access to ODA and debt relief for the foreseeable future.

However, progress with respect to improving the quality of aid has been slow especially with respect to fragmentation, use of recipient mechanisms and predictability and needs to be accelerated. Thus a new development partnership should acknowledge the role of new actors and flows including innovative financing but also prioritise LDCs in the allocation of ODA. This could be done for example through the use of the LDC criteria for aid allocation as agreed in the recent resolution on smooth transition (A/67/C.2/L.51).

In the area of trade the focus of target 8B on duty free quota free market access needs to be revisited as preference erosion is likely to continue. In addition to implementing the commitments related to trade preferences more focus should be put on non-tariff barriers, which often harm LDCs disproportionately (including simplification of rules of origin requirements), trade facilitation measures, as well as aid for trade. Access to technology has also been recognised by the Millennium Declaration and subsequently the IPoA as crucial for structural transformation and as a cross-cutting issue relevant for all areas of development from health and education to employment creation. However, the related MDGs are quite weak and industrial countries have focused more on protecting intellectual property rights than on providing access to technology for vulnerable countries. International commitments in the area of trade and technology should be reflected in a new partnership, including those from the IPoA.

Furthermore the issue of policy coherence for development, which has long been recognised as crucial, needs to be addressed more concretely. It needs to include global public goods like a crisis-prone international financial architecture to reduce the frequency of external shocks. Likewise the voice and representation of LDCs in multilateral institutions need to be increased.

For LDCs regional economic integration and cooperation has a great potential for creating new opportunities for trade, investment and production, through improved infrastructure and connectivity. Thus regional integration including through South-South and triangular cooperation should be considered as one of the key development enablers. The regional dimension could also link the national to the global level in a new partnership.

How can the new development agenda reflect the priority concerns and issues of the LDCs?

There has been some agreement that structural transformation should be a cornerstone of the post-2015 framework as a way to eradicate poverty in a sustained manner. This is especially important for LDCs, which are characterised by structural deficiencies and vulnerabilities. While building on the existing MDGs and keeping the strong focus on poverty reduction and the well being of people, there is the need to reorient priorities away from compartmentalization in social sectors into integration with development strategies that seek to combine economic growth with employment creation and participatory development.

The fact that the MDG targets were misinterpreted as national rather than global goals meant that the failure of LDCs to reach most of the targets was almost unavoidable. Progress in a given area, for instance education, typically follows a bell curve trajectory of slow initial progress, followed by a period of acceleration and finally another slowdown. Thus defining the success of a country based on national targets would provide a more fair interpretation of success.

Productive capacity, which is the first priority but also a cross-cutting topic in the IPoA needs to get higher priority in a new development framework. Its central objective to create decent jobs is crucial for achieving poverty reduction. Likewise a focus on agricultural development would also contribute to reducing hunger and malnutrition. In addition, many factors that could contribute to the increase in productive capacity like infrastructure, access to energy, better quality of education and access to technology could also lead to improvements in other sectors like health. Furthermore the promotion of green economy should be seen as one way to increase productive capacity, attract investment and enter new markets. Thus it is also important to explicitly take into account the interlinkages between sectors and avoid a silo approach in the new development framework.

LDCs are among the countries most affected by climate change through a variety of effects from reduced agricultural productivity and depleted stocks of fish to increased frequency and impact of natural disasters, higher costs for resilience building (e.g. through higher costs for infrastructure and health services) and increasing migration, according to the World Bank report: Turn Down the Heat. In addition, climate change poses a security threat. Thus the new development agenda not only needs to ensure increasing resilience of LDCs but also focus on mitigating climate change effects.

Capacity building in all the areas mentioned above is crucial for a sustainable development path in LDCs. This should include capacity for regulating different sectors, capacity for negotiations with investors in extractive industries and land to generate higher revenues and at the same time avoid negative impacts on the population and the environment. Likewise the capacity to reform the public sector, to increase domestic revenues and to fight against illicit capital flight needs to be strengthened to achieve sustainable development.

Therefore, the Post-2015 Development Agenda should include a strong commitment to address the special needs of LDCs, giving visible priority to addressing their specific challenges and building capacity to deal with them. Such a more comprehensive development agenda would also be conducive to increasing policy coherence.
Emerging countries are sharing their prosperity with LDCs

Jean-Francis Régis Zinsou, the Permanent Representative of Benin to the United Nations in conversation with MediaGlobal News Bureau Chief Nosh Nalavala

Nosh Nalavala  Ambassador, what is your agenda as the chair of the global LDC Group?

Jean-Francis Régis Zinsou  Thank you for giving me this opportunity to exchange views with you and your readers on the work of the LDC Coordination Bureau of which I am the global chair. The coordination bureau is intended to bring the Member States of the group of LDCs to develop a joint perspective, a joint front to common challenges. Our work is embedded in the implementation process of the LDC Programme of Action. We developed in May 2011 in Istanbul a new programme of action, which we call the Istanbul Programme of Action for LDCs, the overarching goal of which is to develop working methods and policies that can enable LDCs to graduate by 2020. That is the agenda: to help LDCs graduate and assist LDCs to put in place strategies that can help them to graduate.

Nosh Nalavala  I believe in 2007 Benin introduced the “People-Centered Framework.” What are its essentials, what did it do for Benin and can it be parlayed to other LDCs under your leadership?

Jean-Francis Régis Zinsou  Benin was instrumental in pushing for a people-centered approach to development challenges because when you talk about the challenges of LDCs, it’s about the living conditions of the people, it’s about the lack of opportunity, and it’s about their vulnerabilities — their vulnerabilities being the vulnerabilities of their country, their challenges being the challenges of their country. That’s why we continue to push for a human-centered approach to development.

Nosh Nalavala  How can this framework help other LDCs?

Jean-Francis Régis Zinsou  Every LDC can take advantage of what is being done because the motto is to do more of what works, and Benin is in the lead. We try to promote an exchange of experiences with other LDCs, and we benefit by working on the basis of lessons learned.

Nosh Nalavala  Can you refer to the outcome of the Istanbul Programme of Action and tell us how the implementation is progressing?

Jean-Francis Régis Zinsou  The Istanbul Programme of Action is a comprehensive programme, which is intended to really tackle the challenges that the LDCs face. It was devised through an assessment of the Brussels Programme of Action, which was implemented in the decade which ended with 2010. The implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action is being pushed forward through mainstreaming in national strategies and national policies because the assessment we made at the Istanbul Conference and in the preparation of the Istanbul Conference that generated the Istanbul Programme of Action is that each LDC can make great leaps if it can maximize the potential locally. This means that when you are a country, you have to identify the things in which you are the best or the things that you can do best. We call that in political analysis, ‘cooperative advantage’. When you build your development on cooperative advantage, you have the chance to make great strides; you have the chance to make a great leap forward.

Nosh Nalavala  As a follow-up, what new measures are you planning to initiate towards strengthening the implementation process?

Jean-Francis Régis Zinsou  We have a lot of initiatives going on. You cannot consider the implementation process as separate from the ongoing global processes. We went to Istanbul, but just after Istanbul we went to Rio, and we developed a real vision of sustainability on the important programmes that we initiated in Istanbul. Now we need to generate some kind of synergy, while building on those programmes. And this is something that we’re working on. I am in a very favourable position towards such a challenge because I have been appointed as member of a group of 30 experts, which will develop sustainable development goals. We have the chance to work in synergy to benefit from what is being done at a global level, and also to implement what we have designed at Istanbul. What we have designed in Istanbul has a very specific new approach — a new approach to focus
on capacity development on the basis of cooperative advantages.

NN Has South-South cooperation helped Benin and how do you plan to narrow the North-South divide?

JFZ South-South cooperation has helped a lot and you cannot imagine how grateful the whole LDC membership is for emerging countries, which are pushing to share their prosperity with LDCs.

NN Which countries are you referring to?

JFZ China is in the lead. India and Brazil are working hard on it. There is also a group of middle-income countries that are also very helpful in exchanging experiences with us. Something that we learned is that the LDCs have taken the lead in a proactive manner to really fill the gaps and weaknesses of the economies that are preventing us from taking the great leap to development. We are doing that now by developing South-South cooperation. How to bridge the North-South divide? We need to bring investment from the north and combine it with knowledge from the south and with national policies of LDCs generate new approaches of development on the ground, which can mobilize people to participate in development. One of the major elements of the new development approach that we devised in Istanbul is to have people get involved.

NN Talking about getting others involved, while LDCs come under your purview as the chief of the LDC group, do you also nurture LLDCs and SIDS, many of them LDCs?

JFZ Of course. The Istanbul Programme of Action is open and comprehensive. A mountain country does not have the same problems as a country with flat lands where there is a lot of agricultural land available for development. We have a programme which opens avenues that countries can make use of according to their challenges for both LLDCs, SIDS and LDCs in general. What we have is a programme that tackles challenges. We tackle them in a way that brings in people. It’s centered on people. It’s intended to fill the gaps in policy and vulnerability. We have a framework, which is focused on addressing vulnerabilities, which is focusing on maximizing local capacity for development.

NN Can you talk a bit about the impact of climate change on LDCs? What are LDCs, specifically Benin, doing towards adaptation and mitigation since your country faces increasing problems of floods and coastal erosion?

JFZ You see those issues are very disruptive challenges because you are talking about Millennium Development Goals, bringing water, securing food, but when floods come, everyone suffers in Benin we have fields close to the rivers and we can develop rice production in those fields. But what if flood comes? Everything is over-flooded. What we plan to do is build dams to protect those areas. Catalytic investments that can help us maximize the benefit that we have. We have coastal erosion, and we have benefited from cooperation from Arab countries to build dams at the seashores to protect our shores and prevent erosion to take place. In the city of Cotonou, large parts of the city have been ‘eaten by the waves’. When I say ‘eaten by the waves’, hotel resorts at the seashore have totally disappeared because there were investments that were made when the coastal origin was not so strong eroded those facilities. It’s a matter in which the international community has a stake, because if you don’t invest to prevent such erosions, you will generate a humanitarian crisis for which more money will have to be spent.

NN Ambassador, as the chair of the LDC Group, what is your expectation of the international community?

JFZ The international community has to build on synergies, build on our local capacities and try to generate more concrete results on the ground for the people. We need to generate concrete changes on the ground for the people. For decades we have been calling for strengthening of the transformation capacity of LDCs. If you grow tomatoes, and if you are not able to transform it, then you have tomatoes for three months and the whole year you are waiting for the next cycle to grow tomatoes. But if you are able to transform it, you can conserve it, you can put it in a bottle, you can have tomatoes all year round. Those are things we are doing now, and China, India, and Brazil are very instrumental in empowering our countries with small facilities that help at local level.

NN Given the choice between ODA and increased investment, which one do you think is more beneficial to LDCs in the future?

JFZ In the future, we need investments. We need as much investment as possible. We need to put in place structures, institutions that can carry those investments. ODA is creating an enabling environment through infrastructure assistance and development capacity building . . . those things are framework assistance. If you are enabled and you don’t have the possibility to grow from there, you don’t progress. And that has been the problem of ODA until now. It brings in improvement in living conditions, but without power. We are working on empowering our people, to build on those infrastructures, to build on those enabling assistance that we are receiving to really generate growth, and generate growth through investment.

“South-South cooperation has helped a lot and you cannot imagine how grateful the whole LDC membership is for emerging countries, which are pushing to share their prosperity with LDCs.”

It was at Rio+20 that the outcome document The Future We Want was adopted and paragraph 180 called for the convening of a Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in 2014. At Rio+20, the message regarding SIDS was clear. They remain a “special case” for sustainable development in view of their unique and inherent vulnerabilities. With negotiations taking place on the margins of the 67th General Assembly debate in September 2012, SIDS leaders agreed that the Conference would take place in Apia, Samoa.

Though the exact date in 2014 is yet to be determined, the modalities resolution A/C.2/67/L.40 was adopted by the Second Committee of the General Assembly and sets out initial modalities for the Conference and its preparatory process. The modalities resolution as it stands, stipulates that the Conference will look to assess the progress to date and any remaining gaps in the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPoA) for the Sustainable Development of SIDS and its follow-up Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the BPoA (MSI).

The Conference will also aim to seek a renewed political commitment by all countries to effectively address the special needs and vulnerabilities of SIDS along with identifying new and emerging challenges and opportunities for the sustainable development of SIDS. Moreover, the Conference will look towards strengthening partnerships between SIDS and the international community while likewise seeking new partnerships that would foster the sustainable development aspirations of SIDS.

On 21 November 2012, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon nominated Wu Hongbo, Under-Secretary-General (USG) for Economic and Social Affairs, as the Secretary General for the Third International Conference on SIDS. Mr. Hongbo will work closely with Mr. Gyan Acharya, USG and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Land Locked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and with the wider UN system and regional entities to ensure a successful outcome to the 2014 Conference.

Climate change, food security, disaster risk reduction, oceans, technology transfer and securing durable partnerships are at the forefront of the High Representative’s agenda, and indeed UN-OHRLLS’.

There remains the crucial need for international and bilateral donors as well as the private sector, financial institutions, foundations and other donors to support the preparations for the Conference through voluntary contributions to the SIDS Trust Fund held by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). On fundraising, High Representative Acharya is collaborating closely with USG Hongbo of DESA, in his capacity as the Secretary General of the 2014 SIDS Conference, to sensitise development partners to the need for financial support towards the 2014 SIDS Conference and indeed the preparatory processes leading up to the Conference.

Likewise, UN-OHRLLS is working closely with DESA in its role as Secretariat for the Conference along with other UN system entities and regional bodies through the SIDS Inter-agency Consultative Group (IACG) mechanism to mobilize support and resources towards the preparatory processes and indeed the Conference itself. UN-OHRLLS will also play an important role within the Inter-departmental Task Force that will focus on timely and effective logistical arrangements in collaboration with the host country.

On the substantive front, UN-OHRLLS is planning several SIDS specific events – as opposed to various other events relating to LDCs and LLDCs -
that will tie into the preparations for the 2014 Conference on SIDS in Samoa. For instance:

- It is tentatively scheduled that in March of 2013, UN-OHRLLS will convene an Experts Group Meeting on the significance of Marine Science and Technology for SIDS and the importance of Capacity Building and Marine Technologies Transfer to SIDS. This meeting is scheduled to take place in New York and will involve partnering with UN entities including UNESCO’s Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC).

- Between the 19th and 23rd of May, 2013, the Fourth Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction will take place in Geneva. Here, UN-OHRLLS plans to convene a SIDS specific High Level featured event at the Global Platform to place emphasis on the importance of mobilizing international support to reduce disaster risk and build resilience in SIDS communities.

- On the 9th-11th April, 2013, UN-OHRLLS is partnering with the American Museum of Natural History’s and its Center for Biological Diversity who will hold a two day symposium addressing current issues in the conservation of biological and cultural diversity across oceanic islands. While the symposium will concentrate on scientific issues, OHRLLS will participate at the event focussing on building the vital linkages between science and policy setting relating to resilience and biodiversity in SIDS.

- As a follow-up to Rio+20 and indeed the MSI, it is the intention of the office that in the coming year, an assessment of SIDS national sustainable development arrangements will be carried out which will focus on the institutional capacity needs of SIDS and how these have been able to support SIDS national sustainable development aspirations.

The objective of these thematic consultations is to inform the preparatory processes leading into the SIDS conference in 2014 and enable SIDS and their development partners to begin focusing on themes and areas for possible future collaboration and cooperation.

The current endeavours by UN-OHRLLS in collaboration with DESA and other UN system entities and regional bodies will lead to a fruitful Third International Conference on SIDS in 2014; thus leading to furthering progress towards the sustainable development aspirations of Small Island Developing States.

INTERVIEW

LDC Portal – A tool for LDCs toward graduation

Ana Luiza Cortez, United Nations’ Chief of the Committee for Development Policy Secretariat, in conversation with MediaGlobal’s Bureau Chief Nosh Nalavala

Nosh Nalavala Ms. Cortez, the objective of the support measures portal for LDCs, the way I see it, is to increase national capacity in governments and export sectors in participating LDCs. Is this project aimed primarily at trade issues?

Ana Luiza Cortez No, not really. The original idea of the project is to increase capacity in least developed countries because what we realized here at the Committee for Development Policy (CDP) Secretariat is that every time that an LDC was recommended to be graduated from the list of LDCs, there was a great deal of concern from the part of the country that it would lose certain benefits and advantages, which is true. But the countries were not aware about which advantages those are and so that was a problem because many of them thought that access to concessional finance for instance from the bank or the fund, the IMF or the World Bank were conditional on being an LDC, which is not the case. And there were a series of other measures which they thought were LDC-related when they were not. So we felt that there was a need for countries to be better acquainted with existing support measures for LDCs so they can use them and also better prepare themselves for graduation.

NN So what do you do to allay these fears?

ALC We classify those measures in three major categories: it is related to trade benefits, that it is not only market access but also measures related to special treatment in other provisions of the legal tax. Then there are measures related to official development assistance, and finally there are what we call, other forms of support measures such as discounts,
Interview with Cortez

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contribution to the UN budget, access to travel funds, and things like that.

**NN** I know that the portal is an LDC portal but there are least developed countries in the small island developing states as well as landlocked developing countries. Does your work spill over into those areas as well?

**ALC** The SIDS and landlocked countries classified as least developed also have access to the same LDC measures, inasmuch as they remain as LDCs. As such, they also have, in theory, access to these measures and they can also benefit from access to this information from the portal.

**NN** The words ‘special treatment’ is being used. What exactly are LDCs seeking in terms of ‘special treatment’ regarding the WTO-related obligations?

**ALC** I don’t know what LDCs are specifically negotiating right now, but I know that for instance, they recently got a preferential market access in terms of services which was not part of the special measures for LDCs. They had preferential market access in goods and not in services. And this is a new thing, of course it is voluntary on the part of the trading partner, except for say, the U.S. or the EU or India to grant preferential treatment for services to LDCs. But they did get a waiver, which was not there earlier.

**NN** Can you define ‘preferential treatment’?

**ALC** Yes, for instance, I am Brazil and I tax a tariff on ports of wheat at 10 per cent. If you are from Bangladesh and you are an exporter of wheat, I may not impose tariff on my imports of wheat from you. So you have an advantage vis-à-vis the other wheat producers. That’s what preferential treatment can do.

**NN** Was this one of the mandates that came out of the Istanbul Programme of Action that is being implemented through the LDC portal now?

**ALC** No, this actually precedes the Conference. The portal itself is not mandated from the Istanbul Programme of Action. It was the initiative of the Secretariat. It was our initiative, but it does help in the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action, especially because it provides easy-to-access list of all the commitments being used by LDCs themselves. And most of the measures that we list on the portal, if not 99 percent of those measures, precede the Istanbul Programme of Action.

**NN** Did they start with the Brussels Programme of Action?

**ALC** Even before that, the enabling clause, for instance, was adopted in 1979, so it precedes these initiatives.

**NN** In other words, it has taken 10 years for this initiative to be implemented?

**ALC** Yes and no. The preferential market access was there earlier. What you see through time is how it has evolved. For instance in 2005 at the Hong Kong WTO Ministerial meeting, there was an agreement to provide duty-free, quota-free goods to LDCs to at least 97 per cent of all tariff lines of trade-in partners and not only in developed countries but also in other developing countries which were in the position to do so. How the measure was being implemented has evolved over time, so it has been fine-tuned and became wider.

**NN** Is this (preferential treatment) being extended or being expected of developed countries as well? Does this help narrowing the gap between the north and the south in terms of narrowing trade restrictions?

**ALC** It offers an opportunity for least developed countries to have greater access to markets in developed countries. But it is not clear whether LDCs are able to make use of such opportunities because on one side, there are issues of limits of productive capacities in the LDCs, and from the other side, there are issues of origin that in a way restrict the use of the preference by LDCs themselves. And the third problem is that countries that grant preference to LDCs are also in trade agreements with other countries, and they extend preference to these countries as well. Consequently, the effective level of preference is much lower.

**NN** And how does this project help official development assistance (ODA)?

**ALC** There are specific targets of ODA as far as the developed countries are concerned. The developed countries have committed to give LDCs between 0.15 to 0.20 percent of the GNI. Some of them have made concrete commitments. This is for developing countries in general, but there is a specific share for the LDCs, so in following up on these commitments implies that the LDCs could have potentially more access to financial and technological tools from developing countries.

**NN** You mentioned something about the LDCs unable to take advantage of the markets opening up in developing countries. Why would you infer that the LDCs are unable to take advantage of the existing benefits associated with the LDC status?

**ALC** Being an LDC, they lack productive capacity. They lack infrastructure, roads, technical capacity in the sense of having in place all the institutions that guarantee the right conditions. So while the measure is there, it is important for countries to improve their productive capacity.

**NN** You have pilot countries in Africa selected for this project. Which are these countries and what are the parameters of the project?

**ALC** We did case studies in Africa on Cape Verde, which is a graduated country, but we wanted to study the experience of the country moving into graduation and how it negotiates with its partners the transition out of the LDC category. The other one was on Mali and we focused on the integrated framework, the experience of Mali. We also had a case study on Mozambique, which we focused on the National Adaptation Programme of Action, which is on Climate Change. We have Samoa, Bangladesh, Nepal and Gambia.
UN-OHRLLS actively participates in the climate change process at COP-18

High Representative lays out a plan of action

Given the disproportionate impact of climate change on LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, UN-OHRLLS has become increasingly active in the global debate on climate change process. While their contribution to global warming is negligible, LDCs and SIDS have and will continue to bear the brunt of these adverse effects of climate change that threaten to undo the gains many of them have made in pursuit of sustainable development. For many of these vulnerable countries, climate change and its impacts go beyond merely development challenges and adaptation efforts – it is a matter of survival.

UN-OHRLLS role is to lend its voice in support of LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, as the UN Secretariat’s chief advocate for these vulnerable countries, and to forge partnerships between these countries and their development partners on this most critical of issues.

Under Secretary-General Gyan Acharya participated in three side-events as a speaker at COP 18 in Doha. On 3 December 2012, the USG participated at an event organized by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) on ‘REDD+ and poverty reduction: what has worked and what is possible?’. He focused on several REDD+ pilot countries in their readiness phase including poverty reduction as a co-benefit outcome of reduction of emissions. This side event shared experiences and insights from cases in India, Nepal, and Mexico, and identified potentials for replication/adaptation in other countries, including in LDCs.

Later the same day Mr. Acharya participated as a panelist in a side-event organized by UNFCCC Secretariat. The event was on the ‘Work of the LDC Expert Group (LEG) in supporting National Adaptation Plans of Action (NAPAs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) in LDCs’. The event also saw the LDCs Expert Group (LEG) launch of the technical guidelines for the NAPs. The next day the High Representative attended an event co-organized with the LDCs Watch, an international NGO which focuses exclusively on developmental issues related to the least developed countries. This event was titled: Climate Change Justice for LDCs: Financing Adaptation and Implementing the Istanbul Programme of Action. Mr. Acharya shared the panel with Dr. Keshav Man Shakya, Minister of Environment, Science and Technology, Nepal; Dr. Arjun Karki, International Co-ordinator, LDC Watch; Ms. Lidy Nacpil; a representative of the South Centre; and a representative of Pan-African Climate Change Coalition.

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UN-OHRLLS at COP-18
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In his remarks, the USG gave a snapshot of the current state of play for LDCs in the context of MDGs and highlighted the fact that at current rate a number of LDCs will not even meet even one of the MDGs. He underscored the fact that these challenges for LDCs have been compounded and will continue to be affected by climate change. He highlighted that LDCs do not have the capacity to withstand the impact of climate change. Many people living in LDCs, particularly in the rural areas, continue to depend on the environment and natural resources for their livelihood. The LDCs will continue to need support of the international community to allow them to meet these challenges that are outlined in the IPOA.

He assured the meeting that the UN system will continue to support LDCs. The High Representative also called for better transfer and diffusion of technology in a more comprehensive manner. He highlighted the importance of climate-proofing with regard to infrastructure development in LDCs and drew the link between the poverty, energy, water and food issues that LDCs and droughts in those LDCs. He underscored the fact that at current rate a number of LDCs will not even meet even one of the MDGs.

He maintained. A focus was placed on growth is sustainable and exit strategies would support their graduation by 2020, which is the ultimate goal of the IPOA. Furthermore they stressed that more attention should be paid to smooth transition processes to ensure that growth is sustainable and maintained. A focus was placed on the need for greater ownership on the part of LDCs and increased representation and participation in global decision-making processes.

COP-19, Warsaw, Poland

UN-OHRLLS intends to actively participate in COP-19 including in the convening of side-events through partnership with UN system entities and other non-UN actors and stakeholders. UN-OHRLLS will, in consultation with its constituents, develop appropriate themes for the convening of special events at COP-19.

AN OVERVIEW AND ROUND-UP

LDCs play a prominent role in General Assembly Deliberations

2012 witnessed considerable momentum behind the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA), which was adopted in Istanbul in May 2011. The continued support from the development partners and the progress made by the LDCs themselves was confirmed in the various LDC-related United Nations General Assembly meetings and events.

The LDC Ministerial Meeting took place in September 2012 during the 67th session of the General Assembly. At the beginning of the meeting, the Foreign Minister of Nepal, Mr. Narayan Kaji Shrestha handed over the chairmanship of the LDC Group to the Foreign Minister of Benin, Mr. Nassirou Bako-Arifari.

Several LDC delegates narrated how their national strategies reflected the goals outlined in IPoA and how their perspectives of LDCs and SIDS; seeking membership in the United Nations Partners on Climate Change; seeking opportunities for active participation in UN Secretariat deliberations on climate change including through consultations with the CCST; active participation in climate change processes, including facilitating special events, discussions, side-events at key climate change meetings and UNFCCC COPs; actively collaborating with UN system entities to develop papers, strategies as they relate to climate change impacts, in favour of LDCs and SIDS; and, strengthening and developing partnerships with institutions, both governmental and non-governmental, as well as private sector and civil society to seek solutions to address the impact of climate change on LDCs and SIDS.

The High Representative’s attendance at COP-18 was well received by the representatives of LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS who attended the conference. The involvement of UN-OHRLLS at COP-18 raised the profile of the Office not only amongst the office’s constituents but it also did so among the UN system. UN-OHRLLS will continue to increase its efforts in engaging on the issues pertaining to climate change on a global level.

In light of the cross-cutting nature of the climate change agenda which covers the development and security pillars of the work of the organization, UN-OHRLLS will continue to support LDCs and SIDS in the climate change process and advocate for their causes. Given that UN-OHRLLS has a specific mandate, within the UN system, over the most vulnerable countries that have the least means to adapt to the onset of adverse climate change impacts, UN-OHRLLS is taking steps to further strengthen its work on climate change issues. These include:

- Increasing interaction with LDCs and SIDS on matters pertaining to climate change; developing a dedicated webpage on climate change providing
At the end of the meeting, a Ministerial declaration was adopted by consensus. This declaration reiterates the firm commitment to promote and implement the IPoA. It furthermore highlights serious concerns over the ongoing multiple crises that affect LDCs in many ways, such as, the possible fall of the net bilateral ODA. The declaration also emphasizes the need for strengthening the global partnership for development, encompassing the full range of actors, including parliaments, civil society, the private sector and foundations.

LDC issues were also discussed in the session of the Second Committee of the General Assembly in October dedicated to groups of countries in special situations. The Under Secretary-General, Mr. Acharya, introduced the Secretary-General’s Report on the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the LDCs for the Decade 2011 to 2020 (A/67/88) and the Report on ensuring the effective implementation of the functions of the Office of the High Representative (A/67/262).

Furthermore, the Report of the GA ad-hoc working group to further study and strengthen the smooth transition process for the countries graduating from the LDC category (A/67/92) was considered.

In this context, two LDC related resolutions were adopted: Follow-up to the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (A/Res/67/220) and Resolution on smooth transition for countries graduating from the list of least developed countries (A/Res/67/221).

The first resolution provides reassurance of the will of the Member States to provide enhanced and tailor-made support to the LDCs and reaffirms the commitments made in the IPoA. It also proposes more coherent UN system-wide follow-up and monitoring of the implementation of the IPoA, as well as the inclusion of the implementation of the IPoA as a standing item on the agenda of the Chief Executive Board. This is expected to contribute to a strong and coherent system-wide follow-up and monitoring of the implementation of the IPoA. Furthermore the resolution underlines that OHRLLS should be provided with adequate resources to fulfill its expanded mandate for the timely and effective implementation of the IPoA.

The resolution on smooth transition spells out the need gradual transition from LDC status based on a strong national strategy and supported by international measures. Member States are encouraged to enhance information-sharing and their understanding of available LDC-specific international support measures, their characteristics and modalities. It recommends that the consultative mechanism for smooth transition should be established by the graduating country, in cooperation with its bilateral and multilateral development and trading partners with support from the UN system. The resolution also invites the development partners to consider LDC indicators such as the GNI per capita, the human assets index and the economic vulnerability index, as part of their criteria for allocating official development assistance.

2012 witnessed considerable momentum behind the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA), which was adopted in Istanbul in May 2011. The continued support from the development partners and the progress made by the LDCs themselves was confirmed in the various LDC-related United Nations General Assembly meetings and events.
BEST PRACTICES
of how diaspora knowledge, skills and resources can be successfully harnessed and transferred to LDCs

Afghan diaspora encouraged to return.
As part of reconstruction efforts of the 2000s, international organizations mobilized high skilled diaspora members to contribute through transfer of skill and knowledge, and local capacity-building. From 2002 until 2006, 38 volunteers provided assistance to the national capacity-building efforts of the Afghan Interim Administration and the successor government. They were mobilized through the TOKTEN programme of the UNDP. IOM launched a Temporary Return of Qualified Nationals (TRQN) programme together with the Netherlands. It mobilized and financed the temporary return (for three or six months) of members of the Afghan diaspora in the Netherlands in the fields of education, health, engineering, infrastructure and information technology. These innovations had been learned and/or practised by diaspora members in the host country. Participants mentioned as their motivation identification with the home country and their desire to participate in its rebuilding.

Medical diaspora network for Bangladesh.
Bangladeshi physicians in North America established the Bangladesh Medical Association of North America (BMANA) in 1980. It supports the home country by organizing visits of medical teams to provide training and technology transfer, provision of subsidized/pro bono specialized clinical services, and donation of books, computers and journals to medical colleges and universities in Bangladesh. Its members have been participating in activities of knowledge transfer and training in terms of cutting-edge advances in medical specialities, such as neurology, surgery and infection control.

Mobilizing resources and knowledge transfer to Haiti.
In Canada, the Regroupement des organismes canado-haitiens pour le développement (ROCADH) is an effort to coalesce many philanthropic organizations working for the advancement of Haitian communities back home. ROCADH brings together some 47 home town associations. It has been active in the fields of education and capacity-building (including in agricultural, animal breeding techniques, commodity processing, medical and tourism service skills). ROCADH has been able to channel substantial funding through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). To be eligible for CIDA funds, ROCADH has to contribute one-third of the value of the project.

Strengthening PhD education at the University of Addis Ababa.
Given the obvious need for more and better training at the doctorate level in Ethiopia, the country’s largest university established several PhD programmes. It realized, however, that in order to reach its objectives it could not rely uniquely on its own resources. Accordingly, it decided to mobilize the knowledge of the national diaspora working in foreign academic institutions. To this end, in 2008 it launched a large-scale programme financed by the Ethiopian Government and the Swedish and French official development aid agencies. The main participants abroad have been Ethiopians active in US and European universities, who in several cases convinced their non-Ethiopian colleagues to take part in the project. Their collaboration with the home country has taken the form of participation in research seminars, book donations, links between laboratories in the universities of Addis Ababa and laboratories abroad, and thesis direction by diaspora members. The programme has had a considerable impact on several departments.