Post-2015 Development Agenda and the world’s most vulnerable countries
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Special feature
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MEDIAGLOBAL NEWS is an independent international media organization, based in the United Nations, creating awareness in the global media on social justice and development issues in the world’s least developed countries. MediaGlobal News is headquartered in New York with offices in the United Nations Secretariat. With a strong focus on the global South, MediaGlobal News disseminates news stories globally on economic development, global health, food security and the impact of climate change on developing countries.

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As we try to shape the contours of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, we have to take cognizance of the special needs and unique challenges of the world’s most vulnerable countries. They are the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states.

It is particularly in these countries that we face the acute challenges of eradicating poverty, promoting rapid and inclusive economic growth and building resilience, given their immense capacity constraints. It is therefore obvious that by providing due priority to these countries, there is a great opportunity to get rid of extreme poverty from the face of the Earth. We have the means and tools to do so. We should summon the necessary political will, devise the right strategies and employ sufficient resources to make this happen.

There is certainly reason to applaud the substantial gains that these vulnerable countries have made in achieving some of the targets set out in the Millennium Development Goals. Even in these countries, the level of poverty has decreased. Child and maternal mortality rates have come down. Gender empowerment is progressing and the spread of deadly diseases has plateaued. Encouragingly, access to education and public services has improved.

However, we cannot continue to be oblivious of the stark reality that the progress has been uneven and insufficient. Given their low initial conditions, there is a long way to go to attain these global goals in general, and in an equitable manner in these countries.

With less than 800 days before the MDG deadline in 2015, every effort ought to be made to accelerate its implementation. Concomitantly, it is incumbent on the global community to ask itself what more should be done to ensure that the needs and concerns of the poorest will be better met and the goal of poverty eradication achieved.

It is important to recognize that even today after so much effort, 47 percent of the nearly 850 million inhabitants of the least developed countries live on less than $1.25 per day. And hunger and malnutrition are a constant challenge for about a third of the population there. What should we do differently?

Now that we face newer and complex challenges of recurrent volatility, the impact of climate change and the depletion of natural capital as well, we should take endemic poverty and inequality, the protection of environment and natural capital, and economic transformation and employment-intensive growth in a more holistic and integrated manner than before.

Therefore, the MDG focus on human and social development and the Rio+20 focus on poverty alleviation in the context of sustainable development have to be complemented by a rapid, inclusive, sustainable and job-rich economic growth.

The Fourth Conference of the LDCs in Istanbul in 2011 was very clear in its enhanced focus on growth and structural transformation of their economies. As such, it has laid a strong emphasis on productive capacity building through rapid development of infrastructure, access to sustainable energy and development of agriculture which would contribute to the creation of employment and decent jobs.

This type of structural change in the economy will also help boost the domestic resource base in the medium term. Therefore, structural transformation of these economies based on improved productive capacity building should find a strong resonance and prominence in the post-2015 development agenda. Our narrative has to focus on long-term structural transformation of their economies. This is also what we have found in a recent study done by my office.

Enhanced human and social development, rapid and inclusive economic transformation and environmental sustainability reinforce each other in these countries. They are various facets of the same reality. As a large majority of the people — about two-thirds of them — still live in rural areas in these countries, it is only natural that they consider protecting the natural capital and building resilience as part of the inherent strategy of economic growth and prosperity for them. Green growth is what they are looking for.
Post-2015 Development Agenda

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We have seen that strong national ownership and leadership, the right strategy and policies, capable and strong institutions, availability of resources and robust international solidarity and support measures are crucial to make progress in all of these areas. This is as much an issue of global solidarity and support as national responsibility and efforts of these countries.

We must therefore make sure that the post-2015 development agenda comes out strongly on resource mobilization and support mechanisms to help those which are least capable and who bear the burden of a high proportion of the poor in relation to their total population. They deserve due priority for international support.

For the 31 nations classified by the United Nations as landlocked developing countries, the main challenge is geography and its attendant drawbacks, including remoteness from major international markets, inadequate infrastructure and high transport and transaction costs. As a consequence, many LLDCs find themselves marginalized from the world economy, cut off from the global flows of knowledge, technology, capital and innovations, and unable to benefit substantially from external trade. This has affected their development prospects, including sustained economic growth, poverty reduction and environmental sustainability.

Today, half of the LLDCs are also least developed and their income status and social and human development level — barring a few of them — are almost at the bottom of the development pyramid.

The most recent progress report shows that the LLDCs have made some progress in meeting the targets of the MDGs. However, of increasing concern has been the slow progress made toward poverty reduction, food security, improved sanitation and the reduction of maternal mortality. It is clear that much remains to be done in LLDCs as well.

There is a need for an enhanced level of global support to address the serious gaps in transit policies and infrastructure, transport development, trade facilitation and regional cooperation. For example, export-import costs for LLDCs in 2013 were 2.5 times more than those of the coastal countries. They are accompanied by cumbersome and inefficient transit procedures and lack of basic infrastructure which pose the greatest impediment to LLDCs’ trade competitiveness, equitable access to global markets, and overall welfare of the people.

The upcoming conference on the landlocked developing countries slated for 2014 is an ideal opportunity for the international community to collectively support these countries as they endeavor to improve their transport, transit, trade and development prospects. The outcome of this conference should find strong reflection in the post-2015 development agenda to make sure that these issues are taken on board by the international community in an integrated manner.

As the world contemplates a post-MDG vision, small island developing states are committed to ensuring the eventual framework recognizes that these countries confront a higher degree of vulnerability. As a result, greater attention should be given to their specific challenges.

It is now well established that one of the primary challenges of small islands is the disproportionate and serious impacts of climate change on their livelihoods, including threat to their very survival in some cases. While SIDS’ contribution is negligible, they bear the greatest burden of climate change. Sea-level rise, ocean acidification and salinization of aquifers, depleting marine resources and infrastructure constraints are real and present dangers with long-term consequences.

Similarly, remoteness from the global markets, high energy costs, the volatility of tourism and frequency of natural disasters combined with low-level of human development and capacity constraints make sustainable development extremely challenging for these countries. Financing constraints have also hugely affected their capacity to build a resilient society and economy.

Ambitious and legally binding mitigation measures, strong financing mechanisms and delivery on adaptation and robust, comprehensive and multi-stakeholder partnerships and global solidarity for building resilience are critical for these countries to ensure sustainable development and progress.

The small island developing states have a fortuitous opportunity to not only influence but drive the post-2015 development agenda, given the timing of the Third International Conference on SIDS, which is to be held in September 2014 in Apia, Samoa.

Finally, the post-2015 development agenda will have to be holistic, inclusive and universal. However, it has to take into account the particular challenges of the countries in special situations. The least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states have the most at stake as the world builds a post-2015 framework for international development cooperation.

Overseas development assistance commitment should be fulfilled as these countries are heavily dependent upon it for development. And as we look toward expanded objectives, the ODA-PLUS agenda will be crucial for these countries. Their demands are growing and the development landscape is also changing. They are looking for strong commitment, support, and coherence in trade, investment, technology and South-South cooperation.

The people in these groups of countries suffer from unacceptable deprivation and extreme vulnerabilities. It is important that we all listen to the voices of the people in these countries, respond to their aspirations to get out of poverty, ensure the protection of the natural capital on which these people are directly dependent and make globalization and global solidarity work for them in an inclusive manner.

There is a golden opportunity to fulfill all these objectives with prescient, targeted and coherent global goals. And now is the time to rise to the occasion.
High Level Event on LDCs and Energy for All
Least Developed Countries call for global goal on sustainable energy

High-Level government representatives, United Nations officials and private sector leaders called on the international community in October to ensure that the sustainable energy needs of the world’s Least Developed Countries (LDCs) are placed at the forefront of the international agenda. The call is for a global goal on sustainable energy for all to be included in the post-2015 development agenda — the new development framework to follow the expiration of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015.

The 49 LDCs represent the poorest and most vulnerable group of the developing world. Of the 1.3 billion people who do not have access to electricity, more than half live in the LDCs.

The call was expressed in a communiqué released following a High-Level meeting initiated by Benin as the current Chair of the 49 LDCs, and supported by the UN Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS). The meeting was co-chaired by Prime Minister Hailaemariam Desalegn of Ethiopia, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia and former Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg of Norway.

“Now that we have embarked on the task of formulating the post-2015 Development Agenda, we must make sure that energy remains at the core of the new global development framework,” Prime Minister Desalegn told participants.

President Sirleaf echoed this call, lauded the UN Secretary-General’s Sustainable Energy for All initiative (SE4All), and expressed that it was particularly important for “those of us from Africa, where this need is the greatest, where this represents the most serious constraint on our ability to achieve our development agenda, that we must all now concentrate on that and invite our partners to work with us on this problem.”

The meeting stressed that in the setting up of targets and indicators supporting the sustainable energy goal on the post-2015 agenda, the special needs of the LDCs should be specifically prioritized. They should also encompass all three dimensions of sustainable development (economy, social issues, and the environment), to help demonstrate the concept of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), she added.

“The world needs energy. At the same time, we need to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. There is no conflict between access to modern energy and development with low emissions,” said former Prime Minister Stoltenberg, adding his thanks to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his SE4All initiative.

The three objectives of the initiative (universal energy access, increased efficiency and renewable energy, including its Global Tracking Framework) can provide a solid framework to build on further, while keeping them fully adaptable to different circumstances and priorities at regional, national and local levels.

President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia lauded the UN Secretary-General’s Sustainable Energy for All initiative and said that it was particularly important for “those of us from Africa, where this need is the greatest.”

Solar voltaic panels in Thies, Senegal.
INTERVIEW

Sustainable Energy in the Post-2015 Development Agenda

MediaGlobal Bureau Chief Nosh Nalavala interviews the Ambassador of Norway, Geir Pedersen.

Nosh Nalavala  Ambassador Geir Pedersen, at the conclusion of the High-Level meeting of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) last month, Prime Minister Desalegn of Ethiopia said that energy must remain at the core of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. With 1.3 billion people without access to electricity, energy issues have always been the central theme. Why is there a call now for additional efforts towards the 2015 agenda?

Ambassador Geir Pedersen  Energy is so important because it is perhaps the key if you want to solve the two really big global challenges, that is poverty and climate change. If we do energy right, we can solve both issues. If we do it wrong, we would complicate both issues. As you rightly alluded to, there are now 1.3 billion people without access to energy, so if we want to lift the poorest people out of poverty we need to address energy. We know we can do it successfully. A hundred years ago, Norway was one of the poorest countries in Europe. We enabled our journey from poverty to prosperity through energy. We did it through renewable energy and hydropower.

NN  What should the LDCs do to bridge this tremendous ‘energy gap’? Is there a tangible plan to at least narrow the gap and do you think that Norway’s example can be supplanted to the LDCs?

GP  Yes, there are many ways you can learn from each other. I am sure that countries can learn from the Norwegian experience, but perhaps even more important is to have an exchange of experiences from countries in the South, that you can learn from each other. What we learned are a couple of things: the important thing was to have a regulatory system that was good, that you have a transparent political system, and that you were able to take in foreign knowledge and foreign capital. We needed foreign experts, but we made sure that we learned how to do it ourselves so that we could take over and be in control of the expertise, the knowledge, the capital, and then also the development of hydropower that was such a huge success for us.

NN  For achieving the goal of providing sustainable energy for all, energy must be fully integrated into the Post-2015 Development Agenda. How will the developed countries assist in rooting it in the Agenda? Has Norway fielded any tangible initiatives?

GP  First of all we are one of the strongest supporters of the Secretary-General’s (SG) initiative “Sustainable Energy for All” and then we have also launched a few others, particularly initiatives like “Energy Plus”, which is a partnership between donors and LDCs where we try to make sure there is sufficient funding based on delivering the results. Both the Sustainable Energy initiative by the SG and the Energy Plus initiative indicate two important things. We need advocacy and we need someone to take the lead to put this in the agenda, and I think we have succeeded in doing that. And then of course is the question of policy, to get the framework right, and thirdly is the question of funding. We are contributing on all of these issues.

NN  Efforts are now being made to develop and establish a common global goal on energy as part of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Could you please explain what this common goal is and how it would be implemented?

GP  This is a very good question. It is still in the early stages, but I think what we have seen now is that there is an agreement by many key actors that energy was the missing MDG and we can’t let that happen in the SDGs. I think there is more and more agreement on that. We know what the overall goal can be, but what we also need is to make sure this is a cross cutting target, that it actually goes into the health sector, which we believe is also crucial, and maybe also other areas where it can be an important factor in having success in fighting poverty and climate change.

NN  The three objectives of the Sustainable Energy for All initiative includes universal energy access, increased efficiency, and renewable energy. A fourth Global Tracking Framework has been suggested. Could you please explain what that means and how it will impact at regional, national, and local levels?

GP  I think we still keep the three core elements; access, renewable energy, and more efficient use of energy. That is the key of the initiative, but then we need to see that things are being implemented, and this is the monitoring mechanism that will enable us to follow up.

NN  And who will monitor it?

GP  This is an initiative through the World Bank, so that would have to be further developed.

NN  Ambassador, do you foresee in the Post-2015 Development agenda, the MDGs being replaced by the SDGs?

GP  I think the MDGs have been a huge success because we have already achieved the reduction of poverty, but then there are all the areas where we have not been successful.

NN  In Sub-Saharan Africa and Sahel region . . .

GP  Exactly, so there is still a lot that needs to be done. We have to make sure that we accelerate the efforts onto 2015, with the MDGs and not lose the focus on what we need to do, and while we are doing that we should plan for a good transition. We take care of the MDGs, so that they are continued in the SDGs, but the important thing with the SDGs is that they are global.
commitment both at the Brussels Program of Action and the Istanbul Program of Action, the Scandinavian countries came through in flying colors. A lot of other countries did not. How do you see this happening?

GP I repeat the message that we have been giving all along, that we the donor community, should stand by its promises of 0.7 percent. In Norway we have reached 1 percent. We do believe 0.7 should be the minimum that all should adhere to. That is significant and important and others should follow the lead of the Nordic countries and Great Britain in this. At the same time we need to make sure that we move away not only from the focus on ODA. ODA is important, but its annual prospect is $130 billion. We need that to fight climate change, we need climate finance and we have already agreed to a hundred billion annually, and that process has just started.

NN Towards . . .?

GP Towards 2020 we should be able to do that towards climate finance. We also need a private-public partnership. We need private financing, we need public, and that goes also for sustainable energy for all. We need to make sure that this is key if we are to be successful.

NN So when we talk about SDGs it sounds very much that the focus is on energy, environment, and climate change. Do you agree with this?

GP What you mention is correct, but it is also economic development and social development. We need to make sure that it is all these three aspects together, because without these three aspects together we won’t be able to achieve what we want, both to fight poverty and achieve climate change.

NN There are a number of common challenges, such as increasing the share of renewable energy in the energy mix, improving efficiency and focusing on funding for energy that need to be addressed effectively. All these issues were discussed at the High-Level meeting last month. What was the outcome in terms of solutions?

GP The initiative was to make sure it is a success for the SDGs and also to be a support to the initiative of the Secretary-General for Sustainable energy for all. Here what we need is to work in the partner countries. There are 60 or 70 countries that are already lined up and working on this. We need to make sure that things are happening on the ground when it comes to policy framework, regulatory framework, and that we have the funding. The big challenge is twofold — we need public funding but we need also private funding.

NN And who is monitoring the fund?

GP This will have to be a joint effort and this is still in the early stages and what you also have to look at is what is happening in the climate discussions, in Warsaw, Peru, and then in Paris.

NN Is this fund different from the Climate Fund?

GP Yes, but what you need to do is mobilize business. There needs to be an interest from the business community. They have to see that this is of interest to them, like what happened in Norway more than one hundred years ago. Business came in and they understood they could make money. This served both the business community and the interest of the Norwegian people. It is this sort of synergy that we would like to see in the LDCs.

NN Public-private partnerships are an important way to overcome practical challenges and meet financing gaps, was a suggestion made by several participating members. Are the developed countries coming forward with these partnerships and how do you see climate finance managed towards the Post-2015 Agenda? As you very well know Norway was at the forefront of fulfilling the commitment both at the Brussels Program of Action and the Istanbul Program of Action, the Scandinavian countries came through in flying colors. A lot of other countries did not. How do you see this happening?

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Secretary of the High-Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, Mr. Homi Kharas.

Ambassador Zinsou noted that “The meeting should be seen as the starting point of a conversation that will materialize in a series of meetings in collaboration with the United Kingdom throughout the post-2015 process.” He thanked the United Kingdom government and Sir Lyall-Grant for their leadership. “These sort of joint initiatives should inspire other development partners to undertake similar action on major issues in the international agenda. This template of partnership-based approach will continue guiding the work of the LDC group”, he added.

Ambassador Zinsou recognized the contribution of the High-Level Panel for their report, particularly its call for eradicating poverty. Indeed, the international community should decisively shift from reducing to ending extreme poverty in all its forms after 2015. The fact that the proposed 12 goals reflect some of the key priority areas of LDCs as agreed upon in the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) was highlighted, though Mr. Zinsou said that not all the concerns of LDCs were present in the report of the High-Level Panel. To address some of these gaps, he pointed to some key priorities of the LDCs, in a letter addressed to the Secretary-General.

Sir Lyall-Grant highlighted the critical importance of the next two years in defining a development agenda beyond 2015. The myriad of processes that will lead to the formulation of this renewed development agenda must focus on the poorest and most vulnerable peoples and countries. The international community should prioritize efforts to ensure that no one is left behind. In this connection, the United Kingdom has made an effort to fulfill ODA commitments. Additionally, by participating in a range of initiatives aimed at supporting strong partnerships, including public-private partnerships, the United Kingdom has further supported LDCs.

On the High-Level panel report, Sir Lyall-Grant applauded the unprecedented consultative process, which included input from over 5,000 organizations and 250 members of the business community. He praised the report for providing a compelling articulation of the values contained in the Millennium Declaration. A new agenda will necessarily involve developed and developing countries. Everyone will contribute, with different levels of responsibilities and according to their capacity. Civil society, individuals, governments and the private sector must be engaged in a new global partnership.

Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson underscored that successful sustainable development strategies require robust partnerships and active participation. Despite the important role that MDG 8 has played in stimulating support for the international development agenda, a new global partnership should be broader in scope, more dynamic, flexible and innovative.

Future human and economic development must be environmentally sustainable, although LDCs, who will bear the most severe consequences of climate change, need to retain sufficient space for their structural transformation. Strong commitment and contributions from all partners will be decisive if we are to integrate in a systematic manner the three dimensions of sustainability.

Sustainable development financing, however, should address needs that go beyond climate change. Adaptation and the sustainable use of resources will have to be incorporated in a comprehensive financing strategy. For the LDCs, official development assistance (ODA) will remain important in this framework since it is still the largest financing source in their national budget. In this regard, the current decline of ODA must be reversed while at the same time other financing channels are further explored and utilized.

Low human and economic development and high vulnerability exacerbate the challenges faced by the LDCs, said High Representative Acharya. Despite substantial progress in some areas such as maternal mortality and gender equality, a disaggregated analysis presents a highly complex picture. In fact, it is likely that only a few LDCs will meet all MDG goals. We have to do better and faster to make progress in the LDCs. Hunger and malnutrition continue to be a serious challenge for this group of countries. Unemployment and underemployment remain pervasive in most of them. Additionally, these difficulties are exacerbated by an increasingly degraded environment.

In the process towards the formulation of a renewed development agenda beyond 2015, human and financial constraints, institutional issues, serious shortcomings in infrastructure and lack of adequate financing in LDCs should be addressed in a holistic manner. Despite impressive commitment and hard-won gains in many areas, the LDCs cannot move their development process by themselves. They will need the strong commitment and support of the international community.

Ms. Mohammed said that the meeting takes place at a critical moment in which important discussions leading towards a post-2015 UN Development Agenda are taking place, such as the President of the General Assembly’s Special Event towards achieving the MDGs. They did not allow sufficient space for an adequate reflection of the priorities of each country. In this regard, the extensive consultative processes around the Post-2015 Development Agenda stand in stark contrast as it has involved a broad range of stakeholders across the full spectrum of issues that will likely underpin the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

“The sort of joint initiatives should inspire other development partners to undertake similar action on major issues in the international agenda.”

- Jean-Francis R. Zinsou
Permanent Representative of Benin to the United Nations
The General Assembly, in its resolution 66/214, decided to hold a comprehensive 10-year review conference of the Almaty Programme of Action in 2014 to be preceded by regional and global as well as thematic preparations. It is in this context that the ITU and UN-OHRLLS organized a pre-conference event on ‘Enhancing ICT development and connectivity for the LLDCs’ as part of the 2013 Global South-South Development Expo to review major achievements in ICT development in LLDCs, showcase the best practices; discuss how partnerships in particular South-South and Triangular cooperation at regional and international levels can help enhance development of ICTs in LLDCs, and suggest concrete recommendations that can be included in the preparation of the outcome document of the 10-Year Review Conference.

The meeting brought together about 40 participants including senior officials from landlocked and transit developing countries, representatives of donor countries, regional development banks, UN system organizations, regional and sub-regional organizations, academia and civil society.

Opening remarks were delivered by Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative of the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, Dr. Hamadoun Touré, Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union (via video) and Ms. Sahle-Work Zewde, Director-General of United Nations Organization Nairobi. The opening session was followed by two panel discussions on key issues on ICTs and Broadband, LLDCs challenges, best practices, country experiences and solutions, and also on initiatives partnerships and solutions that can work to improve ICTs development for LLDCs.

The meeting noted that the LLDCs had special needs for ICT development as noted in the resolution on “special measures for landlocked developing countries and small island developing states for access to international fibre optic network” unanimously passed by the ITU World Conference on International Telecommunications (WCIT-12) held in Dubai in 2012.

Significant progress has been made in the last decade in the development of the ICT sector in LLDCs; however, a digital divide still exists between the LLDCs and the other groups of countries. Some LLDCs have introduced liberalization in the ICT and telecommunication sector that has boosted the role of the private sector particularly in providing mobile telephone services. But the meeting also stressed that government still has a major role to play in areas where the private sector has not been addressed – such as development of the broadband infrastructure network.

Mr. Kharas emphasized the strong focus on the eradication of poverty by 2030 in the High-Level panel’s report. Some of the most challenging issues on eradicating poverty are in LDCs. The High-Level panel’s report pays much more attention to countries initial conditions.

Representatives from LDCs raised the importance of the LDC category during the interactive part of the discussion. It was recognized that the Secretary-General’s Report provided an integrated and balanced perspective of some of the main concerns of the LDCs.

Other issues that were highlighted were the need to better integrate conflict and post-conflict situations into the new framework, the role of South-South, triangular and regional cooperation, the need for a stronger focus on resilience and the importance of partnerships, including public-private partnerships.

Website portals that can provide information on distance education, telemedicine, e-commerce, and social networking are still needed, though there has been remarkable increase in ICT penetration especially of mobile telephony and Internet use.

Another hindrance is a lack of expertise or consistency when formulating the custom designed policy, legal and regulatory framework suitable for the specific needs of a country, as well as the high cost of connectivity to the international broadband infrastructure and the resulting higher costs of ICT and broadband services in LLDCs.

For example: A study carried out in ECOWAS region on access to submarine cables by the LLDCs in 2011 revealed that the wholesale price of international fibre connectivity for a purchasing level of capacity on E1 (2MB) in Niger is about $900 per MB per month whereas in a coastal country remain two to five times lower than the LLDCs. The higher price paid by landlocked countries for international connectivity is linked to the transit costs that they have to pay to coastal countries to route their traffic across the terrestrial network of the coastal country.

Many governments and regulators have not been able to adopt a unified licensing regime, nor have they

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addressed the policy, legal, regulatory and institutional arrangements to cater for convergence brought about by the development of devices, networks and technologies.

Several recommendations were made to support the LLDCs to fully harness ICT for their development, including the suggestion that LLDCs develop a national broadband policy and strategic plans ensuring allocation of adequate resources for its implementation. The policy and strategic plan should include how to develop a modern ICT infrastructure and Internet access that can provide universal access. Such a strategy should be anchored in strong regulatory frameworks and domestic ICT laws that conform to international standards, including the Global ICT policy. The national ICT plan should fully reflect the cross-cutting nature of ICTs and their pivotal role in national development. LLDCs should include in their national ICT plan a strategy of how ICT can be used to promote trade facilitation and address the major challenge of landlockedness.

Improving development and convergence of relevant policies and regulations in domains such as radio spectrum policy and management, cross-border radio frequency management, digital media/broadcasting policy and broadband policy are other ways of enhancing capacity.

LLDCs and transit countries should increase the utilization of ICT to simplify, facilitate trade and transport, in conjunction with harmonization of customs systems and documentation. ICT is especially effective in applying the concepts of pre-clearing goods before they actually arrive at a customs post, of pre-clearing vehicles and drivers and of risk management and selectivity processes.

Benefitting from ICTs requires substantial complementary investments in learning, and reorganization by all stakeholders. Increased capacity-building programmes to increase ICT literacy in LLDCs, including women, children, the elderly, as well as people with disabilities helps to create a workforce and manpower with high levels of ICT proficiency and expertise.

Expanding ICT infrastructure to improve the access of LLDCs to international high-capacity submarine fibre-optic cables, low-price international voice services, high-speed Internet access, and high-bandwidth backbone networks is key to connecting towns and cities within countries, across borders. Governments should play a major role to ensure the development of the fibre backbone infrastructure for broadband required for increased utilization of ICT.

The United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) and United Nations Office for South-South cooperation (UNOSSC) launched a joint South-South Technology Transfer Facility for Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) during the fourth day of the Global South-South Development Expo in Nairobi, Kenya.

The Facility is designed to facilitate South-South transfer of viable, sector-specific technologies aimed at developing and strengthening capacities and production in LLDCs, in areas such as sustainable agriculture, dairy and agro-food processing, water management, global health, climate change adaptation and renewable energy.

Six landlocked developing countries have been selected to pilot the initiative by initially establishing or strengthening national centres that will identify technology local needs, source viable projects and facilitate the negotiations of the technology transfers. The actual technology transfer and matching of potential technology providers with the demand in LLDCs will be executed through the South-South Global Assets Technology Exchange (SS-Gate), a global transactions and services platform established by the UNOSSC, that facilitates end-to-end market-driven exchanges of technology, assets, services and financing among public/private sectors and civil society.

The Facility is being developed as a concrete deliverable to the Second UN Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries that will be held next year.
“Carbon Bubble” Threatens to be Destructive to the Planet

INTERVIEW

“Carbon Bubble” Threatens to be Destructive to the Planet

MediaGlobal News Bureau

Chief Nosh Nalavala interviews Ambassador Marlene Moses, Permanent Representative of Nauru to the United Nations on the impact of climate change on small islands

Nosh Nalavala  Last month at the General Debate in the UN General Assembly you spoke of the small Island Developing Countries (SIDS) being battered on all sides. Can you elaborate?

Ambassador Marlene Moses  Small Islands Developing States are on the frontline of climate change, which means droughts, extreme storms, and increasing sea-level rise are causing life altering changes. At the same time, because of our unique vulnerabilities – isolation, high dependence on natural resources and imports – even small fluctuations in energy and food prices hit us particularly hard.

NN  Do you attribute the constraints to the intermittent flow of Official Development Assistance (ODA) and a stagnation of climate finance?

MM  Yes, a lack of predictability in ODA has made it difficult for developing countries (SIDS in particular) to establish long-term plans that help us transition to a sustainable future.

NN  What were your expectations from the Post-2015 Development Agenda process, particularly in the area of adaptation for SIDS and the Climate Agenda?

MM  The post-2015 process, especially in light of other opportunities for SIDS to make progress on some of our key issues in the next few years, is crucially important if SIDS are able to adequately adapt to the worsening impacts of climate change. In fact, the impacts are so ubiquitous now that it is no exaggeration to say that development and adaption are inextricably linked.

NN  The Third Conference on the Sustainable Development of SIDS and a new climate change agreement in 2015 will have enormous implications for the sustainable development prospects of small islands. How do you see it impacting Nauru and the islands in the Pacific?

MM  What we are ultimately hoping for is to initiate a transformational change in how we approach sustainable development as an international community. This would mean shifting from a system of piecemeal one-off workshops and short-term projects to real institution building that invests in our people and governance structures over the long term. That would prove to be a lasting positive change for Nauru and our region.

NN  You have referred to the “Carbon Bubble”. Could you please explain this concept in relation to carbon emissions?

MM  Just as we saw a gross misallocation of resources fueled by rampant speculation, poor risk management, and most importantly, a deficient regulatory system in the lead up to the recent global financial crisis, we are witnessing a similar man-made disaster at work with the world’s over-reliance on fossil fuels. This “carbon bubble” threatens to be even more destructive to the planet, especially the communities that have contributed least to inflating it.

NN  Ambassador, you are the Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). The Conference of Parties in Warsaw will be important to laying the foundation for an ambitious agreement in 2015. What are the priorities for AOSIS at the climate change conference in Warsaw?

MM  Our priorities are set by what has to happen to keep emissions in line with scientific recommendations, beginning with increased short-term mitigation ambitions. Our Workstream 2 proposal provides a common-sense practical plan that will give countries the confidence that they can in fact do what is necessary in a variety of areas, from sustainable development practices and policies to finance and other key priorities and economic inclusion.

NN  Would you say these priorities have changed from what they were at the last COP conference or have they remained the same?

MM  Just as last year and the year before and the year before, the world needs to take action to reduce emissions and provide the resources necessary so developing countries can build sustainable futures. That is still true, and we know that the longer we wait the deeper the cuts will have to be and the more costly the crisis will become.

NN  What tangible outcomes, if any, does AOSIS expect from the Conference?

MM  We will be pushing especially hard for real commitments on loss and damage and resources for the Green Climate Fund. We think that is achievable, and it is certainly what is needed.

NN  AOSIS has proposed a collaborative approach to rapidly scale up the implementation of policies and deployment of technologies that not only reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but also advance domestic sustainable development priorities. Could you elaborate on it?

MM  The AOSIS plan is to complement the climate talks with a line of technical discussions focused squarely on achieving emissions reductions as soon as possible. The idea is to engage the best and brightest minds working on climate and energy issues – officials from relevant ministries, leading scientists, engineers, policy analysts, and representatives from civil society, community organizations and the private sector – in a collaborative process capable of delivering results in the time frame required.

We will be pushing especially hard for real commitments on loss and damage and resources for the Green Climate Fund. We think that is achievable, and it is certainly what is needed: Ambassador Marlene Moses.
LDC Graduation: Towards MDG Acceleration, Sustainable Development and Structural Transformation

In order to realize the overarching goal of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) to ensure that at least half of the countries in the category meet the criteria for graduation by 2020, the Governments of Turkey and Belgium, in collaboration with UN-OHRLLS, organized a ministerial breakfast meeting to provide an opportunity for the Ministers from development partners and the LDCs to engage in an interactive discussion highlighting the LDCs’ graduating strategies. The meeting aimed at garnering wide ranging support from the development partners with a view to sustain the LDCs’ efforts towards the full and timely implementation of the IPoA by 2020.

Mr. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey opened the meeting reconfirming Turkey’s strong commitment to LDCs’ development and graduation. He stressed that it was critical for the international community to give due attention to the challenges of these vulnerable countries. He informed the meeting that his government intended to host the G20 Summit in 2015 as well as the mid-term review of the IPoA of the LDCs.

Underscoring the importance of the efforts towards reducing inequality, which had become a priority for Belgium in the context of its development cooperation programmes, Mr. Jean-Pascal Labille, Minister for Development Cooperation of Belgium noted that more than half of Belgium’s development assistance was channeled to LDCs. He stressed the importance of eliminating corruption and improving governance. Moreover, social protection and health care would be critical to ensure a successful path towards graduation. In concluding, he recognized the need for the international community to work together to ensure a smooth transition from the LDC category for graduating countries.

MDG acceleration efforts were strongly linked to LDCs’ performance, Ms. Helen Clark, UNDP Administrator, stated. However, she noted that despite many successes, these countries remained highly vulnerable to external shocks. She emphasized the need to address the concerns of graduating countries, particularly with regard to the loss of support measures inherent to the LDC category. Thus, she deemed it necessary to provide an adequate period of continued, additional international support to a smooth transition out of the LDC category. She added that the UNDP new strategic plan had prioritized LDCs and was strongly committed to the implementation of the IPoA. She confirmed that half of UNDP resources went to LDCs.

Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya, High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, stressed that important questions remained on how best the international community could support graduating LDCs. He noted that only three LDCs had graduated in the history of the category until 2013, which clearly signaled the need to put in place adequate measures to ensure that the IPoA goal of graduation could be achieved. He underscored the ambitious character of the IPoA priority actions, which required strong support of the international community to the LDCs in a more coherent, systemic manner, including through a critical areas of trade, investments and domestic resource mobilization.

Mr. Nassirou Bako Arifari, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Benin, as chair of the LDC group, stressed that his country, like many other LDCs, had been facing the consequences of climate change. He emphasized that there were few sustainable resources available and that many LDCs based their economic development on one single resource e.g. oil. He called on donor countries to have a holistic understanding of the situation of LDCs aspiring to graduate and provide maximum support in that complex transition period. He informed the meeting that Benin would be hosting a ministerial conference in the first quarter of 2014 to focus on the issue of productive capacity development in LDCs, looking in particular at fostering partnerships for LDCs.

Mr. Paul Gulleik Larsen, Senior Adviser in the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stated that ODA would remain important in the future, but investment complemented by concrete commitments from all LDCs would play an increasingly critical role. He added that commitments should be based on four main pillars: provide basic services, such as health care, education, food and energy to the most vulnerable; promote gender equality; grow economic potential and rely on a sustainable development framework.

Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya concluded the meeting by underscoring the need for a smooth transition strategy after graduation and emphasized that this process required investments in infrastructure and capacity building, as well as efforts on energy and climate change. He noted that UN-OHRLLS would further extend its support for graduating LDCs by analyzing graduation drivers that identified successful practices as well as challenges ahead and would continue working towards bringing together development partners and LDCs.
Fostering Private Sector Partnerships in Small Island Developing States

The United Nation Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS), in collaboration with the Government of Barbados and the Caribbean Development Bank and key private sector stakeholders, convened a private sector focussed side-event at the SIDS inter-regional preparatory in Barbados on 27 August 2013.

High Representative, Gyan Chandra Acharya, chaired the side-event which saw the participation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade for Barbados, Maxine McClean, Minister of Finance for Samoa, Faumuina Tiatia Faalatane Liuga), Mr. Hedrick Pickering, Deputy Premier of the British Virgin Islands, and USG Wu Hongbo, the Secretary-General of the Third International SIDS Conference. Other presenters were Ms. Indera Sagewan-Alli of the Caribbean Center for Competitiveness, Elizabeth of International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), Ms. Cherry of Women in Business of St. Lucia, and Ms. Fekita Utoikamanu of Secretariat of the Pacific Commission (SOPAC).

The High Representative stated that the importance of private sector engagement in efforts to support the implementation of SIDS sustainable development aspirations is not a new phenomenon in the global SIDS discourse. He recalled that due to the inherent vulnerabilities of SIDS stemming from their small size that prevents economies of scale in SIDS, their isolation and remoteness from markets, the cost of doing business in many SIDS can be prohibitively high.

The side-event heard expressions from participants that such challenges called for innovative solutions, including taking full advantage of appropriate Information Communication Technology (ICT) to help close the distances noting that physical distances are non-existent online. Participants also raised the important role of regional integration and cooperation on issues such as transportation can also play a role in alleviating costs associated with national approaches that could otherwise have been economically unfeasible. The fact that the oceans and marine resources remain among one – and for many SIDS – the only asset through which foreign income can be generated was also highlighted.

Highlighting inclusive growth, participants recognized the role and opportunities for women and youth in business that should continue to be encouraged and strengthened in SIDS. A number of participants highlighted that in many SIDS, the informal sector, including those in arts and handicraft, are spearheaded by women and underlined that being small also has certain benefits. The small size of SIDS can mean that comparatively small expenditures create significant impact and so the right investment — however small has the potential to make meaningful impacts on the livelihood of many islanders.

Participants underscored that it was crucial that the international community supported SIDS in facilitating private sector partnerships and to invite private sectors from both SIDS and development partners to unite in fostering the necessary environments for building genuine and durable partnerships — no matter how large or small — which would see the 2014 Conference being the launch-pad for concrete partnerships between and with SIDS.

The value of financial and tourism services was discussed and promoted as potential avenues that SIDS could pursue. It was recognized that some SIDS had excelled in pursuing these services more than others. The importance of a dialogue with financiers and banks was also highlighted as key in moving forward discussions on enhancing the private sector in SIDS. The example of the Caribbean Challenge Initiative was highlighted as a positive example of a platform that brought together political and business leaders to tackle an issue such as the protection and conservation of vast tracts of ocean spaces that are important for their intrinsic as well as commercial value.

The role of indigenous and local knowledge in the context of the private sector in SIDS was acknowledged and it was agreed that sustainability needs collaboration and the impact that funds and incentives can play in supporting growth can be massive if the issue of sustainability if these incentives can be properly addressed. The impact that incentives made in contributing to promoting the conversion to renewable energy was discussed as a concrete example of the use of incentives to support sustainable development. The need to also focus on social partnership was also expressed during the side-event. Such partnerships play a role in contributing to providing for the social needs for citizens, including in issues related to disaster preparedness.

On moving forward towards Samoa 2014 and the envisaged Private Sector Forum, the meeting acknowledged the need for the private sector as well as the banks to be involved. In closing the High Representative thanked all participants for their rich contribution to the discussions and assured the participants of OHRLLS’ support for the process going forward that was launched by convening the event.
Towards the 2014 Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States

One of the tangible outcomes of Rio+20 was the decision by the international community to convene the Third International Conference on the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to be hosted by Samoa in 2014. In this regard General Assembly resolution 67/207 welcomed Samoa’s offer to host the Conference with the dates for the conference scheduled for 1-4 September, 2014.

As momentum builds towards the Conference, the Government of Samoa, UN-OHRLLS and UN-DESA saw an opportunity during the High Level week of the 68th Session of the General Assembly as an occasion to raise the visibility of the Conference and to highlight important concerns pertinent to SIDS in their path towards achieving sustainable development.

The high level breakfast was convened on 25 September and allowed for SIDS leaders to share with the international community the priorities and emerging issues that they have identified through the SIDS-owned preparatory process towards the Conference as well as to start focusing on how all Member States and UN system entities as relevant stakeholders can collectively strengthen the shared responsibilities towards ensuring a successful forward looking and pragmatic outcome to the Conference. Furthermore, the event provided an opportunity to draw upon the perspectives of highest level political leaders to strengthen commitment towards SIDS priorities and to emphasise the theme of the Conference; Genuine and Durable Partnerships for the sustainable development of SIDS.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon provided the event’s opening address to 120 participants, while the keynote address was delivered by Tuilaepa Lopesolai Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister of the Independent State of Samoa. Interventions were also made by Mr. Wu Hongbo; Under-Secretary-General and Secretary-General of the 2014 SIDS Conference, Mr. John Ashe; President of the General Assembly, the Honourable Baron Divavesi Waqa M.P., President of the Republic of Nauru and Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States, Mr. Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma; President of the Republic of South Africa, Mr. José Manuel Barroso; President of the European Commission and Rt. Hon. John Key; Prime Minister of New Zealand. High Representative Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya moderated the event and made closing remarks.

In his opening remarks, the Secretary-General pledged his “full commitment to making the 2014 Conference a great success” and that he himself was intending to participate. He encouraged the use of social networks to raise the Conferences’ profile and to draw attention on issues facing SIDS.
He emphasised that much has changed since the first SIDS conference in Barbados given that climate change is now a "household term," and indeed the "communications revolution" has provided many tools for raising awareness. He stressed that in 2014, "every participant can use social media to tell the story of SIDS and the Conference."

The Prime Minister of Samoa emphasised the importance of partnerships for SIDS and stated, "Samoa wants to use the Conference to strengthen existing partnerships and to launch specific concrete ones amongst SIDS and with the wider international community." The Prime Minister explained that Samoa offered to host for reasons considered pertinent to the effectiveness and relevance of the Conference outcome and emphasised that Samoa wants "the UN membership to see and experience our part of the vast Pacific Ocean to obtain a deeper understanding and appreciation of how our country and people as well as our brothers in all the Small Island Developing States of the Pacific region are addressing some of the vulnerabilities we contend with through working side by side with our partners."

The President of the General Assembly John Ashe emphasised the importance of partnerships in playing a key role for addressing issues of importance to SIDS including climate change, energy, oceans and seas, waste management, sustainable tourism, environmental audits and indicator systems, as well as stakeholder engagement. President Ashe said he will give "considerable time and personal commitment to the success of the SIDS 2014 Conference, in particular to facilitate the identification of practical, strategic and concrete partnerships."

President Waqa of the Republic of Nauru stated that "If islands are coordinated and vocal, then we can seize this unprecedented opportunity of the 2014 Conference to raise the visibility of SIDS priorities on the international agenda."

President Zuma of South Africa spoke of the vulnerabilities faced by SIDS and that "while natural disasters affect most developing countries, SIDS are most affected given their unique geographic circumstances." He maintained "that the ongoing debate on the post-2015 development agenda should take into account these vulnerabilities that threaten the realization of development aspirations of people living in SIDS." President Zuma expressed his country’s full support in efforts to organise the international conference in Samoa and he hoped "that Africa and SIDS can deepen their cooperation in the post-2015 development agenda."

President Barosso stressed the important collaboration between the European Union and SIDS in areas of mutual interest including climate change. He also emphasised that "the SIDS Conference next year should be a spring board for advancing the climate agenda and pushing for legally binding commitments for all emitters."

Prime Minister John Key expressed the special relationship New Zealand has with Samoa. He also emphasised the support his country is providing by stating that "we are currently working with the government of Samoa to provide targeted support in a range of areas including security, renewable energy . . . and in helping to support Samoa meet the additional needs of accommodation of cruise ships during the conference." The Prime Minister welcomed Samoa’s focus on genuine and durable partnerships as the theme for the Conference.

The High Representative Mr. Gyan Acharya made the closing remarks in which he emphasised that the high level breakfast has focussed attention on the success of the SIDS Conference and that success should not be measured by successfully hosting the Conference but also in terms of the action, outcome, strong genuine and durable partnerships. The High Representative stressed that “this is not a conference for SIDS only; this is a conference for the international community to talk about the issues, concerns, challenges and opportunities for SIDS.”

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The High Representative Mr. Gyan Acharya made the closing remarks in which he emphasised that the high level breakfast has focussed attention on the success of the SIDS Conference and that success should not be measured by successfully hosting the Conference but also in terms of the action, outcome, strong genuine and durable partnerships. The High Representative stressed that “this is not a conference for SIDS only; this is a conference for the international community to talk about the issues, concerns, challenges and opportunities for SIDS.”

President Zuma of South Africa spoke of the vulnerabilities faced by SIDS and that “while natural disasters affect most developing countries, SIDS are most affected given their unique geographic circumstances.” He maintained “that the ongoing debate on the post-2015 development agenda should take into account these vulnerabilities that threaten the realization of development aspirations of people living in SIDS.” President Zuma expressed his country’s full support in efforts to organise the international conference in Samoa and he hoped “that Africa and SIDS can deepen their cooperation in the post-2015 development agenda.”

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Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was represented by Under-Secretary-General Gyan Chandra Acharya, the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, at the 44th Leaders Meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum (44th PIF), convened in Majuro, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, from 3-5 September, 2013. The theme, chosen by the Marshall Islands, was ‘Marshalling the Pacific Response to the Climate Challenge.’

The USG delivered the Secretary-General’s message to the 44th PIF at the opening day of the meeting. The Secretary-General commended the Pacific Islands region as being among the first to raise the alarm on the implications of climate change not only for their own countries, but for the world.

The Secretary-General also said that in September 2014, he will convene a Climate Change Summit in New York. He stated that his aim in bringing leaders together in this way is to catalyze ambitious action to reduce emissions and enhance climate resilience while mobilizing political will for a universal and comprehensive agreement in 2015 and looked forward to PIF leader’s active participation at the Summit.

PIF 44th saw the leaders adopt a climate change leadership declaration. Further to the communiqué adopted by PIF leaders on 5 September, leaders also adopted the ‘Majuro Declaration for Climate Change Leadership,’ wherein they underlined the need for urgent action at all levels to reduce greenhouse gas emissions commensurate with the science and to respond urgently and sufficiently to the social, economic, environmental and security impacts of climate change to ensure the survival and viability of all Pacific SIDS, in particular low-lying atoll States, and other vulnerable countries and regions worldwide.

The Declaration also saw the leaders committing themselves to be ‘Climate Leaders’ and outlined a number of their countries’ own commitments to mitigate as well as adapt to climate change, while at the same time calling on their partners to enhance, accelerate and ensure the effective delivery of their support for the design and implementation of these commitments.

As a contribution to the Secretary-General’s efforts to catalyze ambitious climate action and mobilize political will for a universal, ambitious and legally-binding climate change agreement by 2015, PIF leaders had delegated President Look to present the Declaration to the Secretary-General during the 68th Session of GA.

The PIF Leaders also adopted a communiqué that covers a broad range of issues, covering peace and security, development, and human rights. Some salient points included, the opportunity for the Pacific to contribute, as well as to shape, the new the Post-2015 development agenda. Leaders called for specific focus on protection of oceans resources, promotion of responsible fishing, coastal erosion, livelihood issues, sustainable energy, food security, infrastructure building, youth employment, women empowerment, peace and security, education and health and poverty reduction and inclusive economic growth.

They also called for coherence of the parallel processes, while ensuring that the important priorities that are specific to the Pacific, such as disaster risk management, culture, and mental health, are fully included as goals and targets with indicators that are appropriate for the Pacific Island region.

PIF Leaders also noted the vital role of their regional intergovernmental organizations and agencies in supporting Pacific Island Countries (PICs) to prepare for Samoa next year, as well as the SIDS 2014 Conference, along with the need for PICs’ greater inclusion in the Conference and its preparatory processes.
UN-OHRLLS’ First Annual ‘State of the LDCs Report - 2013’
World’s least developed countries call for support to build productive capacity

Strengthening the ability of poor countries to produce more goods and services more efficiently will boost economic growth thereby accelerating sustainable development, according to a new United Nations report released in September in New York.

The study, ‘Productive Capacity Building in the Least Developed Countries and the post-2015 Development Agenda’ calls for strengthened cooperation between the world’s forty-nine least developed countries (LDCs) and their development partners.

The 115-page report, undertaken by the United Nations Office for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS), stresses that while national development rests with the LDCs themselves, support from the international community remains crucial if inroads are to be made in the fight against endemic poverty in these countries.

A number of innovative steps are to be taken at the national and global level to jumpstart these economies, the report says.

The study suggests that at the national level, macroeconomic policies should go beyond the pursuit of price stability and purposefully target economic growth, job creation, and sustainable development. It adds that sectoral and cross-sectoral policies need to be fully aligned to a development-supportive macroeconomic framework.

“Taken together this new policy approach should be viewed as the means to which living standards can be meaningfully and sustainably improved. It is expected that these policies should contribute to increasing the dynamism of the private sector so as to transform it into a true engine of sustainable growth and development,” Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, Gyan Chandra Acharya, said at the launch of the report.

Foreign Minister of Benin Nassirou Bako Arifari told journalists, “It is important to link this policy approach to the post-2015 process. We strongly believe that productive capacity building should be at the heart of the new generation development policy framework of the UN. From this standpoint, this report has served a very timely purpose.”

The report recommends that at the international level, development partners — including emerging developing countries — and the international community as a whole, should step up their assistance to the LDCs in a number of areas, which include improving the quantity and quality of aid, including the alignment of assistance with productive capacity building priorities in each recipient country.

Greater attention should be paid to the implementation of duty and quota-free treatment for LDCs’ exports, improvement of rules of origin, the operationalisation of services waiver and actions on cotton, the report argues.

Development partners are also encouraged to support poor countries in acquiring modern technology tailored to productive capacity building, including the operationalization of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s proposed Technology Bank which would allow a stronger data and statistical capacity in the LDCs.

The report also makes clear that there is a need to make further improvements in aid coordination and a more transparent global financial system.
The Development Economics of Landlockedness
Launch of an LLDC publication

A recent report launched by UN-OHRLLS in October entitled: “The Development Economics of Landlockedness: Understanding the development costs of being landlocked.” analyses the impact of landlockedness on the development prospects of landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and based on the findings, proposes recommendations that can provide a more holistic strategy to the development to this group of countries.

The LLDCs face special challenges that are associated with their lack of direct territorial access to the sea and remoteness and isolation from world markets. Their seaborne trade unavoidably depends on transit through other countries thereby making them dependent on the political stability, infrastructure and institutional quality of coastal transit countries.

Additional border crossings and the long distance from major markets, coupled with cumbersome transit procedures and inadequate infrastructure, substantially increase the total expenses for the transport services and other transaction costs that erode the competitive edge of landlocked developing countries. As a result the LLDCs are disadvantaged from fully utilizing trade for their development.

The report first uses descriptive analysis to identify a few simple stylized facts to help understand the sort of challenges that LLDCs currently face when compared to the other groups of countries for key economic, institutional, and social indicators. The study findings show that LLDCs lag significantly behind coastal developing countries and transit developing countries in many of the development indicators. They have the lowest GDP per capita when compared to all the other groups — transit developing, all developing, developed, and the world.

With regard to infrastructure development, the percentage of paved roads for LLDCs is lower than that of transit developing countries and less than half of the developed countries. The logistics performance in LLDCs is generally worse than in other groups of countries.

Although progress has been achieved in addressing the non-physical barriers – soft infrastructure, the LLDCs still take almost double the number of days that transit developing countries take to import and export. LLDCs also continue to incur high transport and trade transaction costs. According to the study, on average LLDCs have transport costs that are up to 45 percent higher than a representative coastal economy. International trade is more difficult and expensive in LLDCs than in any other group. Delays to export are also significantly longer in LLDCs than in other groups.

Although, the total trade comprising both exports and imports from LLDCs increased since 2003. The export structure of LLDCs is generally less diversified and they tend to rely on the export of primary commodities more heavily than any other group. To some extent, this lack of export diversification is associated with a relatively small share of manufacturing in GDP.

On the social development front, LLDCs have experienced a positive trend in the Human Development Index between 2003 and 2011 — nevertheless half of the LLDCs are still in the lowest HDI ranking. The LLDCs tend to have worse health outcomes and higher poverty headcount than the other groups. Overall human development is still lower in landlocked developing countries than in the average developing country.

Assessment of costs of being landlocked

The report used econometric methods to estimate the total development cost (including economic and social dimensions) of being landlocked. The empirical evidence indicates that being landlocked is a fundamental obstacle to development. The analysis quantifies the development cost of landlockedness as the percentage decrease in development due to landlockedness. This percentage averages around 20-25 percent, meaning that because of landlockedness the level of development in the LLDCs is on average 20 percent lower than what it would have been if the countries were not landlocked. Individual country estimates show that the range of development costs for landlocked developing countries goes from 10-30 percent.

Therefore, the attention that is being given to the special development needs of LLDCs is fully justified.

Recommendations

The report suggests a set of specific recommendations for the various actors and stakeholders to support the development of LLDCs. Some of the actions recommended for LLDCs include: increasing value addition to their exports, fostering industrialization, strengthening of institutions, improve trade facilitation and intensive mobilisation of domestic and foreign resources to finance investments in infrastructures. Some of the actions recommended for transit developing countries include: to establish and effectively implement transit agreements with LLDCs, to undertake reforms to improve trade facilitation in particular to agree to
share harmonized paperwork and procedures and to make use of information technology to exchange shipping documentation.

The report recommends that donors should increase their support toward aid-for-trade and official development assistance so that LLDCs could improve their transit corridors, productive capacities and competitiveness. Donors were also encouraged to increase funding for students’ exchange programmes, scientific collaboration with institutions in LLDCs, and general human capital formation and transfer of technology.

The report stresses that the private sector should work with the governments to promote infrastructure development particularly through public-private partnerships (PPPs). The report also underscores that the UN System, international and regional organizations should play a major role to support the LLDCs particularly in the areas of their strength and act as facilitators in bringing the different parties together. They should provide technical assistance, policy advice, mobilize support from the international community and support regional integration efforts.

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The United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) is pleased to announce the launch of its new and improved website.

While the OHRLLS website has always been a significant part of its outreach work, we expect these upgrades will greatly enhance the browsing experience of both existing and new visitors, and enable a greater understanding of the work of the UN in support of Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

You are invited to browse the new site at www.unohrlls.org and we encourage you to regularly check the site to keep up-to-date on the latest UN-OHRLLS news and information.
INTERVIEW

The Post-2015 Framework Must Address the Eradication of Poverty

MediaGlobal Bureau
Chief Nosh Nalavala interviews Sir Mark Lyall-Grant, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the United Nations.

Nosh Nalavala Ambassador Lyall-Grant, at the Partnership for LDCs meeting last September, you emphasized defining an Agenda beyond 2015. Could you elaborate on what key elements would form part of the Post-2015 agenda?

Ambassador Lyall-Grant Poverty eradication must be the central objective of the Post-2015 agenda. The 5 transformational shifts outlined in the report of the High Level Panel are essential to achieving this aim. We must:

- Leave No One behind,
- Put sustainable development at the core,
- Transform economies for jobs and inclusive growth,
- Build peace and effective, open and accountable public institutions, and
- Forge a new global partnership.

NN Were there any issues missing earlier that are now being included?

MLG Yes, the Post-2015 framework must include issues that were missing from the Millennium Development Goals, issues such as safety, stability, access to justice, jobs and accountable and effective institutions that enable people to have a say in decisions that affect them. We know these are also issues important to people because they have expressed them in UNGD consultations and the MyWorld survey.

NN Referring to the Millennium Declaration, you mentioned a “new agenda” involving developed and developing countries. “Everyone will contribute, with different levels of responsibilities and according to their capacity. Civil society, individuals, governments and the private sector must be engaged in “a new global partnership”. What is this “new agenda” and “a new partnership” that you refer to?

MLG The post-2015 agenda must be open and participatory – and all actors should consider themselves as partners in delivering the next framework. When the High Level Panel first came together they recognised that the Post-2015 framework would need to go beyond the MDGs and include issues such as climate and environment. It was clear even then that that the next framework would need to be universal in nature.

NN Universal in what sense?

MLG In order to deliver a universal agenda, the Panel knew a global partnership was necessary and in this global partnership each actor must have a considered role to play. Civil society and business would be an important part in this. For it is only by building in dynamic partnerships that we can go beyond an aid agenda and make poverty eradication irreversible.

NN A concerted call has gone out to better integrate governance, transparency, and peaceful and stable societies into the new framework. Could you tell us a little more about why you would support their inclusion?

MLG Hundreds of thousands of people from all over the world have expressed their views in face-to-face meetings, through surveys and in regional consultations and polling. UK Prime Minister David Cameron, alongside High Level Panel co-chairs the President Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia and President Yudhoyono of Indonesia, as well as the other members of the panel listened directly to these voices. Overwhelmingly people made clear that security, freedom from fear, good governance and transparency were crucial to people’s wellbeing and development.

NN Several countries are in conflict or emerging out of conflict . . .

MLG Sustainable peace, good governance and stability are the foundation for development in all countries. We will not eradicate poverty unless we comprehensively address the causes and effects of conflict and fragility. We know this because fragile and conflict affected states are furthest away from achieving the MDGs and that conflict stunts growth opportunities that can alleviate poverty. Countries in conflict or with weak institutions score poorly on the World Bank’s Doing Business Index because investors seek predictable and stable business environments and avoid areas of instability. The right institutions for economic growth and stability need to be put in place. But to do this the fundamental building blocks for stability must be in place. These include individual security, rule of law, access to justice, transparency, accountability, and political and economic inclusion.

NN How does this relate to the Agenda?

MLG The Post-2015 framework must address the drivers of conflict and insecurity in order to advance peace and development and build effective, open and accountable institutions for all.