Towards the Second UN Conference on the Landlocked Developing Countries, Vienna, November 2014
Special feature
Preparations in Full Swing for Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries

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Andean Indian children washing carrots and potatoes on the Altiplano in landlocked Bolivia.
At a press conference in New York on 14 May, USG Acharya called for greater support to landlocked developing countries. The call came as preparations for the Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries to be held in November in Vienna, Austria gathered momentum. The United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution on 22 April 2014 confirming that a comprehensive Ten-year Review Conference of the Almaty Programme of Action (APoA) for Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) will take place 3-5 November 2014 in Austria, Vienna. The conference agenda, composition, and other modalities, including the establishment of an intergovernmental preparatory committee, has also been negotiated and two subsequent preparatory sessions are scheduled for 12-13 June 2014, and 2-3 October 2014 at UN headquarters in New York.

The UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) is serving as focal point for the preparatory review process of the conference and has organized consultative meetings along three principal tracks: the intergovernmental process, the...
inter-agency process, and the private sector.

**Intergovernmental process**

The first of UN-OHRLLS’s consultative processes focuses on intergovernmental participation by the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries. Under the chairmanship of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, the Group of LLDCs has held regular consultative meetings, including three regional reviews, to discuss their concerns and to streamline their priorities for the second generation development framework. LLDCs and their transit and development partners have taken part in three regional reviews that UN-OHRLLS, in partnership with regional economic commissions, organized in 2013.

The LLDC meetings have highlighted key APoA accomplishments and shortcomings and have identified priority areas for the new Programme of Action. There is a growing consensus that while there is a need to retain transit and transport as a core focus, the new development programme for the LLDCs should be more holistic than the narrowly defined and thematic APoA.

LLDC’s have also prepared national reports on the implementation of the APoA over the last ten years. These reports highlight progress in critical areas such as institutional development, transit and transport infrastructure development, regional integration, trade facilitation, international support measures, and policy formulation.

During their latest meeting, LLDC ambassadors welcomed the Republic of South Sudan as the 32nd member. The Republic of Zambia was elected as chair for 2014/2015 biannual.

Two consultative retreats for LLDC Ambassadors are planned for 2014. These will provide opportunity for further consultations on the conference and the post-2015 development agenda. UN-OHRLLS will organize the first retreat, in New York May 2014, the second, supported by the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, will take place in the birthplace of APoA — Almaty Kazakhstan.

**Inter-agency process**

UN-OHRLLS organizes two Inter-Agency Consultative Group (IACG) meetings each year in New York and Geneva. This group brings together the various UN agencies and other international organizations that focus on transit, transport, and trade to consult on the substantive and organizational preparations for the Conference. The IACG has organized fourteen preconference events since September 2012.

**The private sector process**

The third of UN-OHRLLS’s consultative processes focuses on building and supporting private sector participation and engagement in the conference preparatory process. A Private Sector Steering Committee — established by UN-OHRLLS and the International Chamber of Commerce — consists of business representatives from other Chambers of Commerce, promotion agencies, LLDC investors, transit developing countries, donor countries, and representatives from international organizations. The steering committee has also prepared the terms of reference for a corporate champion to spearhead the private sector agenda.

The private sector has been fully represented at all events related to the conference, including the launch of a technology transfer facility for LLDCs in Nairobi in October 2013.

The Private Sector Steering Committee is currently working to organize an investment forum for LLDCs in Geneva in October 2014 and a side event during the November 2014 conference in Vienna. Other UN-OHRLLS events will tackle issues such as the productive capacities of LLDCs and their resilience to external shocks. Additionally, a High-level international workshop on the implications of the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation for the LLDCs will take place in June 2014 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, the Global Compact will organize a private sector event at the margins of the APOA conference in November 2014 in Vienna.

The UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) continues to serve as focal point for the preparatory review process of the conference and has organized consultative meetings along three principal tracks: the intergovernmental process, the inter-agency process, and the private sector.
Bolivia and Paraguay, the two Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) in Latin America, have made significant strides in various areas of development in the ten years since the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action (APoA).

Despite these efforts, the Latin America Regional Review process for the APoA, jointly organized by the Government of Paraguay and UN-OHRLLS, in November 2013, reported that progress in Bolivia and Paraguay has not been without setbacks and that the two countries continue to be adversely affected by geography.

This was the final leg of regional reviews of the APoA. The previous two assessments of the action plan took place in Asia and Africa earlier in the year.

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The Latin American Regional Review was attended by representatives of the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) including Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Peru, and Bolivia. Representatives from the LLDC Bureau and other UN agencies such as the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and UN-OHRLLS also participated. The event was preceded by a seminar on economic development, logistical costs, and the situation of LLDCs.

Two plenary sessions examined the progress made in the implementation of the APoA at the global, regional, and national levels, including international support measures, and the new and emerging challenges facing LLDCs in Latin America. In his opening remarks, Deputy Minister for Economic Affairs and Integration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Paraguay, Federico Gonzalez reiterated that important headway had been made in landlocked developing countries but that challenges still lay ahead.

Statements were delivered to the Latin American Regional Review by Deputy Executive Secretary of ECLAC Antonio Prado and Under-Secretary-General and High Representative of UN-OHRLLS Gyan Chandra Acharya.

“This Regional Review meeting presents a unique opportunity for Latin American landlocked developing countries, transit countries and development partners to critically assess the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action in the region and define a new, action-oriented strategic framework for the next decade.” said USG Acharya.

From 2002 to 2012, Paraguay and Bolivia reported average annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth rates of 4.4 per cent and 4.5 per cent respectively. In terms of trade, exports represent approximately 20 per cent of Paraguay’s GDP and 38 per cent of Bolivia’s GDP; imports average around 50 per cent of Paraguay’s GDP and 69 per cent of Bolivia’s GDP, statistics that reflect the growing openness of the two countries’ economies. Despite this, both countries have made limited progress toward the majority of the targets of the Millennium Development Goals, lagging behind many other Latin America and Caribbean countries. The 2012 Human Development Report ranked Paraguay 111 and Bolivia 108 among 187 countries.

It was reported that Bolivia is working on the final phase of a new general transport law, and that there are planned projects for developing airport infrastructure, building a national Matacucito-Mutún-Puerto Busch rail network for mineral exportation, and improving transport logistics infrastructure. There are also plans to pave all primary and secondary networks and set up signalling systems on waterways and ports. Bolivia still faces transport challenges due to the unreliability and inadequacy of its transport infrastructure and the corresponding impact on the competitiveness of its export products. Excessive bureaucracy at border crossing points and a lack of harmonisation with neighbouring countries’ customs procedures also hampers transit.

Bolivia and Paraguay’s transit neighbours also actively participated in the plenary sessions and shared the view that planning was a vital long-term policy tool, recognising a need to develop integrated and complementary infrastructure, transport and logistics policies. There were calls to intensify existing cooperation in the region, acknowledge the significance of Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America (IIRSA), which is a technical forum of the South American Infrastructure and Planning Council (COSIPLAN), and integrate systems for border checks and customs cooperation. Participants also discussed how to minimise their vulnerability to external factors, such as volatile food and fuel prices, financial and economic crises and climate change.

Recommendations from the regional review include the need for greater production diversification, recognition of the service sector as one of the possible ways to diversify
the economy, and the need to enhance the special and differential treatment for LLDCs in different spheres of negotiation. Participants also recognized the importance of a deepened regional integration process and the need to work towards common logistics and mobility policies, including updating bilateral and regional legal instruments, addressing infrastructure shortfalls, and the possibility of using public-private financing.

The recommendations of the Latin American Regional Review emphasize the importance of integrating the main points of entry (such as airports and seaports) with neighbouring countries. They stress the importance of improving transit traffic regulations and bureaucratic practices at border crossing points, increasing awareness of logistical costs and their impact on development and the sharing of best practices.

The outcome of the Latin America Regional Review will provide important inputs to the Comprehensive Ten-year Review Conference of the APoA that will take place 3-5 November 2014 in Austria, Vienna.

A new publication offering a unique snapshot of the data and statistics associated with Small Island Developing States (SIDS) highlights the special case of SIDS in relation to sustainable environmental, economic, and social development. Indicators such as population, official development assistance, economy and business, remittances, greenhouse gas emissions, and biodiversity are also included in the publication by UN-OHRLLS.

High Representative Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya has emphasized the importance of collating facts and figures relating to SIDS in order to gain a better understanding of the various issues and challenges these countries face.

Small Island Developing States in Numbers employs tables and graphs to present information as easy-to-understand visuals. For example, on average, SIDS have 26.2 per cent of their land area at 5 meters or less below sea level, but Small Island Developing States in Numbers makes visually clear the diversity around this average: the Maldives and Tuvalu have 100 per cent of their population living less than 5 meters below sea level; in Papua New Guinea only 2 per cent of the population lives less than 5 meters below sea level. Similarly, Small Island Developing States in Numbers makes visually clear that SIDS are extremely important for global biodiversity: SIDS islands harbour 20 per cent of all plant, bird, and reptile species in only about 3 per cent of the Earth’s land surface.

Available online and in print, the data and statistics contained in Small Island Developing States in Numbers are not intended to be authoritative, rather they are presented in a manner that attempts to highlight the special case of SIDS. Data regarding demography, social development, economy and business, external debt, climate and environmental vulnerability, greenhouse gas emissions and energy use, was sourced largely from the World Bank’s Little Data Book on Climate Change 2011 — published in 2012. Other sources of data include the World Bank and The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and Conservation International.
First of all, congratulations to Zambia for taking over the chairmanship of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDC). What is your longterm vision now that you have taken over as the chairperson of the group?

**Ambassador Kasese-Bota**

We have a number of priorities which we think should be the highlight of our chairmanship. The first thing that Zambia is going to embark on is increasing the visibility as well as the profile of these LLDCs that are in most cases part of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) anyway. We have 32 LLDCs and we have 49 LDCs, but some of the LLDCs are also members of the LDCs, and when you do an analysis of poverty levels within the LDC category, you’ll find that the countries that hit rock bottom are actually the LLDCs.

Our strategy is to ensure that the plight of the LLDCs becomes known to the international community and the donor community. We also have to be...
very coherent about what we want, and we are getting that coherence from the programme of action that itemizes our priorities. But of course we are looking at integrating as well as prioritizing and having a transformational action-oriented and development focus.

NN Of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which one would you consider is a success for LLDCs?

KB When the MDGs were crafted in 2000, they very much focused on the social pillars of sustainable development, although we also embarked on economic aspirations through infrastructure development and industrialization. I’ll give an example on the first MDG on poverty reduction. You cannot attain poverty reduction to the exclusion of the social development, to the exclusion of industrialization.

NN What do you see as the biggest challenge facing the LLDCs today, and how does the group plan to resolve it?

KB It is the issue of our geographical disadvantage — we are landlocked. We are not connected to the sea, and because of that, the transaction cost and transportation cost are very high. Infrastructure development is also quite high because we are totally dependent on passing goods through a number of transit countries.

NN I guess you’re ‘friendly’ with these transit countries …

KB … we have to be very friendly with all the neighbours and Member States of the UN, but that still does not remove the high cost of passing through transit countries. We have had challenges in trade facilitation because the goods that come from the LLDCs are going to be relatively more expensive than those from other countries. So we also need to work on the issues of trade facilitation as well as ensuring that we have good regional linkages.

NN With the 10 year review of the Almaty Programme of Action (APOA) in Vienna in November this year, the understanding is that there is going to be an action-oriented strategic framework for the next decade. What shape or form of a framework do you visualize coming from the 10 year review?

KB I attended the Rio+20 conference in June 2012 and at that conference, I was encouraged by the language and, the dialogue that came out of “The Future We Want” document; the issues of LLDCs were very prominently highlighted, and the international community was anxious to work together towards a more inclusive sustainable development which will leave no one and no country behind. And because of that, I’m very positive, I’m very optimistic about having a very action-oriented outcome document at the Vienna meeting.

NN What is your feeling about the success of APOA over these past ten years? Do you feel that they have reached the goals that were outlined at that time?

KB It is difficult to say because we are still reviewing the APOA, but I think after the conference and especially through the other processes preceding the conference, we will be able to tell how the countries have faired in terms of the programme of action. But regardless of what we are going to get, I think we are very ambitious. We are looking forward to having a more focused post-2015 development agenda that is going to ensure that the issues of LLDCs take the center stage for sustainable development; that they actually check the position and sit at the right table, and within the right framework of the post-2015 development agenda.

NN You have indicated that it’s going to be an ambitious agenda. How ambitious is your agenda for this conference and can you give me some insight into it?

KB Development of LLDCs is not just for the countries themselves; I think it’s an issue of equity, it’s an issue of humanity and all of us need to get together and ensure that we move at the same pace and no one is left behind.

NN I’d like to go back to the preparatory process in terms of the conference. What have you planned? Are you planning to implement various tracks?

KB We expect to have three tracks; one of them is the intergovernmental track in which we include the national reviews. We have had the regional dialogue meetings which are going to feed into the intergovernmental track, as well as individual countries giving their own presentation. I can’t give much because they are also part of the resolution that we are still negotiating but we are definitely going to have the intergovernmental track, which will then lead into the prepcom meetings. The UN and other international regional organizations are also involved in getting information on what it is that they feel the groups should have in terms of moving forward, reviewing the APOA and going beyond 2015.

NN Our strategy is to ensure that the plight of the LLDCs becomes known to the international community and the donor community.

“… we have to be very friendly with all the neighbours and Member States of the UN, but that still does not remove the high cost of passing through transit countries. We have had challenges in trade facilitation because the goods that come from the LLDCs are going to be relatively more expensive than those from other countries. So we also need to work on the issues of trade facilitation as well as ensuring that we have good regional linkages.”

– Dr. Mwabe P. Kasese-Bota
Permanent Representative of Zambia to the United Nations
Launch of Website for Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries

The UN Office of the High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS (UN-OHRLLS) is pleased to announce the launch of a website dedicated to the Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) scheduled to take place 3-5 November 2014 in Vienna, Austria.

The website will be an important tool in outreach and advocacy efforts to provide all stakeholders with comprehensive up-to-date information in the lead-up to and during the global meeting.

The LLDC Conference will provide Member States, the UN system, private sector, civil society and experts an invaluable opportunity to formulate an ambitious action-plan tailored to the specific needs of this group of countries that are disadvantaged by geography.

Of the 32 countries classified as landlocked developing, 16 are located in Africa, 10 in Asia, 4 in Europe and 2 in Latin America.

Lack of territorial access to the sea, remoteness from markets, cumbersome transit procedures, and poor infrastructure have a direct negative impact on economic growth and hamper sustainable development efforts.

You are invited to browse the new site at www.lldc2conference.org and we encourage you to regularly check in to keep abreast of the preparations towards the Conference and ways in which the UN system may contribute to its successful outcome.

Features

• A news stream on the home page providing visitors with timely, easy-to-read information affecting landlocked developing countries

• Several pages explaining the intergovernmental, private sector and interagency process in clear and concise manner

• A sub-section dedicated to the private sector forum planned to take place on the side lines of the conference

• A timeline to keep track of milestone events

Screen capture of the new website dedicated to the Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) scheduled to take place 3-5 November 2014 in Vienna, Austria.
For the first time in the history of the United Nations an ‘international year’ has been dedicated to a group of countries. The International Year of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) will celebrate the many contributions of these countries to the world, including distinct cultures, diversity, heritage, climate leadership, and stewardship of vast ocean spaces and marine resources.

The International Year of Small Island Developing States will serve to galvanize coordinated regional, national, and international efforts by the UN and other development partners towards addressing the challenges being faced by the community of small island developing states. It will also help build momentum towards the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, to be held 1-4 September 2014 in Apia, Samoa, and will focus on fostering genuine and durable partnerships for the sustainable development of SIDS.

Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of the Republic of Nauru, speaks at the launch of the International Year of Small Island Developing States.
Speaking at the launch event for the International Year of Small Island Developing States, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said, “We must collectively address the special needs of Small Island Developing States.” Secretary-General Ban also highlighted the impact of climate change for SIDS and the importance of the Climate Summit that will be convened in New York on 23 September 2014. Emphasising the need to accelerate efforts towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the need to build the post-2015 development agenda, the Secretary-General encouraged all members of the international community to come together in commemorating the International Year of Small Island Developing States.

President of the UN General Assembly Ambassador John Ashe said, “the global family of nations can and must act to support, protect, preserve and ensure the sustainable development of SIDS,” and highlighted that the exotic and tropical features of many of the small island developing states made it easy to overlook the vulnerabilities and risks that such topographies present — such as limited human resources institutional capacity, and extreme vulnerability to exogenous shocks and natural disasters.

Also in attendance at the launch event, the Prime Minister of Samoa Tuilaepa Lopesoloi Sailele Malielegaoi emphasized that it is important for SIDS to demonstrate ownership of the International Year through concrete initiatives and partnerships to build the overall resilience of SIDS: “The International Year provides a strategic opportunity for SIDS to command sustained centre stage attention of all stakeholders with an interest in future sustainability.” Reflecting on international initiatives to tackle climate change, Prime Minister Tuilaepa Lopesoloi Sailele Malielegaoi also emphasized the need for international participation and support for the upcoming Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States.

The global family of nations can and must act to support, protect, preserve and ensure the sustainable development of SIDS.

- Ambassador John Ashe
President of the UN General Assembly

Peter Kenilorea in conversation with Co-Chairs Ambassadors Tan and Taula on the Upcoming Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States.

In February 2014, the Preparatory Committee for the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to be held 1-4 September 2014 in Apia, Samoa, elected Her Excellency Karen Tan, Permanent Representative of Singapore to the United Nations, and His Excellency Phillip Taula, Deputy Permanent Representative of New Zealand to the United Nations, as co-Chairs of the Preparatory Committee Bureau.

Peter Kenilorea  What, in your opinion, were some of the important outcomes of the first meeting of the preparatory committee and its recent informal inter-sessional meeting, and how would you describe the mood of the preparatory committee?

Karen Tan and Phillip Taula  The mood has been very positive. The first preparatory meeting was an opportunity to hear the views of SIDS themselves, the wider UN membership, agencies and major groups, on the SIDS Conference and we received very useful feedback on what should be the concrete outcomes for the Conference. It was clear to us, the co-chairs, that all parties were interested in ensuring substantive, practical outcomes for SIDS.

Q  At the end of the first preparatory committee it was reported by the Chairpersons of the two contact groups on NGO participation and on rules of procedure that they had been unable to conclude their work by the close of the first preparatory session. Are you confident that the work of these two contact groups can be completed soon, and if so, what reasons can you give for such an outlook?

A  We are confident that the contact group on the rules of procedure will complete its work in due course. On the contact group on NGO participation, it completed its work and the PrepComm held a brief

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Prefering for the SIDS Conference...

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meeting last month to adopt the decision on NGO accreditation to the SIDS Conference. We expect the list of participating NGOs and the rules of the procedure of the Conference to be settled by the end of the Final PrepComm meeting in June.

Q The Zero Draft of the Outcome of the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States was circulated on 14 March 2014, setting into motion the inter-governmental process on negotiating the outcomes of the Third International Conference on SIDS. Without prejudging the approaches, priorities, and decisions by Member States, what key issues do you foresee attracting particularly focused debate and discussions during the intergovernmental process going forward?

A As the co-chairs, we should not prejudge the progress of the negotiations or speculate on the potential problem areas. The Zero Draft is a wide-ranging document which touches on the challenges and problems that SIDS face and contains ideas on how the international community, the UN system, non-SIDS countries and SIDS countries themselves can tackle these challenges. Naturally, Member States will have different perspectives on these challenges and have constructive suggestions for the outcome document. At the informal inter-sessional meeting, we had the opportunity to listen carefully to all views. Negotiations on the text began constructively and good progress was made. We will give serious consideration to all proposals. What is important is that everyone comes to these negotiations with the best interests of the SIDS in mind and with the joint focus of achieving a concise, practical and outcome-oriented result.

Q In addition to the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, there are other global processes underway, including those concerning the post-2015 development and a new agreement on climate change. How can preparations for the SIDS Third Conference and its outcome make a meaningful contribution to these other global processes? Is there a concern that these other global processes could draw attention away from the SIDS process, and if so, what can be done to have the spotlight remain on SIDS and the process going into and coming out from Samoa?

A Given the ongoing negotiations on the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and the forthcoming negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda, it is a good time to have the SIDS Conference. The outcome document of the conference will feed into the processes for the SDGs and the post-2015 development agenda. A good outcome document will help ensure that the needs and interests of SIDS are appropriately addressed in the new global development regime after 2015.

Q Singapore has long been a leader in promoting cooperation between SIDS and many SIDS have benefitted from Singapore’s Small Island Developing States’ Technical Cooperation (SIDSTEC) Programme that was launched in 1999. In 2005, Singapore announced the indefinite extension of SIDSTEC at the Mauritius International Meeting. Since its launch, SIDSTEC has expanded to cover a broader area of current developmental issues such as public administration, governance and law, and civil aviation. Are you looking to further strengthen SIDS/SIDS cooperation going into and coming out of Samoa? If so, what areas do you think Singapore might be looking to strengthen in your cooperation with other SIDS and can we expect further announcements in Samoa?

A (TAULA) New Zealand is a small Pacific country with our own vulnerabilities. We also have longstanding relationships with many SIDS partners, so have some understanding of the unique challenges they face. New Zealand is ambitious for what SIDS can achieve and we are pleased to offer help wherever we can.

Increasing access and introducing clean and affordable energy technologies is a high priority for the Pacific region. In order to fast-track solutions to the Pacific’s pressing energy needs and ensure a coordinated regional approach, New Zealand and the European Union co-hosted the Pacific Energy Summit in Auckland in March 2013. The Summit secured donor commitments of $635 million (NZD) ($525 million USD), sufficient to support more than 40 projects. Since the Summit, donors and development partners have been progressing more than 50 energy sector projects in the Pacific. At the SIDS Conference, there will be an update on progress and the delivery of these projects.

In addition, to encourage coordination across the Pacific region, New Zealand offered the hosts, Samoa, a technical cooperation package tailored to their needs in hosting this major international event. This is an example of “partnerships” advocated by the SIDS as a concrete outcome for the conference.

Q What are the key reasons for New Zealand’s strong support to Pacific SIDS in their efforts to adopt sustainable energy practices and technologies? Are there plans to engage other SIDS beyond the Pacific region on sustainable energy and possibly extend support to these SIDS? What other areas or issues is New Zealand focusing on to support SIDS sustainable development aspirations coming out of the Samoa Conference?

A (TAN) We have always seen ourselves as a small island developing state and the SIDS are our natural constituency. We are always looking for opportunities to deepen Singapore-SIDS and SIDS-SIDS cooperation. In this regard, many SIDS have participated in our technical cooperation programmes. With regard to the SIDS Conference, we have

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Increasing access and introducing clean and affordable energy technologies is a high priority for the Pacific region.

– Phillip Taula
Deputy Permanent Representative of New Zealand to the United Nations
Side-event Highlights Need for Sustainable Global Partnerships in Support of Small Island Developing States

by Rui Xu

The significance of genuine and durable partnerships with Small Island Developing States (SIDS) was highlighted at a side-event organised by the UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) in February this year. Held on the sidelines of the First Preparatory Committee Meeting for the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States to be held from 1 to 4 September 2014 in Apia, Samoa, the side-event focused on the need for new global partnerships to strengthen SIDS’ sustainable development.

“We fostering partnerships in support of sustainable development is one of the critical objectives of SIDS,” said Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least

Noumea Simi, Assistant CEO of Finance, Aid Coordination and Debt Management in Samoa’s Ministry of Finance, addresses the SIDS side event.

UN Photo

We have begun to build on this success in other SIDS regions. For example, New Zealand recently partnered with the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) to fund and organise a Workshop in Dominica, entitled “Driving Geothermal Development: How to Realise Geothermal Potential.” In Comoros, following an initial New Zealand-funded geothermal feasibility report, we are working with UNDP and the Government of Comoros to leverage financial support from other donors to support next steps.

We are also looking at other sectors and areas where we can best support SIDS’ sustainable development priorities and aspirations. Oceans are one priority area that has been identified but there are potentially a number of others where New Zealand will be keen to support SIDS.
Fostering partnerships in support of sustainable development is one of the critical objectives of SIDS.

– Gyan Chandra Acharya
Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States
INTERVIEW

Progress and Prospects for Least Developed Countries

Rita Ruohonen interviews the European Union Commissioner for Development Andris Piebalgs.

Andris Piebalgs is a Latvian politician and diplomat. From 2004 to 2009, Piebalgs served as the European Commissioner for Energy and he currently serves as the EU Commissioner for Development. Earlier this month Mr. Piebalgs was interviewed to discuss progress and prospects for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

Rita Ruohonen The post-2015 framework provides a critical opportunity to discuss and reshape how the international community approaches development. What are the key goals that the European Union wants to accomplish with the post-2015 development agenda?

Andris Piebalgs The post-2015 process is entering a decisive phase. The UN Member States are currently working on the content and principles of the next global framework for action towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the context of these discussions, I have made clear that a post-2015 development agenda should reinforce the international community’s commitment to both poverty eradication and sustainable development.

“A Decent Life for All” (the European Commission’s communication on post-2015 framework) sets out clearly that the next development framework should include a limited set of clear and inspiring goals, addressing not only quantitative targets, but also qualitative ones such as standards in education, nutrition, access to clean water and air quality.

This means that goals should cover a broad spectrum of the fundamental global and universal challenges the world faces. We need to provide a set of basic living standards, to promote the drivers of inclusive and sustainable growth, to ensure the sustainable management of our natural resources, as well as to ensure justice, equity, and equality, and the need for more peaceful societies.

It is of utmost importance to the EU that the priorities of the poorest countries feature prominently in the post-2015 agreement. Only if these priorities are properly reflected will a post-2015 framework help ending poverty and bring about prosperity and sustainability for all.

RR How have the specific economic, social, and environmental development challenges of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) been integrated into the EU consultative process on post-2015? How is the EU supporting the graduation of current LDCs from their LDC status?

AP Rising sea levels are threatening the existence of entire countries. Natural disasters can destroy the development progress of decades. Droughts are a threat to food security and pose a risk to the lives of millions. As country groups, Least Developed Countries and also Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are the most vulnerable to challenges posed by global environmental degradation, climate change and high poverty levels.

For these reasons, it is a priority for the EU to ensure that the challenges faced by the world’s poorest countries are at the top of the post-2015 agenda. Therefore, a dialogue with these countries is crucial. We are currently discussing post-2015 priorities with the African Union. We are working towards a joint approach with the group of African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. Not least, the SIDS conference this September is an opportunity to establish further consensus around the major development challenges beyond 2015.

The EU remains committed to the objective formulated in the Istanbul Action Plan to achieve, by 2020, the graduation of half of the current LDCs from their LDC status. A post-2015 framework must contribute to this objective.

RR Significant progress has been achieved in some of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), however, progress has been uneven, even slow, and many of the MDGs will not be met by the most vulnerable groups of countries, especially LDCs. What needs to be done differently in the post-2015 development agenda to ensure that no one is left behind?

AP Indeed, the world has made remarkable progress towards achieving the MDGs. Yet, many countries and regions are still far from being able to provide a decent life for their populations. There is a lot of unfinished business that needs to be taken care of.

A post-2015 framework must be transformational. It should strengthen the drivers for inclusive and sustainable growth such as structural transformation, a strong infrastructure base and a strong business sector that supports high levels of employment. Also, democratic and effective institutions are central to ensuring that government action can be held accountable and responds to the needs of all parts of the population, in particular the most marginalised and disadvantaged. These two transformational shifts, which constitute the two pillars of the EU Agenda for Change, the blueprint that will see us pursue a new higher-impact, results-oriented development policy,

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need to be put in place in order to ensure that no one is left behind.

**RR** How can Official Development Assistance (ODA) evolve to have a more catalytic role and to leverage investment and promote technology transfer?

**AP** International public finance remains important for countries most in need. However it only represents a fraction of the total resources available to developing countries. For this reason, the Agenda for Change calls for resources to be targeted at countries most in need, as well as the promotion of new financial tools to leverage further resources and increase the EU’s impact on poverty reduction.

One of the tools used by the EU to maximise the impact of its action is the combination of grants with additional resources from public and private financiers, known as “blending”. Currently, 90 per cent of grant contributions to blending projects leverage public finance. This is the type of operation that enables us to finance a solar power station in Zagtouli (Burkina Faso) together with other European donors for example. There is a potential to use grants as a catalyst for private financing, such as support to local businesses to achieve growth and create jobs. We are working to exploit this catalytic potential of ODA.

We can also support the transfer of technology through our programmes that provide technical assistance, or through the implementation of projects in sectors such as energy, water, agriculture, governance and infrastructure which contain important transfer of know-how and technology aspects.

**RR** The EU is a strong advocate for linking EU policies with the goal of eradicating poverty worldwide. How does the Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) benefit LDCs?

**AP** As you said, different European policies can serve together to achieve the same purpose, in this case, overcoming poverty worldwide. Increasing coherence between the different EU policies which interlink with development like trade, agriculture, climate change, security or migration, would have a positive impact and improve the results of our aid, allowing more resources to be concentrated on LDCs, while giving them a fairer chance to ensure their own development.

I have been a strong defender of Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) since the beginning of my mandate and the EU is in fact the only region worldwide that has made PCD a binding concept across all policies.

And we are making good progress here. Take the EU-Mauritania fisheries agreement, which includes concrete measures to increase Mauritanian people’s food security and provide them with more job opportunities. It clearly shows EU’s commitment to coordinate infrastructure which contain agriculture, governance and in sectors such as energy, water, through the implementation of projects that provide technical assistance, or technology through our programmes we can also support the transfer of to local businesses to achieve growth for private financing, such as support to the increased catalytic role and to leverage the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix. It is also worth noting that the Advisory Board includes several members who either hail from LDCs themselves, or come from institutions that focus on their development.

The objectives of the SE4All initiative are in line with our Agenda for Change.

**AP** Yes, certainly, reducing energy poverty in LDCs represents an integral part of our discussions. Both the European Commission and SE4All fully acknowledge that energy is intertwined in all aspects of fostering inclusive and sustainable growth. The three goals of Sustainable Energy for All remain at the core of our discussions: ensuring universal access to modern energy services, doubling the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency and doubling the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix. It is also worth noting that the Advisory Board includes several members who either hail from LDCs themselves, or come from institutions that focus on their development.

The objectives of the SE4All initiative are in line with our Agenda for Change.

**AP** Rising sea levels are threatening the existence of entire countries. Natural disasters can destroy the development progress of decades. Droughts are a threat to food security and pose a risk to the lives of millions. As country groups, Least Developed Countries and also Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are the most vulnerable to challenges posed by global environmental degradation, climate change and high poverty levels.

"..."
High-level government officials from Least Developed Countries (LDCs) met in Lima, Peru, in November 2013 to discuss progress towards the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA).

The Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) emerged from the Fourth UN Conference on Least Developed Countries (LDCs), held in Istanbul, Turkey, in May 2011, as a “collective commitment to finding lasting solutions to the complex and mutually exacerbating challenges and problems of the LDCs.” The core commitment of the IPoA is to support the graduation of LDCs out of LDC category — a goal that is supported by a broad range of governments, international and regional financial institutions, UN agencies, civil society, and the private sector.

The Ministerial Conference, entitled *From the Istanbul Programme of Action to the World We Want in 2015 and Beyond: Implementing the UNIDO Operational Strategy*, brought together more than 250 participants to discuss inclusive and sustainable industrial development and the implementation of the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) LDC Operational Strategy for 2012 to 2020. “It is indeed an opportune time to hold a high level dialogue on the structural transformation of LDCs, as we concentrate on the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action, on the one hand, and look towards shaping the post-2015 development agenda, on the other,” said USG Gyan Chandra Acharya from UN-OHRLLS in his opening statement.

“Strengthening and consolidation of a coherent and comprehensive global partnership including through south-south and triangular cooperation, based on mutual accountability of the countries concerned and the global community are key paradigms of the IPOA, which should be firmly integrated into the post 2015 agenda.

“My office, UN-OHRLLS is working to secure support from within the UN System as well as from bilateral development partners and other international financial institutions in favour of LDCs. We are actively engaged in the United Nations internal coordination mechanism with a view to promoting the interest of LDCs in all relevant areas that United Nations is engaged in, including the follow up to the Rio+20 outcome and post-2015 development agenda.

The Ministerial Conference culminated with the Lima Declaration — an agreement on UNIDO’s development priorities for the coming years that places special emphasis on inclusive and sustainable industrial development.
A special event examining Least Developed Countries (LDCs), the post-2015 development agenda, and Sustainable Development Goals was organised at Wilton Park, United Kingdom, in January 2014. The meeting was one of a number of events co-organized by the UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) over the last year to bring focus to LDC priorities, and to position LDC priorities at the forefront of the post-2015 development framework.

Speaking at Wilton Park, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States Gyan Chandra Acharya said: “The post-2015 development agenda is of crucial importance for LDCs. LDCs have made considerable progress, but still lag behind all others in reaching many internationally agreed goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

“We all know that to make progress towards sustained and sustainable development and to graduate from LDC status, business as usual will not do. Thus the Post-2015 Development Framework should address the special needs of the LDCs, especially in light of their serious constraints on domestic resource mobilization and external borrowing.”

Participants at Wilton Park emphasised structural constraints faced by LDCs — such as low income and limited market opportunities — and stressed how these constraints make LDCs more vulnerable to external shocks. As such, Overseas Development Assistance will remain crucial for LDCs in the medium term and participants discussed the importance of recognising progress towards the eradication of extreme poverty, even if the complete achievement of thus is still generations away.

Any new development framework must be cognizant of existing goals and priorities. For instance, the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) has already recognized productive capacity development — and the many factors that are related to productive capacity, including skills development, access to technology, finance and markets, regulation, infrastructure, energy — as a primary area of priority. Any new development framework must present “value added” to existing commitments.

It was noted that employment creation is crucial for LDCs, given rapid growth of the population. However, the middle class is still very small in most of these countries. It was also noted that for structural transformation to take place, it is crucial that agriculture productivity be enhanced. However there is debate over whether more focus should be on smallholders, which would have a larger effect on poverty; or larger farms, where the potential for increased productivity might be larger. The loss of traditional knowledge through migration to cities is also an issue in this respect.

Gender equality is crucial for progress in many areas and is a relevant consideration for all countries. There is some agreement that gender should be reflected in a separate goal and also mainstreamed in other goals.

Participants also highlighted the deleterious and significant impact of climate change on LDCs. The question is what real effect a non-binding goal related to climate change will have. There is a need for access to climate finance for LDCs both for adaptation and mitigation. The data needs of LDCs were also discussed, as was the need for timely and accurate information for policy planning purposes.

Finally, there was a strong call for governance issues to be a key theme throughout the new global framework. Participants stressed the need for governance to come from internal processes within countries, rather than being imposed from the outside.