



PRESS RELEASE

Least developed countries call for enhanced partnerships and aid commitments

Cotonou, 31 July 2014 - Ministers, senior government officials and United Nations representatives meeting in Cotonou, Benin, have called on donor countries to fulfil their commitments and go further, allocating at least 50 percent of their overseas development assistance (ODA) and Aid for Trade disbursement to the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

The call comes at the conclusion of a special four-day meeting in Cotonou which addressed the need for a rapid enhancement of support for the world's forty-eight most vulnerable countries to improve their productive and trading capacity, human resources and infrastructure development. The gathering was hosted by the Republic of Benin with the support of the UN Office for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS).

Delegates raised serious concerns over a fall in aid to the LDCs and discussed proposals to enhance the ability of poor countries to overcome structural constraints, especially in the post 2015 development agenda. They agreed that a greater level of global support through aid, market access and investment, would assist in the increased production of goods and services and improve trade performance.

“Many least developed countries, despite being rich in human and natural resources, have been trapped in a low level of equilibrium. Enhancing productive capacities with value addition on a sustainable basis, improving infrastructure and promoting inclusive growth are key to eradicating poverty and ensuring a prosperous and dignified future for these countries. This will also help them build better resilience. As we prepare to embark upon the post 2015 development agenda, we have heard a clarion call from all the participants for priority focus on these issues in the

LDCs,” said Mr Gyan Chandra Acharya, USG and High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

Expressions of support were voiced for a planned ‘technology bank’ with regional centres. Participants called for a greater use of modern technology to leapfrog some of the traditional development stages and move on to a green economic path.

The need for LDCs to be assisted with complex contract negotiations, especially in extractive industries, was highlighted. Such support is vital to help promote social and environmental responsibilities and could enhance financing for infrastructure.

Participants highlighted that collective collaboration among government institutions, private sector and civil society is vital for bridging gaps in infrastructure and promoting environmentally sustainable and inclusive growth. They highlighted that good governance and transparency will also go a long way to sustain progress in LDCs.

“From Cotonou, we have started a new journey to break the gravity of structural constraints by building productive capacities in LDCs. The principal of shared responsibilities are deeply embedded in the Istanbul Programme of Action and the Cotonou Conference opens up new partnership corridors, concrete mechanisms and key deliverables to translate the principles into reality. The journey that we have started today will help us transform our economy and help reach a new level of development helping us to tread the path towards graduation,” said Benin’s Foreign Minister Nassirou Bako-Arifari

The meeting saw the launch of several initiatives by organizations including the UN Office on South-South Cooperation and UN-OHRLLS who co-launched a South-South global assets and technology exchange platform, to be hosted by the government of Benin with the support of UNDP. The Cotonou Agenda also called for the establishment of a United Nations Support Centre in order to assist LDCs to increase their ability to attract foreign investment and act as an information bank for investment facilities in LDCs.

The United Nations Decade on Sustainable Energy for All was launched by USG Acharya in Benin. The decade provides an opportunity for LDCs to take action and seek new projects and

partnerships in the energy sector. Sustainable energy is essential for LDCs to improve their ability to trade and produce goods.

The least developed countries represent the poorest and weakest segment of the international community, 48 countries in total. In 2011 a conference of least developed countries and their partners adopted a comprehensive and result-oriented 10-year Istanbul Programme of Action which sets an ambitious overarching goal of enabling half the number of LDCs to meet the criteria for graduation by 2020 with strengthened and renewed global partnership.