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Statement

by

Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya

**Under-Secretary-General and High Representative
for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked
Developing Countries
and Small Island Developing States**

**at the UN-OHRLLS Workshop
for the National Focal Points of LDCs
27 July 2014**

**« Salle du Fleuve Jaune »
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Benin
Cotonou, Benin**

Honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs of Benin, Prof. Nassirou Bako Arifari

My colleague, Mr. Abdoulaye Mar Dieye, Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa, UNDP

Excellencies,
Distinguished National Focal Points,

I thank you very much Honorable Minister for your insightful opening statement. We are extremely grateful to the generosity of the Benin Government and People for their hospitality.

It gives me a great pleasure to join the Minister and welcome you all to our Annual Workshop. As you know, this workshop this time is being held on the day before the very important ministerial conference on Productive Capacity Building generously hosted by the Government of Benin so that all of you can also attend and contribute to its substantive discussions with your vast national experience.

I cannot overemphasize the importance of this annual workshop that brings together the national focal points from LDCs. You are indeed our torchbearers at the country-level and I hope that your active engagement today will create a lively exchange of views and best practices on how best to further consolidate the works related to the full implementation of the 8 priority areas of the Istanbul Programme at the national level including your perspectives on achieving the Programme's overarching goal of putting half of your countries on a path of graduation out of the category by 2020.

Three years into the implementation of the Istanbul Programme, the global economy is still struggling to return to a sustained growth path and the LDCs have been facing a much less propitious environment than in previous years.

Structural change seems to be taking hold in a few LDCs, in particular those that have sustained higher levels of economic growth and diversification. GDP growth for the group reached 5.6% in 2013, up from 4.3% in the previous year. Yet, fewer LDCs expanded at 7% or more, the target set in the Programme of Action, and the share of LDCs in total world trade remained at the 2011 level of 1.13% - a long way to go to reach the target of 2%. FDI has been gradually increasing but remains geographically and sectorally concentrated.

The focus on building robust productive capacity and diversification and value addition in agriculture, manufacturing and services in LDCs as per their endowments must be sustained as they are key to achieving economic transformation and social progress in these countries.

Besides this, human and social development and building resilience from external shocks and disasters including from climate change impacts continues to be a major challenge. Persistent poverty, unemployment, in particular of the youth and women,

and infrastructure development, access to energy, capacity development, institution building and inclusive growth are major obstacles to many LDCs.

There is no doubt that national leadership and ownership is key to progress. National strategy, efforts for domestic resource mobilization and institutional building and good governance all play a very important role in accelerating development efforts.

These challenges have now coincided with the recent decline in official development assistance to LDCs – a decline that has been steeper for LDCs than for other developing countries. Even though the latest OECD report says that in 2013 that there has been an increase for LDCs, after a decline for a couple of years, the trend is still unclear. This is a trend that must be reversed. We are raising our voice on this issue. Allocation of assistance should be commensurate with the needs and challenges of the recipient countries – therefore greater priority should be given to LDCs. This is not only a moral imperative, which it is, but also a matter of enlightened self interest of the international community, as poverty eradication is a global public goods.

Distinguished national focal points,

Notwithstanding the persisting challenges and constraints, it is very encouraging that several LDCs have announced their intention to reach the status of graduation by or around 2020. Countries such as Angola, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Nepal and Rwanda, among others, have set graduation as a goal in their national development strategies. The aspiration of your countries to graduate out of the LDC category stands as a testimony to your commitment to achieve the objectives of the Istanbul Programme while accelerating MDG implementation.

My office has been vigorously engaged in articulating the interests all around, through system-wide coordination among the UN agencies and advocacy before the constituencies beyond the UN, with development partners both traditional and emerging, and with all other financial institutions and relevant philanthropic organizations.

As we approach the end of the MDG era, it is imperative that the provisions of the IPOA are properly mainstreamed into the new development framework beyond 2015. The work of the Open Working Group on the SDGs has just recently concluded and I am happy to report that, thanks to the global understanding which is slowly being developed over the challenges of LDCs with dedicated advocacy work by all the stakeholders, many of the LDCs priorities have got some reflections under the proposed 17 goals. But keeping the momentum and making them sharper, deliverable and coherent with the means of implementation as we all go towards the intergovernmental negotiations remain our common priority. I would like to particularly appreciate the leadership role played by Benin as the chair of LDC to advance the agenda in the negotiations. Our office was very happy to provide full fledged support and relevant analysis in this noble endeavor to the Chair of LDCs as well as the UN system as part of TST.

Excellencies,

Distinguished national focal points,

In conclusion, allow me to underscore the big potential for further cooperation and coordination among LDCs. Many of your experiences and success stories can be replicated in other LDCs. Success breeds success, as it attracts more support and cooperation at all levels. My office will be ready to provide you with appropriate platforms to exchange ideas and lessons learned and share best practices in a more structured manner.

We need regular feedback from you on the status of achievements, challenges encountered and the way forward for the implementation of the IPoA. Your national reports and experiences, as will be shared today, will serve as important inputs for the next annual report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the IPoA to be presented to the General Assembly and the ECOSOC. They will also be an important input to the regional reviews next year in preparation for the MIDTERM REVIEW of the IPoA that is being planned in the coming years to be held in Turkey.

Excellencies

Distinguished national focal points,

The UN system has an important role to play, to ensure timely implementation of the IPoA. National integration is key to attract commitment for international implementation. UNDP has been there on the ground lending its support for you in your endeavors. I myself together with the UNDP Administrator have jointly called for all the LDC resident coordinators to provide support for your efforts for implementation.

From my personal perspective, as someone who was present at the creation of the IPoA - and as one of its main stewards, I assure you of my deep sense of commitment to the full implementation of the programme of Action. It is, and will continue to be, a central priority for me and my office.

Thank you for your kind attention.