



**Statement**

**by**

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

**Ministerial Meeting of Asia-Pacific Least Developed Countries on  
Graduation and the Post-2015 Development Agenda**

16-18 December 2014

Kathmandu, Nepal

Rt. Hon. Prime Minister Sushil Koirala,

Hon. Mahendra Bahadur Pandey, Minister for Foreign Affairs,

Hon. Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat, Minister of Finance

Hon. Prof. Dr. Govind Raj Pokharel, Vice-Chair, National Planning  
Commission,

My colleagues, Mr. Haoliang Xu from UNDP, and Mr. Hiroyuki Konuma from  
FAO

Dr. Arjun Karki, International Coordinator, LDC Watch,

Distinguished visiting Ministers and heads of delegations from the Asia Pacific  
LDCs, development partners, UN and international institutions,

Excellencies,

private sector and civil society representatives,

media persons,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by commending the Government of Nepal for taking the noble initiative of convening the Ministerial meeting of Asia-Pacific LDCs on Graduation and Post-2015 Development Agenda. UNOHRRLLS is very pleased to co-organize this meeting here. I thank the UNDP for their invaluable support. It is a singular honour and privilege for me to make this statement to this August gathering today. We are particularly honored to have the distinguished presence of the Rt. Hon Prime Minister of Nepal despite his extremely busy schedule. The highest level of presence is reflective of his strong commitment to the accelerated development and graduation.

It is indeed a good time to be here. With an increased number of LDCs in the Asia-Pacific region expressing their aspirations and commitments to graduate from the least developed status, the demand for a deeper dialogue on ways and means to reach this goal has grown tremendously. LDCs in the region will identify key drivers of graduation, the right steps in the graduation journey and design comprehensive and coherent support framework.

This meeting fits well for this purpose. On behalf of my delegation and the United Nations system, I would like to express my gratitude for the warm hospitality extended to us and for the excellent arrangements that have been made to make our stay enjoyable.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (UNLDC-IV), the global community adopted the Istanbul Programme, which fundamentally differed from previous programmes of action in that it set an overarching goal of enabling at least a half of LDCs to reach graduation stage by 2020. It also aims at substantially reducing poverty and transforming LDC economies through a strong and coherent focus on productive capacity building. It is founded on a twin pillar of strong national leadership and ownership, and coherent, enhanced and genuine international partnership.

Four years after the adoption of the IPoA, six LDCs have met the graduation criteria, at least once. Of these six LDCs, four are in the Asia-Pacific region. Even more, a growing number of LDCs from this region are expected to join the list of countries qualified for exiting the least developed status by the target date

of 2020. This outlook reflects the combination of continuing positive development trends across Asia-Pacific LDCs and the deliberate and assertive commitment of the leadership across these countries to move toward graduation. But we need to do more to make the change inclusive, rapid and sustainable. That is what we are all collectively deliberating on at this conference.

Indeed, LDCs in the region recognize that graduation is achieved by design and not by chance. Not surprisingly, the long-term vision—which provides the direction, consistency and focus required for effective development process—carries graduation aspirations. LDCs here have therefore formulated or are formulating a road map towards graduation as well as an inclusive and transparent national graduation strategy. Ministerial committees or other institutional arrangements have been established or are expected to be set up to guide, oversee, monitor and evaluate implementation.

The lesson from this ongoing development is that strong national leadership and ownership is key to the graduation process. Moving forward, it is equally important—for the sake of coherence, synergy and effectiveness—that graduation process is part and parcel of national and development strategy.

The path towards graduation should not be an end in itself, but should be viewed as a launching pad towards a meaningful and transformative change in the economic structures and the living conditions of the people in graduated and graduating LDCs. For this reason, sustainable graduation agenda needs to be tied up with that of productive capacity development, gender equality and empowerment, investment in agriculture, infrastructure and energy, structural transformation, resilience building and sustainable improvement in human and social capital. It calls for good governance, rule of law and institutions

building. This justifies even further the need to embed graduation process into national development strategy. It is with the collaboration of all political actors, private sector, civil society and communities that transformative change can take place and becomes broad-based.

Resilience building from disasters and shocks as well as strong adaptation measures from climate change impacts are equally critical. LDCs, be they countries with fragile mountains, low lying lands or small islands, have particular vulnerabilities to such challenges. They consider the alleviation of multi-dimensional poverty, protection of natural capital, equitable growth and environmental protection and climate change impacts as part of their holistic approach to sustainable development. They see them as mutually reinforcing.

Another lesson, which emerges elsewhere—in the intergovernmental process—is that although graduation constitutes a good measure of success and an important milestone in development achievement, it comes both with advantages and challenges. Systematic and coherent regional and global mechanisms are needed to support graduation and to make transition smooth, so as to assuage any anxiety and fear.

Increased traditional international support, strengthened south-south and triangular cooperation, and public-private partnerships—all in the spirit of renewed and strengthened global partnerships and mutual accountability—will be essential in providing strong impetus to graduating and aspiring-to-graduate Asia-Pacific LDCs. They look forward to the targeted and effective support measures in the areas of development financing, trade, debt, technology and capacity-building.

This meeting has the advantage of bringing together the important actors and stakeholders who represent such significant expertise, deep commitment and unique leadership needed to start the discourse on the enabling national, regional and global framework for sustainable graduation. It is my hope that this conversation takes the graduation agenda to another level and informs the upcoming discussions on the post-2015 development agenda and the Financing for Development. An integrated and holistic approach to the eradication of poverty, inclusive and rapid economic growth and environment sustainability are indeed our common aspirations, the framework of which we are working on to agree at the global level through the post 2015 development agenda. Therefore the timing of this meeting could not be more propitious, as transformative and inclusive global agenda will imply to a large extent that LDCs are not left behind, but taken along. Indeed, given the high level of importance of global framework to LDCs, their level of poverty and deprivation, structural constraints and multifaceted challenges, the global framework will succeed only when it delivers for the people in these countries in an inclusive manner. A life of dignity for all naturally puts the LDCs on the frontline. Global support for LDCs in a coherent manner with enhanced commitment in all crucial areas such as ODA in terms of quantity, quality and development effectiveness, development of domestic resource base, private sector development, public private sector partnerships, foreign investment, trade and technology and capacity development would be indispensable for smooth transition and graduation. It is time for international community to deliver on all the commitments effectively, and it is time for LDCs to show leadership and coherence for effective implementation of its programs. graduation aspiration is not only desirable but also doable.

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me take this opportunity to thank all the distinguished delegates from the LDCs, development partners and UN agencies for their invaluable participation in this conference.

I hope that your investment of resources, time and energy and your vision and commitment to deliver will provide further guidance to the journey of Asia-Pacific LDCs toward successful graduation.

Let me also thank the governments of Norway, Germany and Netherlands for making contributions to support this meeting here. I thank you for your kind attention.

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