



Statement

by

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Statement at the Opening Session

**High-level Asia-Pacific Policy Dialogue on the Implementation of
the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed
Countries for the Decade 2011-2020**

4 March 2015

Siem Reap, Cambodia

His Excellency Hon. Mr. Keat Chhon, Permanent Deputy Prime Minister and First Vice-Chairman of the Council for the Development of Cambodia,

His Excellency Mr. Ly Thuch, Senior Minister and Chairman of the National Committee for ESCAP, Cambodia

Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, Under-Secretary General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP,

Mr Taher, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Finance of Bangladesh,

Hon. Ministers, Excellencies,

My colleagues from the UN system,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first commend the government of Cambodia for its leadership in organizing this important policy dialogue and for the wonderful hospitality extended to us. It is so fitting that the meeting is taking place here in Cambodia, which has been making good progress in human development, poverty reduction and economic growth over the years. I am confident that it would be further enhanced ensuring equitable, sustainable and inclusive growth and structural transformation in the years ahead.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific, and Dr. Shamshad Akhtar in particular, for the contributions in supporting the Asia Pacific LDCs in their development efforts and fostering a timely implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action.

The timing of this policy dialogue could not be more opportune. With an increased number of LDCs in the Asia-Pacific region making continuous progress in uplifting the social and economic status of its people, the demand for an in-depth conversation on ways and means to achieve the goals of IPOA has grown tremendously. This was also one of the clear messages emerging from the Kathmandu Ministerial Meeting of Asia Pacific LDCs that we organized with the Government of Nepal in December last year and the expert group meeting on financing for graduation that the Government of Bangladesh organized in Dhaka last year. So there is a commitment on the part of LDCs to accelerate and consolidate progress towards the achievement of IPOA goals including graduation.

Let me reiterate here that IPOA has a very important objective of eradicating poverty, meeting internationally agreed development goals and bringing about structural transformation of LDCs with a view to meeting the criteria of graduation by half of LDCs by 2020. They are indeed ambitious goals yet they are desirable goals. In this day and age of unprecedented global prosperity, revolutions in science and technology and globalization, people in LDCs should not remain entrapped in a vicious circle of poverty deprivation and inequity. Therefore the IPOA calls for mutual accountability. National ownership and leadership should guide the development process complemented strongly by international support and solidarity. It is based on these twin pillars that we can bring about rapid transformation in the lives of people in LDCs.

Furthermore, we are meeting here in Siem Reap against the backdrop of important global processes that are set to transform and shape the development cooperation framework for years to come.

LDCs have an enormous stake in the elaboration of the SDGs and the Post-2015 development agenda, in the financing for development process, disaster risk reduction conference in Sendai as well as in the outcome of the Paris climate change conference and WTO Ministerial in Nairobi this year.

Let me reassure you that my Office in New York and myself are committed to providing our utmost substantive and analytical support to the LDCs so that the specific needs, challenges and aspirations of your countries receive full attention and proper reflection in these landmark UN agreements.

There is widespread consensus on the contours of the post-2105 development agenda and the SDGs. It will be a forward-looking, holistic, universal, transformative and integrated development framework. It will be a substantially expanded agenda, encompassing poverty eradication, inclusive and rapid economic growth as well as environmental sustainability.

Considerable financial costs will be entailed in pursuit of the SDGs.

The SDGs will not only be looking at human development issues like education, health and gender empowerment, but also equitable and rapid economic growth, industrialization, energy and infrastructure; resilience building issues like protection of the natural capital, climate change impacts; as well as systemic issues like peace and security. All of it in an integrated and holistic manner.

Therefore this expanded agenda calls for an equally strong, commensurate package of 'means of implementation' to match the breadth and depth of the new development agenda.

This is certainly of great importance for the LDCs, where national capacity and financial means to address the multidimensional challenges of poverty eradication, inclusive and rapid economic growth and resilience building are limited. Financial constraints in most LDCs suggest that the costs of achieving the SDGs and true economic transformation would have to be met by increased flows of ODA, facilitation of other sources of financing and domestic resource mobilization, if LDCs are to avoid falling further behind and guarantee implementation on the ground for real and transformative changes in the lives of all their people.

A first step would be for donors to fulfill their long-standing commitments to provide the equivalent of 0.15-0.20 of their GNI as ODA to LDCs and set a concrete timetable before the end of 2015 for reaching that goal.

Reaching the target for the LDCs should be possible by ensuring a greater amount of resources in favour of countries with the greatest needs, specifically in view of their limited capacity, incidence of poverty, low domestic resource base and high vulnerability. Allocating 50 percent of total ODA to the LDCs would be a step in the right direction.

As stated earlier, even if the ODA commitments are met for the LDCs, their resource requirements to meet the SDGs will be so high that we must make sure that a necessary mechanism be put in place to increase FDI, trade, South-South cooperation, remittances, innovative financing and domestic resource mobilization in favor of LDCs.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A growing number of LDCs from this region are making good progress. Yet, sustained and inclusive progress is needed over the years to achieve our common goals. This positive outlook reflects the combination of continuing positive development trends across Asia-Pacific LDCs and the deliberate and assertive commitment of the leadership across your countries to move forward towards graduation.

The path towards graduation should not be an end in itself but should be viewed as a launching pad towards meaningful and transformative changes in the economic structures and the life of people in graduated and graduating LDCs. For this reason, any sustainable graduation agenda needs to be tied up with that of productive capacity development, structural transformation, resilience building and sustainable improvement in human and social capital.

Another important dimension is that although graduation constitutes a good measure of success and an important milestone development achievement, it comes with both advantages and challenges. Systematic and coherent regional and global mechanisms to support both graduation and smooth transition are therefore needed so as to assuage any anxiety.

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 making further progress in the Asia-Pacific LDCs with some targeted and effective support measures in the areas of development financing, trade, technology and capacity-building.

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me say a few words about the IPOA Midterm Review. As the midpoint of the decade-long programme of action draws near, the UN General Assembly has tasked my Office with the responsibility to lead the organization of the comprehensive high-level midterm review of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action and coordinate its substantive preparatory process.

The high-level midterm review will be held in June 2016, in Antalya, Turkey, for a period of three days. It will provide an opportunity to undertake an assessment of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action by the LDCs and their development partners.

My Office launched the preparatory process last month. An inter-agency consultative group meeting was held where over 30 UN agencies and international organization, participated. A road map to the Antalya conference was laid out and Agencies have committed to contribute sectoral appraisals on the various priority areas of the Programme of Action as well as the organization of preconference events.

The national level preparations for the midterm review are being launched as we speak. My Office will be sending your capitals a request for the preparation of a national review report, based on an annotated outline that we have prepared and with the support of the UN Country Teams.

The outcome of your discussions here in Siem Reap, to be endorsed by the ESCAP Commission in May, will provide a substantive, invaluable contribution to the midterm review preparatory process by bringing in the perspective from this very dynamic region. The African regional review is being planned for the end of March in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa.

It is expected that the midterm review will result in an inter-governmentally negotiated and agreed outcome in the form of a political declaration.

My Office is also committed to ensuring that the midterm review will produce a number of strong deliverables: (1) a toolkit to facilitate the mainstreaming of the Istanbul Programme into the work programmes of all UN System organizations so as to raise visibility of LDC issues and increase support; (2) the consolidation of support measures across the spectrum of ODA, domestic resources mobilization, remittances, trade and technology transfer and capacity building. (3) operationalization of the Technology Bank for the LDCs; the first meeting of the Secretary-General High Level Panel of Experts took place a few weeks ago in Turkey and my Office was entrusted with the preparation of a feasibility study, as an important step towards supporting technology transfer and innovation in LDCs; (4) the launching of an international investment support mechanism with a view to promoting FDI flows that contribute to LDCs' productive capacity building and structural transformation.

Last but not least, as the midterm review will take place in 2016, we will take the opportunity to see how best the synergy could be ensured between the objectives of the Istanbul Programme of Action, with the outcomes of the United Nations Summit on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, the Financing for Development process and the 21st Session of the Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in a more coherent and integrated way.

Excellencies,

This high-level policy dialogue will help share the best practices, learn lessons and interact on challenges and aspirations. Your active engagement here in Siem Reap, during the preparatory process and at the midterm review conference itself will ensure that the challenges faced by the LDCs and their aspirations are properly addressed by the international community in a spirit of solidarity and support.

I thank you for your kind attention.