



Least Developed Countries in Africa committed to graduating from category of world's poorest countries and improving food security

Press Release

Milan, 9 June 2015 - Ministers from the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in Africa have met in Milan to voice their determination to transform the structure of their economy and graduate from their status as the world's poorest nations.

At a Ministerial Meeting, co-organised by the Government of Italy and the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, high-level participants discussed ways in which inclusive economic growth can be accelerated contributing to sustainable development.

Government representatives from 29 countries as well as experts, including from the United Nations system and other international organizations, think tanks and the private sector, stressed the key drivers of graduation from the LDC category. This included enhancing capacity to produce products and services, the importance of good governance, food security, access to modern energy and infrastructure development.

The meeting was held on the margins of the Expo Milano 2015, the universal exhibition that Italy is hosting from May to October 2015 on the theme: "Feeding the Planet – Energy for Life".

In a Ministerial declaration participants stressed that Least Developed Countries must be prioritized in the upcoming Third Financing for Development Conference to be held in Addis Ababa and United Nations Summit in September on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. They underscored that it is essential that commitments to overseas development assistance are met, in addition to enhancing investment promotion, market access and access to technology. For development to be rapid and sustainable they also stressed stronger national ownership and leadership.

"We must ensure sufficient resources to facilitate needed infrastructure development to foster resilient communities and empower poor and marginalized rural households for inclusive and sustainable development in the LDCs" said High Representative for Least Developed Countries, LLDCs and Small Island Developing States, Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya "There is great potential in these countries. Transformation in LDCs will not only help us eradicate poverty and hunger, but they can be an

important contributor to food security and global peace and prosperity. There is a great global premium on sustainable development of LDCs. It promotes international peace, prosperity and order”

Ministers highlighted the importance of graduation from the LDC category in line with the overarching goal of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) for the LDCs, which calls for at least half of all LDCs to meet the criteria for graduation by 2020. The IPoA is an ambitious set of targets which is due to be reviewed at a mid-term meeting next year. It was emphasized that graduation from the LDC category is a major milestone, which should lead them back towards broad-based growth, human development and better resilience.

Least Developed Countries represent the poorest and weakest segment of the international community. They comprise more than 880 million people (about 12 per cent of world’s population), but account for less than 2 percent of the world’s GDP and about 1 percent of global trade in goods. The LDC category was officially established in 1971 by the UN General Assembly with a view to attracting special international support for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of the UN family. Since then only 4 countries have graduated from the category. However, recent progress with respect to economic and social indicators in a number of countries around the world has enabled more LDCs to reach the thresholds for graduation.

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Louise Stoddard, Public Information Officer, Stoddard@un.org