Statement

by

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Agenda Item 2: Presentation of the Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the IPoA as well as the substantive preparations for the midterm review

Preparatory Meeting of Experts in preparation for the high-level midterm review of the Istanbul Programme for Action

UN Headquarters, New York
Trusteeship Council Chamber

28 March 2016
Distinguished Co-facilitators
Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to extend a warm welcome to you all to this preparatory meeting of experts. I also express my appreciations to His Excellency Mr. Jean-Francis Zinsou, the Permanent Representative of Benin and to Her Excellency Ms. Bénédicte Frankinet for their election as the co-facilitators to lead the consultations on all issues relating to the comprehensive high-level midterm review. I am fully confident that given their diplomatic skills, knowledge and understanding of the issues, we will reach to a successful conclusion of this meeting.

The General Assembly in its resolutions 69/231 and 70/216 has decided to convene the MTR with an extensive mandate to take stock of the status of implementation of the IPoA, share best practices and lessons learned and identify obstacles and constraints encountered. The mandate also includes the provision of further strengthening the global partnership for development for LDCs. The Assembly also encouraged the participants to launch concrete measures, initiatives and partnerships, individually or collectively, that have the potential to further progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action.

The decision of the General Assembly represents the will of the international community to continue to support the development aspirations of LDCs in a comprehensive manner and ensure coherence with other global processes including 2030 Agenda as we start their implementation.

We must bear in mind the broad mandate that the Assembly has provided for the MTR and come up with commensurate level of comprehensive and forward looking outcome document.

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

The General Assembly has mandated my office, to ensure that the preparations are carried out effectively and efficiently and for mobilizing and coordinating the active involvement of the organizations of the United Nations system. Accordingly, I and my office are fully engaged in undertaking substantive preparations for the Review.

A number of preparatory events have already taken place. Two regional reviews, one for African LDCs and another one for Asia and the Pacific LDCs, have already taken place.

LDCs have prepared their national reports on the implementation of the IPoA. A meeting of the national focal points of LDCs was held in December 2015. We convened another meeting of the LDCs national focal points yesterday, just prior to this meeting. These reports and meetings have provided on the ground perspective of aspirations and constraints of LDCs with practical inputs.
The President of the General Assembly organized a one day thematic event on 11 February 2016 focusing on the synergy between the IPoA and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and renewed global partnerships for development. The event came up with concrete recommendations on how to build synergy between IPoA and other ongoing processes.

My office organized a consultative meeting of LDCs and Friends of LDCs, the retreat, on the comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) and discussed about the elements of and approaches to the outcome document.

We have fully engaged the UN system in support of the Mid-term review through inter-agency consultative group mechanism. So far, three inter-agency meetings have taken place. The agencies are taking keen interest in the MTR. So far, we have received more than 40 requests for side events during the MTR. We have also invited the Member States to organize side event and they have responded positively to participate with others or organise it individually.

We are expecting thousands of participants from Member States, representatives of the UN and other international organizations, private sector, civil society and academia.

The MTR will be held at the highest possible political level. The invitation letter from the SG to all Heads of States/Governments has already been transmitted. I would request all distinguished members to confirm their participation at the HoS/HoG level or the highest possible level.

As decided by the GA, there will be opening and closing plenary meetings and four additional plenary meetings, as well as four parallel thematic round-table meetings.

The Assembly has invited the Secretary-General to convene a United Nations system high-level event during the comprehensive high-level midterm review. The Secretary-General has invited all members of the CEB to attend the MTR and the high-level UN system meeting which will be held on 29 May 2016.

There will also be parallel events for the parliamentarians and the civil society organizations simultaneously.

The UNGA resolution also encouraged the host country to organize a Forum on investment opportunities for LDCs. Accordingly, a private sector forum will be held in Antalya on 26 May, one day before the MTR.

As my office is fully engaged in the preparation both substantive and logistics, for the conference, I can assure you that they are going on as planned.

Distinguished Co-Chairs,
I now take this opportunity to introduce the Secretary-General’s report on the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 contained in document A/71/66–E/2016/11.

It is encouraging that there has been a moderate pick-up in economic activity in many LDCs, with GDP for the group has accelerated from 4.3 per cent in 2012 to 5.3 per cent in 2014. However, the performance of LDCs in the area of growth is quite uneven with only 12 LDCs reaching the growth rates of 7% or more in 2014.

The share of manufacturing in LDCs countries remained stable around 10 per cent during the period 2011-2014 representing a slow pace of structural transformation.

Gross capital formation as a percentage of GDP rose only modestly to 25.1 per cent in 2011-2014. The number of Internet users per 100 people almost doubled, from 4.4 per cent in 2010 to 8.6 per cent in 2014, with progress in almost all LDCs. However, the rate is still very low, even compared to other developing countries. Mobile cellular subscriptions increased from 33 per cent in 2010 to 63 per cent in 2014.

Access to electricity in LDCs increased slightly to 34.5 per cent in 2012. LDCs are lagging behind in all aspects of science, technology and innovation. Citizens of least developed countries filed a total of 628 patents in 2013. Only 0.185 per cent of scientific and technical articles published in journals worldwide in 2011 coming from LDCs.

Agriculture still employs the largest share of the population in most LDCs, with an average of 60 per cent. Agricultural productivity remained constant with the index of production per capita standing at around 110 from the baseline of 100 during the period 2004-2006.

LDCs percentage of exports in relation to total world exports is stagnant at 1.1 per cent with dominance of primary commodities in the total export basket. Technology contents are minimum in the export items. In recent years, the geographic diversification of exports from LDCs has increased, with 57 per cent of exports going to developing countries. Duty-free quota-free market access for least developed countries in developed economies increased only slightly, reaching 84 per cent in 2014. At least 18 developing countries are providing preferential market access to least developed countries.

Aid for trade to least developed countries has seen some improvement, with disbursements increasing to $11 billion in 2013.

Net primary enrolment in least developed countries stood at 84 per cent for the period 2011-2013. It is still a matter of great concern that more than 21 million children of primary age were not attending school. The rate of enrolment in secondary education was low compared to other developing countries.

While substantive progress has been achieved in a decade on maternal and child related deaths, they continue to be substantially higher in least developed countries than in other developing countries, because of the initial conditions. Access to safe drinking water and sanitation continues to remain a big challenge.
LDCs are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The damage from natural disasters is far more severe in LDCs due to their lack of adaptive capacities, and the severity and frequency of disasters. From 2010 to mid-2013, people living in these countries were five times more likely to die from climate-related disasters than people living elsewhere. At the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties, the aim to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, as also advocated by the least developed countries, was acknowledged. The task ahead is to ensure ambitious mitigation program across the world, and at the same time to ensure effective adaptation support to LDCs.

The rate of gross domestic savings as a percentage of GDP in LDCs increased to 20 per cent in 2014. The ratio of government revenue to GDP has also increased to 16 per cent, which is a positive sign. However, bilateral ODA to LDCs dropped sharply in 2014, reaching $43.7 billion, representing a decline of 9.3 per cent in real terms from the 2013 level.

In 2014, the total external debt of the least developed countries amounted to $217 billion, an increase of 8.8 per cent. Foreign direct investment (FDI) flows increased by 4.1 per cent in 2014 to $23.2 billion and remittance flows reached to $35.8 billion in 2014.

There has been some progress in the women empowerment in LDCs. The ratio of girls to boys enrolled at the primary level has reached to 0.94 in 2013. There has been some improvement in creating an enabling environment for the private sector in LDCs with several countries are now among the top 100 in the overall ranking of the Doing Business indicators. The commitment to the fight against corruption increased significantly, with 42 least developed countries being parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

There has been some considerable progress in the area of graduation. Until 2011, only three countries (namely Botswana, Cabo Verde and Maldives) graduated from the LDC category. Since then, Samoa graduated from the list in January 2014 and 10 additional LDCs had reached the graduation thresholds as of March 2015, which are at different stages of graduation process. (Equatorial Guinea, Vanuatu, Tuvalu, Angola, Kiribati, Bhutan, Nepal, Sao Tome and Principe, Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste). Furthermore, an encouraging number of least developed countries have announced their ambition to graduate around 2020.

The Office of the High Representative has institutionalized system-wide support to the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action within the framework of the Inter-Agency Consultative Group for LDCs. The Office has developed a set of guidelines and best practices as a toolkit for mainstreaming the activities of the United Nations system, which was considered by the members of the HLCP. The toolkit will be launched at a United Nations system high-level event during the midterm review in Antaly.

One of the important lessons learned from the five-year implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action is that speedy progress requires a holistic and multi-stakeholder approach, a strong sense of direction, commitment to implementation and
effective monitoring and follow-up in order to realign implementation strategies with changing circumstances and lessons learned. All the above-mentioned ingredients of success depend on cogent national leadership, robust international support and mutual accountability.

The development partners need to fulfil at the earliest possible date the upper limit of their commitment to provide the equivalent of 0.2 per cent of their GNI as ODA to LDCs by upholding the principles of aid and development effectiveness. South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation should be able to leverage more resources and investment and serve as a platform for peer learning in support of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action. The national leadership must show strong ownership with multistakeholder approach, generate resources and ensure effective implementation to ensure effective impact on the ground.

The technology bank and science, technology and innovation supporting mechanism dedicated to LDCs should be made operational at the earliest opportunity, with support from all development partners, the global private sector and philanthropic organizations.

I would like to read the final paragraph of the UN Secretary General’s report on implementation of IPOA in LDCs. I quote “For the first time, the international community has aimed at eradicating extreme poverty from the face of the earth. Various studies have shown that if we do not accelerate our programmes in a substantial way, a larger share of the extreme poor are likely to live in least developed countries over the medium term, given the higher rate of their population growth and higher ratio of poverty to population. Owing to the advances that have been made in science and technology, knowledge and information and to the availability of a larger global pool of financial resources, the eradication of poverty is not only desirable but also possible with stronger international cooperation and ever stronger national efforts. The world has so much at stake in the least developed countries. If the world can do it in the least developed countries, it can do it anywhere. The midterm review should be the occasion to reinforce global commitment and redouble efforts towards attaining common objectives in the least developed countries in a more accelerated and coherent manner”.

With that view in mind, I look forward to substantive discussions on the draft outcome document submitted by the Co-Chairs today and the days ahead. My office stands ready to extend all necessary support to the negotiations.

Thank you for your kind attention.