



World's Least Developed Countries must be at the forefront of sustainable development

Press Release

29 May 2016, Antalya. – A major UN meeting focusing on the world's Least Developed Countries has closed today in Turkey with a call for greater support to the world's most vulnerable nations.

The three-day meeting, co-organized by The Government of Turkey and The United Nations' Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, reviewed progress made on the path to sustainable development as set out in The Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) for the Least Developed Countries.

Challenges and opportunities were considered in addition to recommendations for the next five years of implementation, taking into account the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

The meeting, hosted by Turkey, included approximately two thousand participants including high-level officials and representatives from government, parliaments, international and regional organizations, civil society, private sector, foundations, think tanks and the media.

It featured an inter-governmental plenary, four high-level roundtables, 25 side events, a private sector forum, a civil society forum and a pre-conference event hosted by UNFPA and the Government of Bangladesh. A number of initiatives were announced, including the appointment of a Governing Council for the Technology Bank for Least Developed Countries, which will support access to and the better utilization of science, technology and innovation.

"I would like to thank The Government and people of Turkey for generously hosting the Midterm Review of the Istanbul Programme of Action. We are pleased that a number of important initiatives have been put forward that will support the Least Developed Countries to reach their full potential" said Gyan Chandra Acharya, Under-Secretary-General and High-Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

"Strengthening global partnerships and supporting strong national leadership and ownership, will assist almost 1 billion people living in vulnerable countries as they work towards a bright and productive future. It is important that we build solid links between the Istanbul Programme of Action and global development frameworks in order to accelerate progress in the next five years".

The meeting adopted a Political Declaration, in which participants highlighted how the Least Developed Countries have experienced some recent progress in areas including reduced child and maternal mortality rates, gender parity in education and parliaments and access to the internet and mobile networks. Economic growth has also been strong, even though its pace has been more

volatile and below the average of the last decade. There has been an increase in the number of countries fulfilling criteria, which will lead towards graduation from least developed status.

Despite this, much needs to be done to build productive capacity in agriculture, manufacturing and services. Further development of infrastructure and access to energy will have far-reaching effects in Least Developed Countries and help to eradicate poverty and promote sustainable development. Private sector development and the promotion of gender equality and empowerment will accelerate progress. Vulnerability to shocks, including climate change-related ones and others, could roll back hard-won development gains. Building resilience in the least developed countries will therefore play a critical role in sustaining their progress.

The meeting reaffirmed a strong commitment to reverse the decline in Overseas Development Assistance and fulfill the pledge made by development partners to allocate the equivalent of 0.2 per cent of their Gross National Income to Least Developed Countries.

It was emphasized that initiatives and programmes, providing Least Developed Countries with access to duty-free and quota-free markets and offering favorable conditions under which exports qualify for preferential treatment, should be fully utilized. There was a further commitment to increase Aid for Trade to Least Developed Countries.

The international community also committed to undertake a study that will consider ways in which Least Developed Countries can manage and withstand shocks such as natural disasters, health pandemics and economic volatility. It was also agreed to increase the role of the United Nations system in supporting Least Developed Countries to attract an increased flow of foreign direct investment that promotes economic growth and development.

Further Information: www.ipoareview.org

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