Remarks

by

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

Civil Society Forum

11:30 am on 26 May 2016

Antalya, Turkey
Excellency Mr. Naci Koru, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey

Excellency Amb. Masud Bin Momen, Ambassador PR of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh and Chair of the global coordination bureau

H.E. Ms Bénédicte Frankinet, Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations and co chair of the friends of LDCs

Mr. Gauri Pradhan, International Coordinator of LDC Watch

Excellencies, distinguished civil society participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by thanking LDC Watch for organizing this Civil Society Forum. We are grateful for its important work in bringing the voice of civil society from LDCs to our discussions. We are pleased to acknowledge close collaboration with the civil society. We also very much welcome the presence of civil society from all corners of the world. In our common goal to support the least developed countries, your perspectives are extremely important as outlined in the IPOA in terms of effective implementation on the ground. Civil Society has contributed to promote inclusive development, advocate for the interests and aspirations of the marginalized population and areas and foster greater accountability and transparency of governments of development partners and LDCs. Furthermore, you have always called for equity and justice at the national and international levels.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the generous support extended by the Government and the people of the Republic of Turkey, and for their excellent hospitality and facilities.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Civil Society Forum is taking place at a critical juncture for the least developed countries. We are about to start the Midterm Review of the Istanbul Programme of Action, the ambitious compact that we collectively embraced in Istanbul in 2011.

During the last five years, we have witnessed many LDCs who have made good progress. We can attest to the fact that how with adequate and strong support and multi-stakeholder national ownership, societies can thrive including in LDCs. We have seen that when there is progress in the LDCs, it would not only contribute to poverty eradication and sustainable development in their own countries, but also in bringing peace stability and prosperity to their neighbors and the global commute at large. But we have also gained knowledge on where the obstacles are and what we need to do to overcome them in order to realize their potential and translate our vision into sustainable, resilient, inclusive and prosperous societies.

The Midterm Review is the first Intergovernmental Meeting after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other global development framework. The Istanbul Programme of Action is an integral part of the SDGs, as illustrated by the inclusion of key priorities for the LDCs across the Sustainable Development Goals. Besides general goals of eradication of poverty and access to health, education and energy for all, there are over two dozens of specific targets of LDCs. In fact, LDCs occupy a central locus in our common pursuit to guide the world to a more
prosperous, sustainable and resilient path. Accelerating poverty eradication and sustainable development in the LDCs is central to our collective aspiration of leaving no one behind.

Eradicating poverty has been defined as the greatest global challenge. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development commits to eradicate poverty and hunger, combat inequalities, to build peaceful and just societies, to protect human rights and gender equality and to ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources. None of these global goals can be achieved without addressing the special needs of the Least Developed Countries.

Expanding the support of the LDCs to build their productive capacities in agriculture, manufacturing and services remains central to our undertaking. The experience during the last five years clearly shows that poverty reduction and sustainable development in the LDCs necessarily requires transforming the basis of their economies to generate more value, more decent employment and a lasting and sustainable basis for prosperity. Building productive capacities in agriculture, industry and the service sector requires a substantial increase in resources and in the instruments available to the Least Developed Countries to realize their aspirations. Poverty rates among the LDCs are still unacceptably high, unemployment figures are staggering, basic infrastructure is still sorely lacking.

While LDC exports increased by 5.3 per cent in 2013, the share of LDCs in world trade rose marginally, from 1.13 per cent in 2012 to 1.14 per cent, i.e. for about 12-13 per cent of that population. Export structures dominated by primary commodities limit the ability of the LDCs to shift their economies towards higher value-added activities. They need inclusive
and job-rich growth which is essential for accelerating poverty reduction, structural transformation and sustained growth in LDCs.

The LDCs is the group of countries where international public finance can have higher impact and bring higher returns. Structural transformation, however, needs to be supported not only financially, but also through concrete measures. They need enhanced ODA, improvement in domestic resource base, access to technology and home and host country incentives for FDI in LDCs, besides supportive international trade regime. We have accepted these objectives in Istanbul, and we reaffirmed some of those objectives more recently in the form of SDGs. We must work together to make sure that the instruments to accelerate progress are in place, well-funded and effective.

Despite progress in many areas, much still needs to be done to build the LDCs’ productive capacity and reduce their vulnerability to economic crises, climate-related events, natural disasters and health-related threats. Equally important, is better governance at national and international levels, strong national leadership, accompanied by robust and comprehensive global support which can help deliver transformative results in LDCs.

The least developed countries have made substantial efforts to integrate themselves into the global system. However, the LDCs’ collective current account deficit increased to a record level of $49.4 billion in 2014, 40 per cent higher than in 2013 and 87 per cent higher than in 2012. The merchandise trade deficit nearly tripled to $33.6 billion in 2014, as imports rose by $20 billion and exports fell by $1.9 billion. Developing countries absorbed 55 percent exports from LDCs in 2013 compared to 52 per cent in 2012. The marginal tariff preferences enjoyed by LDCs over other
developing countries shrank, particularly for manufacturing products. Thus, the expansion of duty-free and quota-free access to markets, including through more simplified and beneficial rules of origin and a reduction in non-tariff barriers, as well as improvement in the allocation of Aid for Trade and other measures geared towards overcoming supply-side constraints are critical.

The impact of natural disasters and that of climate change in many LDCs have reminded us of the serious capacity constraints of the LDCs to cope with adverse shocks. Severe human and economic losses as a result of natural disasters and climate-change-induced disasters have substantially reversed hard-won development gains. This vulnerability is further heightened with persistent challenges associated with disaster reduction management, such as limited financial and human resources, weak capacity at the local level, and insufficient policy coordination on integrating climate change risks into disaster risk management strategies. Therefore, crisis mitigation and resilience-building measures and effective financing mechanisms specifically targeted to the specific needs of LDCs would be crucial.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Midterm Review presents us with a great opportunity. Sustainable and sustained development requires a multi-stakeholder approach. Civil Society, because of their reach to the grassroots level, advocacy and contributions, play a very important role within LDCs to achieve our lofty objectives. Similarly, your campaign for awareness and advocacy for equity and solidarity at the international level is well appreciated. More importantly, we are here today to set a stronger
foundation for equity and inclusive and shared prosperity in the Least Developed Countries. Your support here and in your own countries and regions is crucial to make sure that we are able to accelerate the implementation of the eight priority areas of the Istanbul Programme of Action in an inclusive and integrated manner and bring synergy with all the global development framework including SDGs.

We look forward to the continued collaboration and strong contribution of civil society to attain all our objectives in LDCs.

I wish the civil society forum a great success.