



**Opening Remarks
by**

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Consultative Meeting of LDCs and Friends of LDCs

Venue: Glen Cove, Long Island

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8 p.m.

- Excellencies
- Distinguished Delegates,
- Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me a great pleasure to welcome you all to this Consultative Meeting on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries.

I would like to thank His Excellency Mr. Masud Bin Momen, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh and Chair of the LDC Group, for his active engagement in leading the LDC Group. I also wish to express special thanks to the Government of Finland for providing continued support to the LDCs and sponsoring this event.

As we are convened here today, in the beautiful setting of Glen Cove Mansion, it is important to note that the world is facing an increasing number of dire challenges. Millions of people are barely surviving in the space between malnutrition and death, vulnerable to diseases and outbreaks. The negative impacts of climate change already affect the everyday life of many of us, for example through increasingly frequent weather events. Numerous conflicts, terrorism, migrant flows and economic instability have become everyday news.

The LDCs are where development challenges intersect the most with those that relate to conflict, humanitarian crisis and climate change. Promoting sustainable economic growth and development, poverty eradication and resilience-building in these countries will therefore go a long way towards preventing conflicts and

humanitarian crises and addressing challenges of vulnerability and extremism—all of which are the centre of the Secretary General's agenda.

This Consultative Meeting therefore takes place at a critical juncture of various key processes taking place at the UN, including the upcoming High-Level Political Forum as well as the on-going UN reform. This meeting offers a unique opportunity to discuss how to ensure that the least developed countries will achieve the sustainable development goals and the objectives of the Istanbul Programme of Action – including accelerated graduation, which can be then feed into other discussions.

Many LDCs have made great strides in their development efforts, based on the mainstreaming of the IPoA and SDGs into their national development plans, taking ownership for their own progress. Nevertheless, more needs to be done in terms of building productive capacity, accelerating structural transformation and addressing economic and environmental vulnerabilities. In this regard, it has been often said that the LDCs are the battleground on which the 2030 Agenda will be lost or won. Without intensified focus and support for LDCs in the implementation of the SDGs, we as the international community, risk failing the agenda in these countries already at the early days of its implementation.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I assumed my new role one month ago. It has been a hectic start, to say the least. The mandate of my Office, advocating for the vulnerable countries, is wide and I am aware of the dimensions of my new responsibilities. Ensuring that the vulnerable countries will not be left behind in the implementation of the sustainable development goals will be my key priority. I am fully committed to work together with all of you in translating the development aspirations set in the global frameworks into action.

That said, our first session tomorrow will therefore focus on localizing sustainable development goals and the Istanbul Programme of Action. It provides an opportunity to exchange views on key accomplishments and critical constraints in implementing the 2030 Agenda and the Istanbul Programme, and how the main challenges can be addressed at national, regional and global levels.

The second session will discuss how support by the whole UN system can help LDCs to achieve the ambitious 2030 Agenda. This is especially critical for the LDCs which, among all groups, depend the most on the UN for policy advice, technical assistance and financial support.

After lunch, we will discuss the financing options to achieve the SDGs and Istanbul Programme of Action. Domestic resources and Official Development Assistance will remain critical to LDCs. However, there is a need to explore other opportunities LDCs can tap into.

The last session will focus on resilience building as it is critical for LDCs to strengthen their capacity to resist and recover from the impacts of various shocks without compromising their long-term development gains.

With this agenda in mind, we hope to gather some key recommendations and best practices on how to accelerate poverty eradication in least developed countries and how the UN system can best support the efforts of the least developed countries in the spirit of leaving no one behind.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

We are very grateful to have many representatives of the Friends of LDCs here with us today. I would like to thank the Permanent Representative of Belgium and co-chair of the Group of Friends of LDCs for joining us today. The support of the Group of Friends is critical. Investing our energies and our support in LDCs is an opportunity to tackle the rising inequalities. Therefore, let us join our forces to work for a truly global development agenda that eradicates poverty and promotes transformative change.

I urge everyone to actively participate and contribute to the discussion today and tomorrow, and I am confident that we will have a meaningful discourse on issues of high relevance to all of us.

I thank you for your kind attention.