



The Permanent Mission of Iceland to the United Nations

**Statement by
Ambassador Hjalmar W. Hannesson
Permanent Representative of Iceland
to the United Nations**

at the

**GA63 – High-level Plenary Meeting Devoted to the Mid-term
Review of the Almaty Programme of Action**

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Mr. President,

I thank you for giving me the floor and since this is my first time at this General Assembly, I would like to congratulate you on your election and wish you well in the important work ahead.

We welcome the efforts made by the Secretary General to ensure effective preparation for the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action and we thank him for his comprehensive report on the implementation of the Programme. I would also like to thank H.E. Ambassador Takasu, Permanent Representative of Japan, for his excellent work in facilitating the consultations on the declaration to be adopted at the end of this meeting.

There have been a number of positive developments in the landlocked developing countries in recent years, and fairly consistent economic growth. The report of the Secretary General shows, however, that considerable effort is needed in the nearest future to improve the competitiveness of the LLDC's, in order to strengthen their participation in the global economy.

We are fully committed to the implementation of the five priorities of the Programme of Action. We recognize that the specific situations of these countries, with their lack of access to the sea, and distances from world markets make eradication of poverty even more challenging. Last year 41% of our bilateral development assistance was directed to LLDC's in Africa and another 30% to important Transit Developing Countries in Africa.

We are concerned that the LLDC's continue to build an unsustainable level of external debt. Iceland is a supporter and financier of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, as well as the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI), both of which have been important for many of the LLDC's.

More is needed on financing for development. The forthcoming meeting in Doha on Financing for Development will test the resolve of the international community and, for its part, Iceland aims to be among the top ODA contributors, having already doubled its budget for development cooperation in the past four years. We will continue to direct most of our bilateral development assistance to the LDC's in Africa, many of which are either landlocked or important transit countries.

Women play a fundamental role in development, and experience has shown that support for the education, health and economic activities of women has a multiplier effect for their communities. For this reason we have increasingly directed our development cooperation at gender specific projects. This has been done through our bilateral programmes in the partner countries and through support to the work of UNFPA and UNIFEM.

To conclude Mr. President

Aid for trade, which Iceland supports, is an important initiative that can reduce the adverse effect of the LLDC's geographic location and should be a part of a broader development policy for the LLDC's. We will continue to advocate increased liberalization of international trade. The setback of the Doha Development Round could slow down the integration of the LLDC's into the world economy. That makes it even more urgent than ever that we facilitate market access for goods originating in these countries and ensure at all levels a broad range of trade facilitation measures. It is our duty to do what we can to offset the high transit and transport costs facing businesses in the LLDC's.

Thank you, Mr. President