

Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC-IV)

9-13 May 2011 (Istanbul, Turkey)

Civil Society Briefing Paper



The upcoming LDC-IV in early May 2011 in Istanbul is a key landmark for LDCs. The road from Brussels to Istanbul, spanning a decade of advocacy and campaigns towards advancing the interests of LDCs, also marks the 10th anniversary of LDC Watch since it evolved out of the NGO Forum held in parallel to LDC-III in 2001. At LDC-III, a few like-minded civil society allies came together informally and agreed to continue the momentum of engagement with all relevant stakeholders for the cause of LDCs – the most vulnerable and marginalised group in the radar of development politics. Consequently, to “watch” the outcome of LDC-III, the Brussels Declaration and Programme of Action for the LDCs for the Decade 2001-2010 became the *raison d’être* of LDC Watch.

Having said this, positioning itself with a critical perspective towards the Brussels Programme due to its limitations, LDC Watch envisioned to go beyond the Brussels Programme in addressing poverty, hunger, social injustices and human rights in the LDCs. This meant mobilising and consolidating people’s will, strength, commitment and most importantly, people’s alternatives to bring about the urgently required paradigm shift in the existing development process. The decade-long road has seen struggles but not without successes and it is with this spirit that we are gearing towards Istanbul where the next Programme of Action for the LDCs for the new generation will be adopted. Therefore, at this critical threshold, we call upon the global civil society and peoples to join us in the making of a new LDC agenda that places people’s development at its centre while embracing human dignity for all. Istanbul must genuinely mark the 25th anniversary of the UN Right to Development for the peoples of LDCs!

Dr. Arjun Karki
International Co-ordinator
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Context

The United Nations (UN) first recognised the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in the late 1960s as the most vulnerable group of the international community and therefore requiring special development attention. The International Development Strategy for the second United Nations Development Decade for the 1970s incorporated special measures in favour of the LDCs. In 1971, the UN identified 24 countries of the world as LDCs based on their Gross Domestic Product (GDP), share of manufacturing in GDP and adult literacy rate. The current criteria of defining LDCs are based on Gross National Income (GNI), human assets and economic vulnerability.

The UN has organised three major conferences on the LDCs in the last three decades, each coming up with specific Programmes of Action for the LDCs. However, little substantial progress has been made towards achieving sustainable development and poverty eradication in the LDCs. Today, the number of LDCs has more than doubled to 49 – with 33 in Africa, 15 in the Asia-Pacific and 1 in the Caribbean. A recent UN Report, titled “Rethinking Poverty: Report on the World Social Situation 2010”, highlights that “poverty levels remain stubbornly and unacceptably high in sub-Saharan Africa and in South Asia”, home to all of the 33 African LDCs and 5 Asian LDCs.

The Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC-IV), scheduled to be held from 9-13 May 2011 in Istanbul, Turkey, will mark the adoption of the next-generation Programme of Action for the LDCs leading to 2020.

UN Conferences on the LDCs: LDC-I, LDC-II, LDC-III

The First United Nations Conference on the LDCs (LDC-I) was held in Paris in 1981, which adopted a comprehensive Substantial New Programme of Action (SNPA) for the 1980s for the LDCs. The SNPA was subsequently endorsed by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in its Resolution 36/194 of 17 December 1981. To sustain focus of the international community on the need for special development measures for these countries, the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC-II) was held in 1990, also in Paris, adopting the Paris declaration and the Programme of Action for the LDCs for the 1990s.

In order to assess the results of the LDC Programme of Action during the 1990s, UNGA in its Resolution 52/187 of 18 December 1997 decided to convene the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC-III) and in its Resolution 53/182 of 15 December 1998, accepted the offer of the European Union (EU) to host the Conference. LDC-III was held from 14–20 May 2001 in Brussels which consequently adopted the Brussels Declaration and Programme of Action for the LDCs for the Decade 2001–2010 (BPoA) that was endorsed by UNGA in its Resolution 55/279 of 12 July 2001. An NGO Forum was also held in Brussels in parallel to LDC-III. This was the first time that the role and contributions of civil society actors were explicitly recognised and institutionalised as part of the UN LDC Conference process. The Civil Society Forum (CSF), which will be held in parallel to the Fourth United Nations Conference on LDCs, is a continuation of the process of fostering effective participation of civil society members in the review of the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action adopted during LDC-III.

Brussels Programme of Action (BPoA)

The Brussels Programme provides a “framework for partnership” between the LDCs and their development partners carrying the overarching goal of

making “substantial progress towards halving the proportion of people living in extreme poverty and suffering from hunger by 2015 and promot[ing] the sustainable development of the LDCs”. It contains 30 international development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration. The Programme is based on shared but differentiated responsibilities or mutual commitments between the LDCs and their development partners, and articulates the policies and measures by the LDCs in seven interlinked areas: 1) fostering a people-centred policy framework; 2) good governance at national and international levels; 3) building human and institutional capacities; 4) building productive capacities to make globalisation work for LDCs; 5) enhancing the role of trade in development; 6) reducing vulnerability and protecting the environment; and 7) mobilising financial resources.

The Programme contains ten cross-cutting priority issues: poverty eradication, gender equality, employment, governance at national and international levels, capacity-building, sustainable development, special problems of landlocked and small island LDCs, and challenges faced by conflict-affected LDCs. Its implementation is guided by the following five principles: 1) an integrated approach; 2) genuine partnership; 3) country ownership; 4) market considerations; and 5) result orientation. It is well recognised in the Programme that success will critically depend on effective follow-up, implementation, monitoring and review at the national, regional and global levels. For this purpose, by its Resolution 56/227, UNGA has also established the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) at the UN Headquarters in New York.

Fourth UN Conference on the LDCs (LDC-IV)

In its Resolution 63/227 of 2008, UNGA decided to convene the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC-IV) and further decided during its 64th Session in 2009 that the Conference would be held for five days in Turkey during the first half of 2011. LDC-IV is now scheduled to take place from 9–13 May 2011 in Istanbul, Turkey.

On the basis of the modalities set out in the UN Secretary General’s Note of August 2008 (A/63/284) and in accordance with UNGA Resolution 63/227, the LDC-IV will assess the implementation of the BPoA, reaffirm the global commitment for LDCs and consequently adopt the next development action for the LDCs.

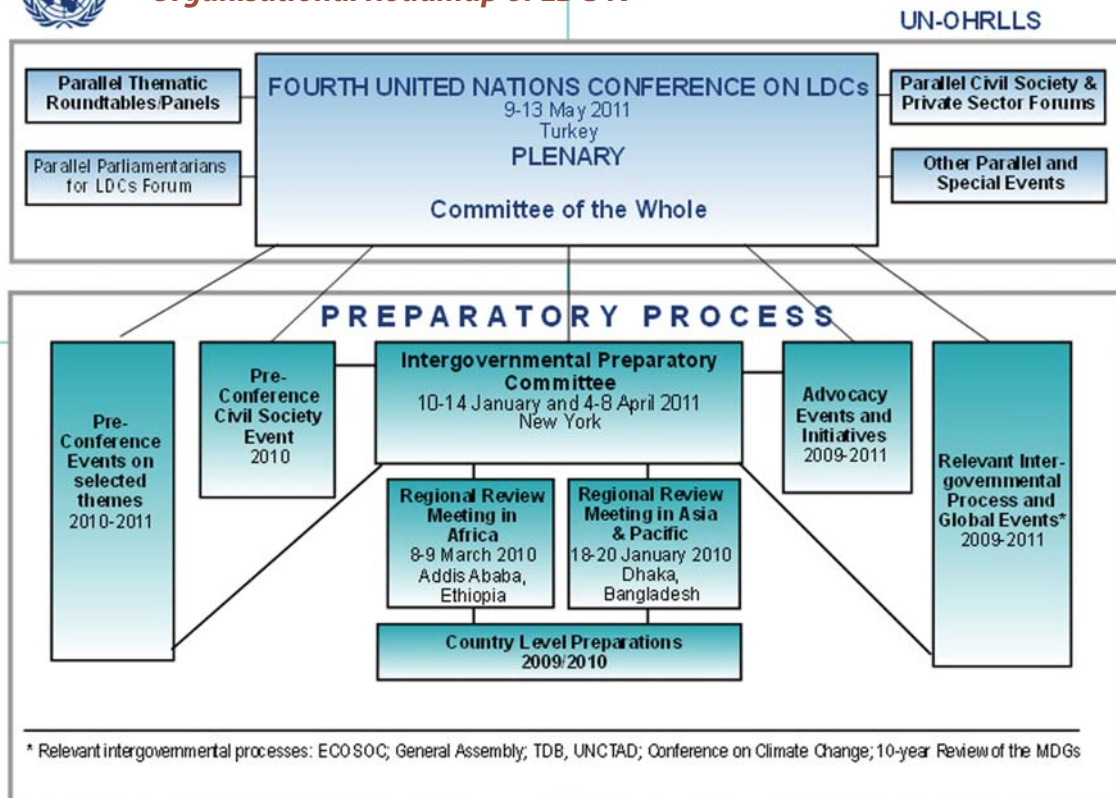
Preparations for LDC-IV are currently underway at national, regional and global levels, with a series of pre-conference events and two Intergovernmental Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) meetings that will be held in 2011 ahead of the Conference. The first session of the Intergovernmental PrepCom will take place in New York, from 10 to 14 January 2011 and the second session will also be held in New York from 4 to 8 April 2011. In a new GA resolution, dated 22 November 2010, the President of the General Assembly (PGA) has been requested to organise a day of informal interactive hearings with members of the civil society before the second session of the Intergovernmental PrepCom. On 17 December 2010, the organisational session of the Intergovernmental PrepCom fixed the date for the interactive hearings with civil society for 1 April 2011.

The main components of the preparatory process and the Conference itself constitute the inter-governmental track, parliamentary track, international organisations track, civil society track and the private sector track.

UNGA has appointed UN-OHRLLS to coordinate the Conference and its preparatory activities. Mr. Cheick Sidi Diarra, Under-Secretary-General, Special Adviser on Africa and High Representative for the Least Developed



Organisational Roadmap of LDC-IV



Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS), is providing leadership to the preparatory process and organisation of the Conference in his role as Secretary General of LDC-IV.

Bureau Members of the Intergovernmental Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) for LDC-IV

The organisational session of the Intergovernmental PrepCom, on 17 December 2010, elected the following Bureau members:

Finland	H.E. Mr. Jarmo Viinainen, Permanent Representative to the UN as Chair
Australia	H.E. Mr. Gary Francis Quinlan, PR to the UN as Vice-Chair
Slovenia	H.E. Ms. Sanja Štiglic, PR to the UN as Vice-Chair
Hungary	H.E. Mr. Csaba Körösi, PR to the UN as Vice-Chair
India	H.E. Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri, PR to the UN as Vice-Chair
Bangladesh	H.E. Mr. Abulkalam Abdul Momen, PR to the UN as Vice-Chair
Ethiopia	H.E. Mr. Aman Hassen Bame, c.d.a., PR to The UN as Vice-Chair
Malawi	H.E. Mr. Brian G. Bowler, PR to The UN as Vice-Chair
Haiti	H.E. Mr. Léo Mérorès, PR to the UN as Vice-Chair
Dominican Republic	H.E. Mr. Federico Alberto Cuello Camilo, PR to the UN as Vice-Chair
Turkey	H.E. Mr. Ertugrul Apakan, PR to the UN, ex-officio as host country
Nepal	H.E. Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya, PR to the UN, ex-officio as Chair of the LDC Co-ordination Bureau

Benin H.E. Mr. Jean-François Régis Zinsou, PR to the UN, **ex-officio as member of the LDC Co-ordination Bureau**

Solomon Islands H.E. Mr. Collin D. Beck, PR to the UN, **ex-officio as member of the LDC Co-ordination Bureau**

Sudan H.E. Mr. Daffa-Alla Elhag Ali Osman, PR to the UN, **ex-officio as member of the LDC Co-ordination Bureau**

LDC-IV Civil Society Track

The importance of civil society and its contributions has been recognised in UNGA Resolution 63/227. In the context of the civil society track, LDC Watch has been entrusted by the UN-OHRLLS with globally coordinating the civil society process towards and at the LDC-IV.

As part of this process, LDC Watch has been leading the organisation of civil society consultations with the objective of reviewing the implementation of the BPoA and strategising on the way towards LDC-IV and beyond.

LDC Watch

LDC Watch is a global alliance of national, regional and international civil society organisations, networks and movements based in the LDCs and supported by civil society from development partner countries. LDC Watch acts as a coordinating body for LDC civil society to advocate, campaign and network for the realisation of the Brussels Programme of Action (BPoA) as well as other Internationally Agreed Development Goals (IADGs). For the past decade, LDC Watch has been raising its voice and articulating LDC civil society perspectives in a multi-stakeholder framework, engaging with the UN, LDC governments and their development partners, both as partner and pressure group.

Mobilisation of civil society is planned in each LDC. To date, several consultations with mixed groups of local, national and international civil society organisations, and other concerned stakeholders have already taken place.

At the regional level, in partnership with the UN-OHRLS and relevant UN agencies, the following three consultations have been organised:

- Africa LDC Civil Society Assembly from 4-5 March 2010, Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) in the lead-up to the official regional review in Africa
- Pacific LDC Civil Society Assembly from 3-6 August 2010, Port Vila (Vanuatu) in parallel to the forty-first official Pacific Islands Forum
- Asia LDC Civil Society Assembly from 22-23 November 2010, Bangkok (Thailand)

All civil society organisations are required to be accredited to participate at the LDC-IV including the informal hearings with civil society. The online accreditation process for the LDC-IV as well as for the informal interactive hearings is now open at www.un-ngls.org/ldc4/registration/conference/en/ and www.un-ngls.org/ldc4/registration/hearings/en/ respectively.

LDC-IV Civil Society Forum

The civil society track will culminate at the Civil Society Forum that will take place in parallel to the official event. The CS Forum will open two days before the start of the official conference and continue until the end of the conference. It will bring together not only NGOs from LDCs but all representatives of the civil society, including women's movements, youth movements, trade unions, peasant federations, media, human rights defenders and renowned cultural artists from all over the world.

The Civil Society Forum will comprise of the following:

- Formal opening of the Civil Society Forum
- Plenary meetings of the Forum
- Thematic seminars
- Dialogue with the official conference
- Press briefings
- Strategy meetings
- Cultural performances and Exhibitions

The International Coordinator of LDC Watch, Dr. Arjun Karki, is working as the Chairperson and Spokesperson of the Civil Society Forum.

LDC-IV Civil Society Steering Committee

The Civil Society Steering Committee of the Civil Society Forum was officially launched by High Representative Cheick Sidi Diarra on 19 October 2010 at the UN Headquarters in New York. The Steering Committee will meet at least four times during the preparatory process. Two of the meetings will be scheduled to coincide with the meetings of the Preparatory Committee. LDC Watch will be leading the Civil Society Steering Committee, comprising of the following members:

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