



REPORT ON THE GUINEA CONSULTATION

It was held on May 11, 2018, in the capital, Conakry. It was hosted by the LDC Watch Focal Point, CECIDE, represented by its Executive Director, Mister Kabinet Cisse.

LDC Watch was represented by its President, Demba Moussa Dembélé, from Senegal.

A) Opening Ceremony

Mister Kabinet Cisse was the first to take the floor. He welcomed all participants for taking time to respond to CECIDE's invitation. He then thanked the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation for sending a representative to the Consultation. He thanked LDC Watch and its President for giving them the opportunity to hold the Consultation. He reiterated his organization's commitment to be a true Focal Point for LDC Watch and disseminate the network's policies and documents within the Guinea CSOs. He then put the Consultation in the Guinea national context and explained its significance for CECIDE and the country's CSOs

Then, Demba Moussa Dembélé took the floor on behalf of LDC Watch. He thanked CECIDE for hosting the Consultation and the representative of the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation. He said that the Guinea Consultation is part of a series of Consultations organized by LDC Watch for its constituencies, not only in Africa but also in Asia Pacific. Guinea comes after consultations held in Senegal and Mali, in recent weeks. More consultations are planned in other African LDCs.

Mister Dembele gave some background information on LDC Watch, since its launch in Brussels (Belgium), during the Third UN Conference on LDCs (UN LDC-III) in 2001. Since then, LDC Watch has developed into a full-fledged international network, with affiliates in all LDCs in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean (Haiti). It has become the leading voice for the advocacy of LDCs' issues at the United Nations and with other inter international organizations.

He highlighted LDC Watch role during the Fourth UN Conference on LDCs (UN LDC-IV) in Istanbul (Turkey), during which LDC Watch organized the very successful Civil Society Forum, which brought together more than 400 representatives of CSOs from around the world.

After that introduction on LDC Watch, Mister Dembele explained the importance and objectives of the National Consultation on the Istanbul Program of Action (IPoA) and its coherence with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The last speaker was Mister Chaïkou Yaya Diallo, from the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation. He delivered a message from the Minister, who welcomed the Consultation and said that it was a good opportunity to share information with CSOs on how the Guinea government tried to adopt its economic policies to the objectives of the Istanbul Program of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals.



I) Overview of the IPoA and SDGs

Mister Dembele gave an overview of the main objectives of Istanbul Program of Action (IPoA) and the SDGs and tried to show the coherence between the two. He briefly explained the origins of the LDC category, as decided the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 1971, and the criteria that characterize an LDC. He said that the IPoA was fourth of its kind, after previous programs of action for LDCs, in 1981 and 1991 (in Paris, France) and in 2001 (in Brussels Belgium). However, these programs were not successful since the number of LDCs went from 24 in 1981 to 47 now, with 34 in Africa. Another illustration of their failure is that since 1981, only four (4) countries had graduated before the Istanbul Conference: Botswana; Cape Verde; Maldives; and Samoa. The fifth, Equatorial Guinea, graduated in 2017.

The failure of the previous programs of action led to the Fourth United Nations Conference on LDCs (UN LDC-IV), in Istanbul (Turkey) in May 2011, which adopted a more ambitious agenda for the LDCs, with the aim of graduating half of the LDCs by 2020.

1) The Istanbul Program of Action (IPoA)

The Istanbul Program of Action made a critical assessment of the Brussels Program of Action (BPoA), by exposing its weaknesses, in particular its impact on structural transformation, job creation and LDCs' role in global trade. The IPoA called for new mechanisms of support for the LDCs for the 2011-2020 decade, with an important role assigned to South-South cooperation. It proposed eight (8) priority areas, which are critical to the graduation process.

However, the framework proposed by IPoA is not very different from the previous ones. This is why LDC Watch and other CSOs and international networks were skeptical about its ability to realize the objectives adopted in Istanbul. Their skepticism was vindicated during the assessment made by both official and civil society delegates at the Mid-Term Review held in Antalya (Turkey)

2) The Mid-Term Review in Antalya (Turkey)

It was organized by the United Nations in May 2016 in Turkey, with the aim of assessing the implementation of the IPoA, examining its shortcomings and seeking ways of remobilizing all stakeholders to get more progress by 2020. In fact, mid-way through its implementation, the IPoA had made little progress toward fulfilling its main goal of cutting LDCs by half. The main critique came from the successful Civil Society Forum, organized by LDC Watch. Also, LDC government representatives acknowledged that their countries have not been able to achieve meaningful progress in several of the 8 priority areas of the IPoA.



One of the reasons for the lack of progress is that many countries are lagging behind in terms of economic growth, unemployment, food security, domestic resource mobilization, social development, good governance, etc. For instance, due to the fall in commodity prices, very few countries have achieved growth rates of 7% or more, needed to get on the path to graduation. As a result, LDCs' trade deficit widened, which means the need for more external assistance to close the gap in their budgets. In the agricultural sector, food production is still at low levels and many LDCs are net food importers. Therefore, poor economic performance and shortage of financial resources explain why there is little progress in terms of poverty eradication in many LDCs.

On gender issues, there is still a long way to go in many countries to fulfill the goals set in the IPoA. All in all, like previous Programs, the IPoA is not likely to fulfill its promises. In the next four years, it is very unlikely that more than 10 countries could graduate from the LDC category.

3) The SDGs

The presenter first refreshed the participants' memory about the SDGs. Then, she examined the coherence between the objectives of the IPoA and the SDGs. She observed that the LDCs are a target for the SDGs and the IPoA as well. To illustrate, she indicated that the SDGs, like the IPoA, through its 8 priority areas, include the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental, as well as poverty eradication. Another similarity is that while the SDGs aim to eliminate extreme poverty by 2030, the IPoA aims to cut the number of LDCs by half by 2020.

Furthermore, the second SDG (zero hunger) with the doubling of agricultural productivity and farmers' income by 2030 is similar to the first and second priority areas of the IPoA (enhancing productive capacity and ensuring food security) which also aim to double production and eradicate hunger.

In conclusion, he said that the IPoA and the SDGs are a global approach to eradicating poverty and promoting sustainable development. For LDCs to benefit from their implementation, there should be synergy and coherence with the IPoA. However, the IPoA is not likely to achieve its main goal of cutting by half the number of LDCs by 2020.

II) Guinea: adapting policies to the IPoA and SDGs

Mister Dembele's presentation was followed by Mister Chaïkou Yaya Diallo, representing the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation. He explained that Guinea has put together a National Program of Economic and Social Development, a framework within which all national policies are elaborated. It has integrated the IPoA and SDGs into its objectives and targets.



However, the implementation of the Program was overshadowed by the break of the Ebola epidemic, which hard hit Guinea for several months and disrupted governmental activities in almost all areas. The country used its resources and those from development assistance to try to cope with the epidemic. This is why most of the objectives of the National Program for Economic and Social Development could not be achieved.

In fact, the Ebola break showed that in many areas, Guinea has major weaknesses and its State was more fragile than thought before. As a result, Guinea has been named a **Fragile Country**, along with two dozen other countries.

III) Guinea as Fragile State

Mister Ibrahima Seck, a Consultant with the Ministry of Mining and Geology, briefed participants on the so-called Fragile States. He said that, Guinea, along with 19 other countries in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean, are a group called Fragile States, needing special attention from the international community. This is why these countries are benefiting from a special agenda, called the **New Deal**, characterized by four key principles: 1) promote legitimate and inclusive policies; 2) build security forces with a republican culture; 3) promote an independent judicial system; 4) build an administration supportive of economic and social development.

Within that New Deal, Guinea has proposed a program to its partners. If the response is positive, the country could receive substantial resources to invest in key areas, improve its governance and take the road toward the end of its status as a least developed country.

IV) The Debates

There were more questions than contributions from participants. The questions revolved around the link between the MDGs and the SDGs, the role of LDC Watch and its constituencies in the implementation of the IPoA; and the level of implementation of the Guinea Plan. Some participants wondered whether the SDGs can have a better outcome than the MDGs. Others raised doubts on the effectiveness of the policies linked to both IPoA and the SDGs.

Others, still wondered why Guinea still remains an LDC, despite its abundant natural resources and the level of investments.

In conclusion, recommendation was made for CECIDE to provide more information on the IPoA and SDGs, mobilize more CSOs around them, and work more closely with the relevant departments in the government.

V) Interview with National Television



Demba Moussa Dembele was interviewed on Guinea National Television, on the objectives of the Consultation, and the role of Guinean civil society organizations in the implementation of both the IPoA and SDGs. The interview was shown on the prime time news broadcast the same night.