

REPORT ON
NATIONAL CONSULTATION ON IMPLEMENTATION OF ISTANBUL
PROGRAMME OF ACTION (IPoA) in MALI AND ITS COHERENCE
WITH AGENDA 2030
IN MALI

3 May 2018, Bamako, Mali

Organized by:

LDC Watch



in collaboration with

Centre Amadou Hampâté BA (CAHBA)



I) Introduction

The Mali Consultation was held on May 3, 2018, hosted by the LDC Watch Focal Point, Centre Amadou Hampâté Bâ (CAHBA), with the presence of its President, Madame Aminata Traore.

LDC Watch was represented by Demba Moussa Dembélé, LDC Watch President and Focal Point in Senegal.

A) Opening Ceremony

Madame Aminata Traore welcomed all participants for taking time to respond to her invitation. She then thanked LDC Watch for the renewed trust in CAHBA and for making this Consultation possible in this particular Malian context. She reiterated her organization's strong support for LDC Watch and pledged, as a Focal Point, to continue to reach out to more Malian CSOs so as to strengthen LDC Watch standing in the country.

She said that the Consultation comes at an opportune time and will give the opportunity to debate on the country's real situation and explore policy alternatives that may be available to it in the current context dominated by security issues. She invited participants to be bold in their contributions and make useful recommendations for her organization and the Malian CSOs.

Then, Demba Moussa Dembélé took the floor on behalf of LDC Watch. He thanked CAHBA and its President for hosting the Consultation and explained the context in which it was being held and the expected outcomes. He said that the Mali Consultation is part of a series of Consultations organized by LDC Watch in order to strengthen its constituencies, in Africa and elsewhere. Mali comes after the Consultation held in Senegal in March and before the one planned in Guinea, soon after.

Mister Dembele went on to give 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 strong international network, with affiliates in most of the LDCs in Africa, Asia, Pacific and the Caribbean (Haiti). It has become the leading CSO interlocutor on LDCs' issues for the United Nations, the UN-OHRLLS and for 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 several hundred 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).

Overview of the IPoA

Mister Dembele gave an overview of the Istanbul Program of Action (IPoA). After explaining the origins of the LDC category, by the ECOSOC in 1971, he indicated the three criteria that make a country an LDC. He said the IPoA is the fourth program for LDCs, after the three previous programs of action adopted by the UN Conferences on LDCs, in 1981 and 1991, in Paris (France) and in 2001, in Brussels (Belgium). Despite these programs of action and the commitments made by the UN and developed countries, the number of LDCs has not diminished. Quite the contrary, since their number has almost doubled, from 24 in 1981 to 47 now. 33 out of 47 LDCs are in Africa.

So, it is against this general background that the Fourth United Nations Conference on LDCs (UN LDC-IV) was held in Istanbul (Turkey) in May 2011 and adopted the Istanbul Program of Action (IPoA) for the decade 2011-2020.

The Istanbul Program of Action seems to be more ambitious than the previous ones because it aims to cut by half the number of LDCs, by 2020. It identified 8 priority areas with the objectives to be achieved in each of them. The IPoA proposed a new international cooperation framework for LDCs, in which South-South cooperation should play a key role.

However, the IPoA does not depart much from the Brussels Program of Action (BPoA). This is why LDC Watch, leading CSOs and international networks, present in Istanbul, strongly criticized the IPoA and raised doubts about its ability to make a difference. They seem to be vindicated by the assessment of the IPoA implementation at the Mid-Term Review of 2016.

The Mid-Term Review in Antalya (Turkey)

It was organized by the United Nations in May 2016 in Turkey. LDC Watch organized a very successful Civil Society Forum, with the participation of the UN under Secretary General and Head of the UN-OHRLLS. It was a general view that mid-way through its implementation, the IPoA is not delivering in several areas.

Several factors account for this. One factor is the economic growth rate, below the 7% targeted by the IPoA. This is due to the fall of commodity prices on which most LDCs depend. This has a negative impact on employment, food security, and social development. For instance, on gender issues, there is still a long way to go in many countries to fulfill the goals set in the IPoA. In conclusion, there is little hope that the IPoA will achieve some of its key objectives, in the next two and a half years before 2020. Cutting the number of LDCs by half by 2020 is mission impossible when one knows that since 1981, only five (5) countries have graduated: Botswana; Cape Verde; Maldives; Samoa, and Equatorial Guinea. Other countries may graduate before 2020 or soon after, like Angola, Vanuatu and Tuvalu, but the number will not reach the target set by the IPoA.

Coherence with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The presenter explained that the SDGs were adopted by the United Nations in 2015, after the conclusion of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). There are 17 SDGs with more than 150 targets. Then, he examined the coherence between the objectives of the IPoA and the

SDGs. He observed that both aim to eradicate extreme poverty, promote sustainable development, environmental protection and social development.

Furthermore, SDG 2 (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 eliminate hunger.

There are other areas of coherence between the IPoA and the SDGs that could benefit LDCs. However, the real challenge is whether the commitments made by LDCs' governments and their partners as well as the UN system will be fulfilled.

Questions & Answers

Before the next presentation, some participants raised a few questions, about the IPoA and the SDGs, the graduation process and the situation in Senegal and other West African countries. Some participants asked what makes the IPoA different from previous Programs of Action so as to have such an ambitious agenda. Others asked how one can expect success with the IPoA, given it is not very different from previous programs that failed since 1981.

With regard to the graduation process, participants asked how it works. Some wondered whether it was not based more on political issues than on economic criteria. The response was no, even if some political factors may interfere. With regard to Senegal, people asked whether it would graduate before 2020 and whether other West African countries may graduate as well.

Other participants expressed doubts that the IPoA and the SDGs could be of much help to Mali since they are not very different from past programs that have so far failed.

These few reactions set the stage for the presentations by the panelists

II) Mali: the implementation of IPoA and SDGs overshadowed by security issues

The panelists agree that the invasion of the North and the interventions of foreign forces since 2012 have made security issues the overriding concern for the government and its partners. This has overshadowed the debate over economic and social policies in the country.

They explained that before the invasion, the government had crafted in December 2011 a program called Strategic Framework for Growth and Poverty Reduction (SFGPR) for the 2012-2017 period. That Framework was in line with the IPoA recommendations. But it was not implemented properly, due to security concerns, political instability and lack of financial resources, as a result of many donors' reluctance to deliver their promises as official development assistance (ODA).

The panelists claimed that since the invasion of the Northern part of the country and the subsequent war against terrorist groups that ensued, the overriding concern was the end of the invasion and the recovery of national integrity. Despite the intervention of French forces and the presence of UN peace-keeping forces, security is still high on the country's agenda.

In fact, the panelist argued that the collapse of the Mali State, which was exposed by the invasion of the North, is in part the result of neoliberal policies, imposed, first through structural adjustment policies (SAPs), then through World Trade Organization (WTO) rules and other “free trade” agreements. Given that background, all panelist wondered whether it is possible for the IPoA and the SDGs to help Mali recover and make economic progress since these programs are not much different from the previous ones. This raises the question of alternatives, which should be the focus of the debates, they concluded.

III) The Debates

Most of the debates revolved around the failure of the neoliberal economic policies and the search for alternatives. Almost all the speakers said that neoliberal policies have destroyed the Malian society, with the spread of poverty and the collapse of the State. The end result has been the rise of unemployment, and despair for the youth, with as only alternatives for them either migration to Europe, with its tragedies, or the temptation of joining jihadist groups.

Therefore, many speakers said that Mali should break with neoliberal policies and take its own destiny into its hands. Several participants claimed that this was the case during the term of the first President, Modibo Keita. At that time, Mali was a proud nation, respected in Africa and elsewhere, because its policies were built on the search for self-reliance and the promotion of endogenous development. There was a sense of pride in the Malian people, with a leadership which had an ideal and cared for the people. Most of those values are lost now.

Several other speakers insisted on reclaiming some of those values by reorganizing the educational system, with the reintroduction of national language. Others claim that there is need to rebuild the State, and the national defense forces. Because, with a failed State, no economic or social policy can succeed.

However, the conclusion was that Mali should try to make the best of the IPoA and SDGs by looking at specific areas where these programs could be helpful.

Live Broadcast of the Debates

The Consultation was broadcast live by a popular radio station, named GEKAFO, which means “public forum”, in national language. So, the debates were followed by hundreds of listeners in the capital, Bamako, and outside. Madame Traore and some other participants gave interviews to the radio after the debates.

Annex 1 : Photographs





Annex 2: Registration Sheet

Consultation Nationale sur la mise en œuvre du Programme d'Action d'Istanbul et les Objectifs de Développement Durable (ODD)

Bamako, le 03 Mai 2018

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