



STATEMENT BY DR ARJUN KARKI, INTERNATIONAL CO-ORDINATOR OF LDC WATCH AND CHAIR AND SPOKESPERSON OF THE LDC-IV CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM, AT THE INFORMAL INTERACTIVE CIVIL SOCIETY HEARING OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, NEW YORK, APRIL 1, 2011

Madam Chair Ambassador Susan Waffa-Ogoo, Acting President of UNGA; Ambassador Cheick Sidi Diarra, Secretary General of UN LDC IV; Ambassador Jarmo Viinanen, Chair of the PrepCom, Ambassador Acharya; Chair of the Bureau of LDCs, Ambassador Apakan, host of the UN LDC IV Conference, Excellencies, my colleagues from civil society, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for giving us this opportunity to be here, and for providing a forum for civil society from all parts of the world to voice their expectations of the Fourth UN LDC Conference.

While there is a need to assess the failings of the Brussels Programme of Action – and of approaches to development in general, the urgent task is to craft ambitious and implementable strategies that will effectively address the constraints to development that condemn too many to a life of poverty and uncertainty, with little prospect for the future. If numbers are an indicator the fact that in the three decades since the UN established the focus on the Least Developed Countries the group has doubled from the 24 originally identified rather than disappeared is indeed an indictment of failure. That only three countries have graduated from the group speaks for itself. Despite all the commitments, pledges and Programmes of Action, the international community has failed the world's poorest citizens. The development paradigm must change, and urgently.

It can, of course, always be argued that there are mitigating circumstances. The multiple crises in the last decade have certainly had a devastating impact on many around the world, and in many countries these have derailed progress on the Millennium Development Goals, not least in the LDCs. In recent years, we have witnessed a global financial crisis accompanied by prolonged recession, unprecedented hike in food and fuel prices, popular uprisings demanding change and increasing incidence of natural disasters. These compound the insecurity that too many people feel, and cause untold suffering – physical and psychological.

In almost all instances the people on whom these crises impact played no part in bringing them about. All too often they are the result of the policies and practices put in place by human activity; the result of “progress” of the development paradigms that have been pursued over many decades. Inevitably countries and their societies with small and impoverished economies are particularly vulnerable to these negative results and have least capacity to mitigate their consequences. Their vulnerability is due to the lack of their capacity to withstand or cope with exogenous conditions that are difficult or impossible to control.

One can also point to the numerous instances within the LDCs where conflict, war, and political instability compound the impact of these crises. But this is hardly surprising. Vulnerability itself feeds instability and conflict. It is difficult to see this changing without tackling the underlying causes of vulnerability. This is not something that the LDC governments and their societies can do on their own. It requires support from the international community as a whole. More importantly it requires a policy framework at the global level that enables societies within these countries to define their own paths to development that enhances and supports local solutions to problems faced by them.

Lets us not forget that each and every country has an enormous asset in the form of its own people. It is from a nation's people that any development strategy must draw and depend if it is to succeed and sustain. In too many LDCs this asset has yet to be mobilized effectively, which in itself contributes to their vulnerability.

So, what do we expect from this conference? Certainly not an outcome that merely rolls over the programmes of action of past decades, re-iterates commitments already made, and yet again urges renewed efforts for their implementation. We have heard all this before, and seen the results that are dismal.

Today's interactive civil society hearing brings together number of representatives those who will be present in Istanbul. They will set out their expectations for the outcome of the LDC IV conference. They come from all parts of the world – Africa, Asia, the Pacific, the Americas and Europe. They are drawn from LDCs, other developing countries and from development partner countries. They represent a diverse group: women's organizations, farmers groups, human rights defenders and regional and global civil society networks. Nevertheless their concern is same.

We need a commitment from the international community to enable the development process within LDCs to work. This means ensuring there is an effective transfer of technology, debt cancellation, climate justice and real market access that is not constrained by non- tariff barriers that prevent LDC products from entering developed country markets and circumvent the DFQFA agreement. Likewise, use of subsidies is to be stopped as is the use of aid as a lever to open poor country markets to the rich country products. And of course, the delivery of aid commitments that remain an important source of revenue.

We call on member states to contribute substantially to the Global Climate Fund for LDCs. As we are also nearing the Rio+20 Summit, we ask member states to address the special mechanisms that should be promoted to help LDCs enact more efficient adaptation measures and be more resilient to increasing threats of Climate Change. With very little funds for adaptation, sophisticated infrastructure or disaster preparedness, LDCs are at the most vulnerable position in this global defense against Climate Change.

The outcome of the conference in Istanbul must not once more echo the commitments that have been made in the past. We don't need a conference to do this. More importantly, it must recognize that the responsibilities for failures in development within LDCs not only falls on the LDCs alone but also on the richer nations of the world which dominate global decision making that defines the global policy framework.

We do not want a world with permanent branding as 'developed', 'developing' and the 'least developed countries'; of 'lenders' and 'borrowers'; of the 'rich' and the 'poor'. The people in the LDCs want to march forward to the center stage of shared prosperity and live with dignity. We are calling for a world without LDCs. There is no point holding all these events and conferences

if there is no collective desire and effort to solve the problem at hand. We must mobilize all our energy and will to lift the poorest citizens of the world out of their misery, and collectively wipe the curse of being least developed off the face of the world.

Global development policy must acknowledge the special and different needs of least developed countries. Led by the UN, the global community must recognize its collective responsibility to the world's most vulnerable citizens. Going forward, LDCs should receive the highest priority in terms of resources, technology and a proportional voice in the global governance to achieve the MDG targets in time and ideally to eradicate poverty in the not-so-distant future.

In order to translate any substantive outcome of the conference there must be a strong, result oriented and comprehensive monitoring and follow-up mechanism both in terms of process and content. Civil society will certainly play its part, focusing on the commitments undertaken by all actors.

This hearing is designed to be inter-active. We invite representatives of the member states to respond to the views expressed today by my colleagues from civil society. But we want this engagement to continue – during the prep com next week, at home, and in the conference in Istanbul. And of course this engagement must continue after the conference ends. Thank You.