



LDC  
Watch

L'Observatoire  
PMA

Fighting for justice, peace and human rights of the LDCs

# LDC5

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# NEWSLETTER

Fighting for peace, justice and human rights

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## Civil Society leaders demand: Flawed global financial system be changed

During a civil society session at the LDC5 Conference on 5 March, civil society leaders demanded a change in the flawed global economic and financial system. Addressing a panel discussion organised as part of the Civil Society Forum, Coordinator of the Asian People's Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD), Lidy Nacpil, said that debt service has tripled between 2011 and 2019 – jumped to \$33 billion dollars per year on average.

"During the Covid period (2020-2022), debt service obligation of LDCs almost doubled to around \$50 billion per year. We have been shouting from various fora that full and unconditional cancellation of debt is very urgent for LDCs and most of the developing countries in the Global South," said Nacpil.

Ms Nacpil said that most of the Global South countries are in debt distress. "We also need to challenge the very short relief measures provided by lenders in the last three years. Debt from private lenders is also increasing significantly, including in the LDCs," she added.

"There has been 2 trillion dollars net financial flows from Global South to Global North in recent years. We demand reparation, that's why we are fighting for loss and damage fund," said Nacpil.

### "We need a paradigm shift"

**Founder of African Center for Trade and Development, Dr Cheikh Tidiane Dieye (Senegal)** – said that the African Continental Free Trade Area (ACFTA) agreement, which was concluded in a very short time, was a proof of African leaders' political will. "The most important thing is to build African market for African companies. Intra-African trade is 15 to 20% of their total trade. What we need is a paradigm shift," he added.

"One of the biggest producers of rubber, Liberia, can't produce a single wheel from the rubber, while some 80% of Guinea-Bissau export is raw cashew nuts, but they can't even process more than 5% of their cashews," he explained.

Tetteh Hormeku of African Trade Network said that African countries are primary commodity exporting countries to the Global North. "Profit seeking companies are coming to Africa. There's been deliberate efforts to put African economies on dependence. The focus should be on changing international system of economic governance," he added.

Emilia Reyes (from Mexico) said that 92% of carbon pollution comes from the Global North. “73% of commodities are used by the Global North while 50% of the commodities are extracted from the Global South,” said Emilia, adding further, “Climate change is just one of the bigger threats. We are on the verge of breakdown of ecosystem. It’s about the survival of the planet. We need to make a pact with mother nature.”

## LDCs trapped in three paradoxes

UN Under Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa, Cristina Duarte, said African LDCs are trapped in three paradoxes, related to finance, energy, and food. “Financial paradox is obvious. There is debt distress; national treasuries are bankrupt; these are root causes prompting other crises. Africa is rich in agriculture resources, but has faced food insecurity for the past 50 years,” she said.

“Debt crisis is taking huge amount of resources outside Africa and cost of borrowing is rocketing. Africa doesn’t control its economic, financial sources. Any external shock pushes you to liquidity crisis. Domestic resource mobilisation must be put in the driving seat,” she added.

Paul Aqiwumi, Director for Africa and LDCs at UNCTAD, said, “LDCs cannot keep relying on the commodity-driven development model. This has to change. One critical thing is that most of the LDCs do not have productive capacities, to adapt to climate shocks. They have to build the capacity to produce goods and services. Domestic resource mobilisation is critical for LDCs. They have to grow their tax base.”

Civil society activists from around the world are calling for a fundamental shift in the international system to address the poverty and underdevelopment of some of the world’s poorest countries.



## Interview:

*Jane Nalunga, SEATINI, Uganda*

### **Can you tell me your full name and tell me about the organization you work for ?**

Okay. I’m Jane Nalunga. I come from Uganda. My organization is called SEATINI: Southern and Eastern African Trade Information and Negotiation Institute. We work on economic policies, trade investment, and fiscal policies to ensure that those policies work for the people and that they also work for the environment. We are members of a number of alliances and networks. We are members of the Africa Trade Network. We are also members of LDC Watch. We are also members of the Tax Justice Network, Africa. So we work with many networks.

### ***What are the issues that you'll be pushing at this conference when you meet government officials or other people?***

We want to make sure that there is coherence between the commitments which have been made in the Doha Program of action and also other economic-related processes like the World Trade Organization, the IMF, and the World Bank so that if we can be able to translate those commitments into action so that LDCs can benefit.



### ***And is this your first LDC conference?***

No, I participated in the Istanbul Programme of Action. We were there in Istanbul, and we engaged with our governments and the international community.

### ***I think there's perhaps a feeling that a lot of these conferences haven't achieved much, and perhaps the Istanbul Programme of Action didn't achieve much. Are you more optimistic about the conference today?***

You see, this is the Fifth Programme of Action since 1971. Indeed, there are a number of promises which have been made to LDCs. For me, I think the biggest challenge is a lack of coherence among different processes, such as the UN-led LDC-specific programmes of action and the SDGs, on one hand, and binding commitments on the other. For example, when we go to Geneva for the WTO Conference, they haven't started to implement the Doha Development Agenda, which was endorsed by the UN last year. It's clearly stated in the SDGs that the Doha Development Agenda should be implemented.

So, for me, I think that's why you see that the Programmes of Action happen every ten years, and we come back every ten years, but there is little change. There is increasing poverty in LDCs, and there are more LDCs now, because when the LDC category was put in place in, I think, 1971, there were 25 LDCs. Now there are 46 LDC. So, there are those challenges, I think, which should be addressed.

### ***And are you optimistic, perhaps?***

Yes, we have to be optimistic because what else should we do.

## **LDC Graduation**

Much has been said at this conference about how a few LDCs have graduated over the last 50 years. Here, we give a guide to how it works, and list those countries which have graduated, or are on the brink of graduation.

Every three years, the UN Committee for Development Policy (CDP) reviews the list of LDCs and makes recommendations on their possible graduation using the following criteria:

- 1) Income
- 2) Human Assets – e.g. Infant mortality, literacy, gender parity at secondary school
- 3) Economic and Environmental Vulnerability- remoteness and landlocked, agricultural instability.

**Table 1 LDCs in process of graduation**

Continent	Graduated	Scheduled to graduate	Graduation deferred	Graduation criteria met for the first time
Africa	Botswana (1994)	Angola (2024)		Djibouti (income only criterion)
	Cabo Verde (2007)	Sao Tome and Principe (2024)		Comoros (met income and human assets criteria)
	Equatorial Guinea (2017)			Senegal (met income and human assets criteria)
				Zambia (met income and human assets criteria)
Asia	Maldives (2011)	Bangladesh (2026)	Myanmar (2024)	Cambodia (all three criteria)
		Bhutan (2023)	Timor-Leste (2024)	
		Lao PDR (2026)		
		Nepal (2026)		
Pacific	Samoa (2014)	Solomon Islands (2024)	Kiribati (2024)	
	Vanuatu (2020)		Tuvalu (2024)	

Source: UNCTAD. (2021). The least developed countries in the post-COVID world: Learning from 50 years of experience. [https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ldc2021\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ldc2021_en.pdf)

## **Afghan Robotics Girls** *– an inspiration showing what girls can do*

Today, we talked to the Afghan Robotics Girls, who have an exhibition in the conference centre.

The Girls became famous during the evacuation of Afghanistan in August 2021, when they had to leave the country, after the Taliban take-over. The Qatari government offered them a home; so they were flown out and accommodated in Qatar.

The Afghan Robotics Girls is a project that has been going on since 2017. It was the brainchild of Afghani entrepreneur Roya Mahboob, who heard about a competition in the US to find the best robotics team. She organised a national competition to find suitable girls between 12 and 19 years to form a team of robotics designers. Out of 150 girls, 12 were selected for the first team, and after school, they went to Mahboob's house, to be trained by her brother Alireza Mehraban.

### **A Silver Medal for Courageous Achievement**

In 2017, six members of the Team travelled to the United States to participate in the International Global Challenge Robotics Competition. Their visas were initially rejected, but eventually they were allowed to participate, and gained a Silver Medal for Courageous Achievement.

When they returned to Afghanistan, they started working on robots to be used to benefit local communities, building robots that could be used for security, medicine, and agriculture.

Today, they showed me some of their recent robots: one for use by someone in a wheelchair, who is unable to move. The robot controls the wheelchair based on eye movement. A second one was a ventilator robot they had designed during the COVID-19 pandemic, which controls the volume and respiratory rate.

### **“We want to inspire other girls”**

The girls at the exhibition are very clear why girls should be allowed to study engineering. As they said: “In Afghanistan, because it's a traditional society, people think engineering is a field only for men”.



“Our main aim is to inspire girls in Afghanistan and to raise the voice of women in Afghanistan, who are banned from studying and education. Today, we are here to show the ability and the power of Afghan women and girls for all people around the world. And we should find a way for them, and we should provide a safe and equal education for all people around the world, especially today for Afghan women”, they told me.

## Parliamentarians from LDCs pledge to gather forces for a fossil fuel free future.

A very fruitful meeting took place on Sunday evening, with Parliamentarians, who exchanged their experiences on pushing forward parliamentary measures to introduce legislation to cut global carbon emissions.

Parliamentarians from Bangladesh, Benin, Cameroon, Kenya, Liberia, Niger, the Philippines, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia said they were ready to garner support from other Members of Parliament (MPs) in their countries to work towards a fossil-free future. They also talked about the importance of South-South cooperation, and even a triangular cooperation – including the developed North.

Mr Saber Chowdhury, Member of Parliament from Bangladesh, and past President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, who convened the meeting said; “It is inspiring that Parliamentarians who are interested in the safety, security, and welfare of their constituents are coming together in global solidarity to protect the interest of those we represent.”

The aim of the campaign aim is to get 1000 MPs from 100 countries to commit for fossil fuel free future by the end of 2023. Given the large support that Parliamentarians described they saw from their countries, this will be an easily achievable aim.

**PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR A FOSSIL FUEL FREE FUTURE**  
**AND THE DOHA PROGRAMME OF ACTION**

Room No. 103  
 March 6, 2023 | Monday | 5:00-7:30PM  
 Qatar National Convention Center  
 Doha, Qatar

Parliamentarians from LDC countries will come together to push for the scaling up of commitments and actions of governments and enhancing international cooperation and collaboration - towards accelerating the just and equitable transformation of energy systems.

Hon. Saber Chowdhury  
 Member of Parliament, Bangladesh  
 Former President, Inter-Parliamentary Union

Hon. Nissat Shaaban Harje  
 Member of Parliament, Sierra Leone

Hon. Biyilla Lawrence Songa  
 Chief Committee on Climate Change and Environment, Sierra Leone

Hon. Rebecca We Kamusa  
 Member of Parliament, Sierra Leone

Hon. Johnson Gwabo  
 Member of Parliament, Zambia

Moderator: Lily Inagol  
 MP, Sierra Leone

Mr. Arjan Dharti  
 MP, Sierra Leone

Organized by: Parliamentarians for a Fossil Fuel Free Future  
 in cooperation with the Least Developed Countries Movement on Data and Development (PMDD) and LDC Watch

PARLIAMENTARIANS' CALL FOR A FOSSIL FUEL FREE FUTURE  
[www.fossilfuelfreefuture.org](http://www.fossilfuelfreefuture.org)

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 whatsapp: +839176353725

## Interview

– Farida Akhter, UBINIG, Bangladesh

**I'm here talking to Farida Akhter. So, Farida, can you tell me about the organisation you work with and what it does?**

My organization is called UBINIG in English. It is a policy research organisation for development alternatives, based in Bangladesh and we do research mostly on women farmers, particularly ecological agriculture, because we find that in our countries, people talk about food shortage and hunger. But if you do the right way of farming, that is, by preserving biodiversity, preserving the local variety of seeds, then you can really get away from poverty.

We are also working on enhancing biodiversity. There are lots of plants in our environment that are edible and can be a food source for human beings and animals. So, as an LDC country, we think that we do not only have to focus on industrialisation to be called a developed country. We have to really invest more in our natural resources, human beings, and particularly women and children.

## ***There's also a threat that Bangladesh may be well submerged as it is one of the countries severely affected by climate change. Isn't there?***

Yes, Bangladesh is one of the few countries that will almost disappear. First of all, our position is that the developed countries who are contributing the most to the climate disaster, they should really stop. Because we are not only victims, we are also making changes to produce less carbon emissions. But if they continue the pattern of their lifestyle that causes such climate disasters, that is not acceptable. So, this is our first demand.

The second thing is we won't accept the false solution now given by many corporations, saying, "Okay, you won't have your food production, so take genetically modified seeds". That is also not the answer. We don't take false solutions. We want to have our own capacity built and be made resilient, so that we can fight this disaster.

## ***It's interesting you talked about women so can you tell me what you do with women?***

You know that this is one of the most important things. Leave no one behind. But actually they leave women behind in all the policies, although women contribute a lot to our development, in agriculture and every sphere. Our work is with rural women. Women are not just of one kind. There are a lot of different types of women. So the empowerment of women lies in enhancing their own capacities wherever they are, be they in rural areas in the farming community, or in the industrial areas as workers. They are really contributing a lot to the GDP in many different ways. So we think that women's empowerment and mobilisation of women are keys to getting out of the vicious circle and to work differently. So, let's work with that.

## ***I know that your organization has produced a number of publications as well as research. Are you working actively with many organisations?***

Yes, we are working with many international organisations, as we put together research done by different people. We also work with a woman's centre called Narigrantha Prabartana, which actually focuses on writing by women and for women. So we publish those things that will not be published by the mainstream publishers. It is very important to disseminate women's knowledge to really get out what women are thinking. And those are very powerful writers. So we welcome that.



## ***Okay, so really you see women as agents.***

We don't like to see women as victims only, because that makes women much weaker. Because, yes, women are victims, they are made victims. And we identify who made them victims, and we fight against them, but we don't say that women are victims. We do not have to accept somebody else will come to liberate us. No, we are the ones to liberate ourselves. We are the ones to change our condition. And also through us, the world will change.

## **Reach Out**

For questions, feedback, article ideas, or story contributions, email [ldcnewsservice@gmail.com](mailto:ldcnewsservice@gmail.com) and we'll be in touch.