

Press release

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Poorest countries need new development approaches

Current development strategies have failed the world's poorest countries, says LDC Watch in its statement to a UN meeting in Ghana this week. *"Globalisation has generated remarkable wealth and prosperity for particular countries and particular industries"* the LDC Watchⁱ statement says. *"But these benefits have not reached the Least Developed Countries where the majority population is still compelled to live in extreme poverty"* it continues.

The Least Developed Countries (LDC)ⁱⁱ group was established by the UN in 1971 in recognition of the specific need for the poorest countries. Initially the group numbered 24. Some 35 years later the group includes 49 countries.

In 2001 the UN adopted its third Programme of Action for LDCsⁱⁱⁱ which aimed to ensure that LDCs achieved sustainable development by 2010. The Brussels Programme of Action stated that *"its success will be judged by its contribution to progress of LDCs toward achieving international development targets, as well as their graduation from the list of LDCs"*.

With less than two years left for the Brussels Programme of Action it is clear that it will fail to meet its objectives. *"There is little doubt that the international community has failed the LDCs"* said Dr. Arjun Karki, President of LDC Watch. *"current development approaches have brought little to LDCs. And with recent increases in food and energy prices the position will only get worse for people living in poverty in LDCs. It is time for a new approach"* he continued.

A meeting organised on the opening day of the UNTAD XII^{iv} by LDC Watch, heard how two decades of economic growth had not resulted in increased employment, nor appreciable reductions in poverty. UNCTAD's Director of the Division responsible for LDCs, Mr. Habib Ouane, told the meeting that the macro economic policies of the current development paradigm was responsible. The focus must be placed on enhancing productivity he had said.

In its statement to the UNCTAD XII meeting LDC Watch calls for a total cancellation of debt, a fulfilment of donor promises to increase aid and for fair trade rules that discriminate positively and realistically in the interests of LDCs. *"Greater prioritisation needs to be given to LDCs"* said Karki, *"particularly as beneficiaries of human, institutional and productive capacity building initiatives. And given that the majority of people living in poverty are women these initiatives need to address the role that they play in development"*.

LDC Watch also calls for greater transparency in policy and decision making with emphasis on pro-poor and pro-people policies. *"Good and accountable"*

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governance is central to development” said Karki. “It embodies participation, transparency, accountability and equity. It applies to both North in their dealings with the South, and the South itself in managing its affairs. Rampant corruption only keeps the poor and disadvantaged where they are.”

“This meeting of UNCTAD should start the process of reviewing development approaches towards LDCs” said Demba Dembele, Director of the Dakar based Forum for African Alternatives and a Board member of LDC Watch. “When the 4th UN Conference for LDCs takes place in 2011 we want an outcome that addresses the core obstacles facing LDCs. This will only be achieved with the full participation of civil society organisations in their planning” he continued.

Over the next two years LDC Watch aims to work with civil society organisations in LDCs towards ensuring a coordinated engagement by civil society in reviewing current development strategies towards LDCs, and the establishment of new approaches.

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ⁱ LDC Watch, as a global alliance of national, regional and international civil society organisations (CSOs), networks and movements based in the LDCs and supported by civil society from development partner countries, acts as a coordinating group for LDC civil society to advocate, lobby, campaign and network for the realisation of the Brussels Programme of Action (BPoA) including other internationally agreed development goals (IADGs) such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It goes beyond the BPoA in addressing poverty, hunger, social injustice and human rights in the LDCs. LDC Watch, therefore, has been raising its voice and articulating its perspectives in a multi-stakeholder framework, engaging with the UN, LDC governments and their development partners, both, as partner and pressure group.

ⁱⁱ The 49 Least Developed Countries (LDCs) are home to about 750 million people in the world. By 2015, the year by which the international community has targeted to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), this population size is projected to reach 942 million. Of 35 countries that fall in the lowest category of the Human Development Index (HDI), measured in terms of life expectancy, literacy, standard of living and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, 32 are LDCs.

ⁱⁱⁱ The Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) for the Decade 2001-2010 adopted on 20 May 2001 in Brussels aims at improving human conditions of the population of the LDCs and provides a [framework for partnership](#) between LDCs and their development partners "to accelerate sustained economic growth and sustainable development in LDCs, to end marginalization by eradicating poverty, inequality and deprivation in these countries, and to enable them to integrate beneficially into the global economy".

^{iv} UNCTAD XII is taking place in Accra, Ghana from 21 to 25 April 2008 with the title Addressing the opportunities and challenges of globalisation to development. UNCTAD meets every four years.