

United Nations Fourth Conference on Least Developed Countries

ISTANBUL (9-13 May 2011)

Statement of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States

Mr President,

At the outset , I would like to underscore that the ACP Group has in its membership 40 out of the 49 Least Developed Countries (LDCs) recognized by the United Nations and this is not a record to be proud of. It is for this reason that I have the honour and responsibility to address this august assembly and convey the expectations of the ACP Group on the outcome of this Conference.

Mr President,

Most recent assessments of LDCs situations indicate that their average per capita income as share of world income has declined during the past decade. Similarly progress towards the structural transformation of LDC's economies was very slow. LDCs still depend on primary commodities, in general, and agriculture, in particular. Poverty alleviation efforts have not resulted in satisfactory outcomes. Access to technologies that LDCs require for their development efforts is very limited. During the past decade, the economies of LDCs have become more vulnerable.

Indeed, the Fourth UN LDC Conference is taking place at an opportune moment in light of recent events of significant relevance. These include the Summit on the Mid-Term review of the Millennium Development Goals; completion of the evaluation of the Brussels Programme of Action for LDCs, which brought out significant gaps in implementation and meeting of commitments; the global economic crisis fuelled by

the food, fuel and financial crisis; and the impact of climate change causing floods, earthquakes, tsunamis, drought and desertification and other disasters in most of the LDC States.

The political events in the Middle East, Northern and other parts of Africa, which have been triggered by low incomes, lack of jobs for the youth, inequity and suppressed freedoms, all call for a united approach and fresh thinking at the international level on how to deal with disparities and related problems. Left unattended, the problems identified in these regions could expand to other countries resulting in unprecedented migration to Western countries and other areas perceived to be safe havens.

Therefore, the international community has to seriously engage and come up with workable solutions that will address the numerous problems faced by LDC States.

Mr President,

The raison d'être of the ACP Group and of its cooperation with the European Union are to promote and expedite the economic, cultural and social development of the ACP States, with a view to contributing to peace and security and to promoting a stable and democratic political environment.

The ACP-EU partnership is centred on the objective of reducing and eventually eradicating poverty consistent with the objectives of sustainable development and the gradual integration of the ACP States into the world economy. Indeed the Millennium Development Goals adopted by the United Nations also provide a clear basis and do underpin the cooperation in the ACP-EU partnership.

In this regard, ACP LDCs are accorded special treatment in order to enable them to overcome the serious economic and social difficulties hindering their development so as to step up their respective rates of development. But this has not been adequate. More efforts are needed both by the LDC States themselves and by the international community.

In view of the above, the ACP Group welcomes the overall objectives and priority areas for action identified in the draft of the Istanbul Plan of Action 2011 – 2020. The focus on issues of productive capacity, which include infrastructure, energy, science, technology and innovation as well as private sector development, is quite appropriate.

LDCs should be assisted to develop effective infrastructure policies, coupled with an increase of the share of aid allocated to infrastructure development. Furthermore, LDCs should be supported to expand power infrastructure and increase capacity for generation of all forms of energy, and in particular renewable energy.

Issues of agriculture, food security and rural development are identified and must be properly dealt with. LDC States, in particular those in Africa, should be assisted towards achieving food self sufficiency, through the implementation of a green revolution similar to what was done in Asia.

The need for rapid innovation in crop varieties calls for a rethink in genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and LDC governments should encourage public research on GMOs in developed countries that could be pertinent for use in LDCs. Where feasible, GMO related national capacity research in LDCs should be created and strengthened.

Emphasis must also be placed on human and social development, including access to clean water and sanitation as well as dealing with pollution.

With regard to trade and commodities, issues related to market access and market entry as well as the preservation and where possible increase of trade preferences must be put high on the agenda. In this regard, LDCs must be facilitated to effectively participate in the WTO so as to derive benefits from trade opportunities. LDCs that are not members should not be impeded from joining the WTO.

There is also a need for policy coherence in the treatment of LDCs at the multilateral, regional and bilateral levels when negotiating trade and other trade related agreements.

Mr President,

In order to ensure development effectiveness, policy coherence should also be observed by international agencies and organizations so that their policy prescriptions to LDC States do not contradict. Furthermore, the architecture of partnership for development laid out in the MDGs and the Monterrey Consensus and subsequent conferences, resulted in commitments, which are not effectively linked to the WTO trade negotiation process and also in aid allocation. Consequently, in trade negotiations, development issues are marginalized and thereby undermining the commitments made elsewhere, with severe implications and dire consequences for LDCs. Therefore, there should be coherence between global commitments made in different forums in support of LDCs.

Development effectiveness can also be ensured by assisting resource rich LDCs to harness their untapped wealth for development.

In order to ensure that returns from natural resources benefit the entire population, LDC States should develop legislation and set up appropriate institutional mechanisms that ensure incomes from minerals are allocated to develop and exploit to their full potential, other sectors of the economy.

Mr President,

Information and Communication Technologies can and have played a key role in the general development of most of the LDCs since the impact of these technologies drive the rest of the sectors and help address some of the challenges that confront LDCs. For instance, the ratio of telephone lines per inhabitant and internet penetration has improved over the past decade. This has mainly been due to improved political stability, low-cost wireless technologies, and an enabling environment. Therefore, ICTs do contribute in addressing extreme poverty, structural weaknesses of economies in LDCs, climate change impacts, and the general vulnerabilities of LDCs that often expose them to immense infrastructure damage and loss of human lives due to natural disasters.

The devastating impact of climate change is another challenge that LDCs face. It is absolutely necessary that a fair proportion international climate change funding, including “fast start” and long term funding is allocated to LDCs, and in particular, small island developing states (SIDS).

Effects such as severe desertification experienced in the Sahel region, confront LDCs and create a danger to the environment and availability of water resources. The key climate change issue for LDCs is mainly adaptation, which in most cases is more relevant than mitigation. There is a danger that the mitigation agenda will inadvertently be imposed on LDCs, through the linking of assistance to targets for mitigation. Climate-related assistance to LDCs should be for adaptation not mitigation.

Mr President

To conclude, the ACP Group subscribes to the identified principles that will guide the implementation of the Plan of Action, and in particular, that the primary responsibility for development through ownership and leadership, lies with the LDCs. However, the rest of the international community must proffer genuine partnership through augmented global support to achieve the goals that the LDCs and the Plan of Action have set out.

To end, let me emphasize that there should be a proper mechanism for the implementation and regular monitoring of the ISTANBUL Programme of Action. Such a system should be established separately at the level of LDCs and jointly with development partners.

Mr President,

My statement has highlighted a few points in a more comprehensive position paper by the ACP Group. This paper has been distributed for the information of all delegations.

Thank you all for your kind attention.