



With breaking stories and
newswire products from

UN NEWS CENTRE



UN report urges changes in support structures for poor countries



High Representative, Cheick Sidi Diarra

25 November 2010 – Current international support measures for the least developed countries (LDCs) have failed to accelerate their growth and development and significant changes are needed to ensure better support structures for the poorer States, according to a United Nations report unveiled today.

The Least Developed Countries Report 2010, released by the UN Conference on Trade and Development ([UNCTAD](#)), analyses development in the LDCs over the last decade, addressing the issue of how the international community can best support the world's poorest and most vulnerable countries.

“The current international support measures for LDCs have not been sufficient for accelerating growth and development in the LDCs, leading to their graduation from that category, which is the ultimate goal of all LDC action,” said Cheick Sidi Diarra, the UN's High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

“Only two countries have graduated from the group, while their ranks have swollen.”

He said this had led to fundamental questions about the design and implementation of international support programmes, which the report addressed, arguing for less emphasis on trade intervention and more focus on dealing with structural weaknesses in LDCs.

Mr. Diarra's concerns were echoed by Charles Gore, UNCTAD's Special Coordinator on LDC issues, who said that, despite LDCs showing high levels of economic growth and seemingly greater resilience to the global recession of 2009, there were still major problems.

“Our statistics show that the rate of poverty reduction was very slow despite high rates of economic growth. You also find increasing vulnerabilities because of rising export concentration and rising dependency on commodities and there is very weak development of production capacities,” he said.

He said economic growth was led by commodity prices with low levels of saving and very little structural change.

The report assesses how well the LDC-specific support measures worked over the past decade concluding that the current set of measures do not go far enough.

“Existing international support measures have had largely symbolic rather than practical developmental effects,” said Mr. Gore, adding that aid targets have not been met and that aid remains tied to conditionalities. In addition, while many studies are carried out to assess the needs of LDCs, few concrete projects are launched to meet those needs.

Mr. Diarra also highlighted challenges that LDCs will face in future, pointing specifically to climate change.

“Many LDCs are already suffering from the negative impact of climate change and therefore require an injection of new funds and new technology to deal with the impact of climate change,” he said.

Mr. Diarra said that if the changes that are lobbied for in the report are implemented, very positive results can follow.

“We need to bring about a change of perceptions about the LDCs. We should not see the LDCs only as countries that receive foreign aid. We should see the formidable potential that exists in LDCs and we should tap into that potential,” he said.

In a related development, the 14th conference on African natural resources organized by UNCTAD ended today in Sao Tomé with a resolution recommending that a task force to be set up by African governments “to work on the methods and evaluation criteria of the local content in the area of natural resources in general.”

The references to be used by the task force fall within the framework of the Africa Mining Vision already established by the African Union.

Discussions during UNCTAD's Oil, Gas and Mines, Trade and Finance Conference and Exhibition stressed that steps should be taken to lessen the “enclave” nature of natural-resource extraction in African countries.

Instead, participants said, links should be established between national economies and the operations – often foreign-designed and run – that harvest these resources.

News Tracker: past stories on this issue

[Measures to improve economies of poorest nations focus of UN-led forum](#)