



Negotiations kick off for upcoming UN conference on world's poorest nations



High Representative, Cheick Sidi Diarra

4 April 2011 – With a major United Nations conference on the world's poorest nations just weeks away, Member States today began another round of negotiations aimed at achieving a new action plan to advance the economic and social development of these vulnerable countries.

The Fourth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) is due to take place in Istanbul, Turkey, from 9 to 13 May to assess the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action – the outcome document adopted at the 2001 LDC conference – and to reach agreement on a new set of support measures for the world's 48 LDCs.

"The second round of intergovernmental negotiations is yet another important milestone ahead of Istanbul Conference," said Cheick Sidi Diarra, the UN High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

"I would urge Member States to seize this opportunity to produce an ambitious and far-reaching package that delivers for the least developed countries."

Mr. Diarra is also Secretary-General of the Istanbul Conference – also known as "LDC-IV" – which is expected to draw more than 50 heads of State and government to discuss issues such as debt relief, development assistance, foreign direct investment, agriculture, trade and climate change.

This week's preparatory meeting follows the first round of negotiations held in January, as well as the release of a report last month by a high-level panel which called for determined national action and international support to halve the number of LDCs by 2020.

Ahead of this second round of negotiations, civil society representatives met at UN Headquarters last Friday for an informal hearing of the General Assembly, at which they called for total debt relief for the LDCs, and pressed developed countries to reconsider hefty farming subsidies, which they claim help to distort international trade.

They also called for curbing military spending and for the allocation of such resources to structural transformation of LDC economies to bring about a sustainable inclusive growth.

Many of the civil society participants expressed frustration that efforts to implement the earlier action plans targeting LDCs had yielded only limited results, citing the low "graduation" rate of these countries. Only three of the original 51 LDCs – Maldives, Botswana and Cape Verde – have moved out of the category since 1970.

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