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Ban urges poor nations' leaders to create conditions for economic development



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon opens Civil Society Forum of the Fourth UN Conference on Least Developed Countries

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[Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon today encouraged leaders of the world's poorest countries meeting in Turkey to agree on a common position and send a strong political message to the rest of the world on the importance of investing in the least developed countries to eradicate global poverty.

“The priority for the new programme of action is to build strong economies that can withstand external shocks,” Mr. Ban [told](#) a summit of the leaders from 48 States in Istanbul on the eve on the opening of the Fourth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in the Turkish city.

The conference will 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 48 nations classified as LDCs.

Mr. Ban called for the building of productive capacity and the expanding of opportunities for decent employment for men and women in LDCs.

“It means guaranteeing space for civil society and the private sector to operate. It means expanding the provision of essential services – education, health, infrastructure and social safety nets, especially for nutrition security.

“To achieve this you will need the engagement of a wide range of partners traditional donors, emerging economies and the world of business,” said the Secretary-General, urging the leaders “not to allow the new atmosphere of global austerity to undermine progress.”

In an interview with UN Radio, the Secretary-General stressed that the LDCs conference must come up with an “ambitious, strong, workable programme of action.” “We will make sure that it is monitored and [that] these commitments are delivered,” he added.

He acknowledged that the goal of reducing LDCs from 48 at present to 24 over the next decade is ambitious, but realistic, provided that those countries maintain their commitment to implementing the programme of action that will emerge from Istanbul.

Mr. Ban told UN Radio that emerging economies, such as Brazil, China and India, had a role to play in supporting LDCs in their development endeavours. “In the context of South and South cooperation, I would strongly urge those emerging powers to do their own way to help the LDCs,” he said.

Acknowledging that developed countries are also facing challenges similar to those bedevilling poorer nations, including climate change and soaring food prices, Mr. Ban said that the main issue was that LDCs have limited capacity and resources to address those global problems. Assistance from developed countries to developing ones was not charity but the “politically correct and morally correct” thing to do, the Secretary-General said.

“Developed countries should understand that this is going to be a great opportunity for them to live together [with others] harmoniously,” he added.

In his speech to the LDCs leaders' summit, the Mr. Ban said enterprises from around the world will, during the five-day conference, be networking, exchanging ideas and establishing relations that can form an enduring basis for cooperation and opportunity.

“We hope they will go away from Istanbul with the message that doing business in the LDCs is not charity but a wise and profitable endeavour,” said Mr. Ban.

“But even when we leave Istanbul with a comprehensive programme of action, there will be no time to relax. The promises made here in Istanbul must become promises kept.

“As Nelson Mandela remarked on becoming president: 'After climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb.’” “The United Nations is committed to climbing these hills alongside you,” he added.

Earlier, the Secretary-General met separately with the Prime Minister of Nepal, Jhala Nath Khanal, and the President of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai.

The Secretary-General urged Mr. Khanal to make greater efforts to move the Nepalese peace process forward through genuine cooperation among all political stakeholders. He also underscored the need for establishing transitional justice mechanisms.

“The Secretary-General reaffirmed support for efforts – in close cooperation with UNESCO [the UN agency tasked with preserving the world's cultural heritage] - to better preserve Lumbini, the birthplace of Buddha,” said a statement released by the UN chief's spokesperson after the meeting.

Mr. Ban thanked Mr. Khanal for Nepal's steadfast contribution to UN peacekeeping operations, and expressed his condolences for the recent sacrifices of Nepalese peacekeepers in Afghanistan and Haiti.

The Secretary-General and Mr. Karzai discussed ways to improve the safety and security of UN staff in Afghanistan. They also exchanged views on the prospects for reconciliation in Afghanistan and the UN's support to the Government-led political process. They “agreed on the importance of focusing on sustainable development as part of the efforts to improve the economic situation in Afghanistan and more broadly promote peace amidst the current turmoil in the world,” according to an information note released by the office of the Secretary-General after the meeting, which also touched on developments in the Middle East and North Africa, especially the mounting civilian casualties, particularly in Libya.

The Secretary-General also addressed the opening of the civil society forum the Fourth UN Conference on Least Developed Countries, telling delegates that the conference success would depend on their energy and ideas.

“You have been representing the aspirations of the people of our planet's 48 least developed countries during the national, regional and preparatory processes. Your voices have been heard and your ideas are reflected in the draft outcome document of this Conference that will be finalized during the next coming five days,” Mr. Ban told representatives from non-governmental organisations and civil society groups.

[Speaking](#) at a session of the LDCs parliamentarians forum, the Secretary-General emphasized that his appeal to the conference will be for more commitment, especially in the key areas of building productive capacity aid and trade debt relief and foreign direct investment technology transfer and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

“Securing and implementing this commitment will fall, in large part, with you – the world's parliamentarians,” he said.

The Secretary-General also conferred with José Manuel Barroso, the President of the European Commission, on a number of issues, including developments in North Africa and the Middle East. They also exchanged views on Cyprus and the Western Balkans, particularly political developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

At a separate meeting with the Turkish Foreign Minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, the Secretary-General expressed his gratitude for Turkey's support for the LDCs conference. They also discussed the Cyprus question, Palestinian reconciliation and the Middle East peace process, as well as developments in Libya and elsewhere in the Middle East and North Africa.

On Libya, the Secretary-General and Mr. Davutoglu agreed that it is vital to secure an immediate and verifiable ceasefire and to find a political solution.

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