



General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/43/698
11 October 1988

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Forty-third session
Agenda item 82 (b)

DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION:
TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed
Countries

Report of the Secretary-General

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 42/177 of 11 December 1987, recalling its resolution 40/205 in which it decided to carry out a global review and appraisal of the implementation of the Substantial New Programme of Action for the 1980s for the Least Developed Countries, the General Assembly decided to convene the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries at a high level in 1990 to review progress at the country level thus far in the decade; to review progress in international support measures and particularly in official development assistance; and to consider, formulate and adopt appropriate national and international policies and measures for accelerating the development process in the least developed countries during the 1990s in accordance with their long-term national social and economic objectives. The General Assembly accepted the generous offer by the Government of France to host the Conference. It also decided to designate the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development as the focal point for the preparations for the Conference, and requested the Secretary-General of the United Nations to designate the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development to serve as Secretary-General of the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and, in that capacity, to make all necessary arrangements for the holding of the Conference. The General Assembly further requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to its forty-third session on the state of preparations for the Conference. The present report has been prepared in response to that request.

II. STATE OF PREPARATIONS FOR THE SECOND UNITED NATIONS
CONFERENCE ON THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

A. Preparatory meetings

2. In paragraph 1 (d) of resolution 42/177, the General Assembly decided to convene one session of the Meeting of Governmental Experts of Donor Countries and Multilateral and Bilateral Financial and Technical Assistance Institutions with Representatives of the Least Developed Countries in the spring of 1989, followed by one session of the Intergovernmental Group on the Least Developed Countries, as Preparatory Committee for the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, in early 1990 in order to prepare for the Conference. The Meeting of Governmental Experts of Donor Countries and Multilateral and Bilateral Financial and Technical Assistance Institutions with Representatives of the Least Developed Countries is now scheduled to be held at Geneva from 22 to 31 May 1989. The Intergovernmental Group on the Least Developed Countries is scheduled to meet at Geneva from 26 March to 6 April 1990. The terms of reference of those meetings are annexed to General Assembly resolution 42/177. It is proposed that the Conference itself take place in Paris from 3 to 14 September 1990.

B. Mobilisation and co-ordination of organs, organisations
and bodies of the United Nations system

3. In accordance with paragraph 5 of resolution 42/177, the Secretary-General, with the assistance of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation and the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, is taking steps to ensure the full mobilisation and co-ordination of all organs, organisations and bodies of the United Nations system in the preparations for the Conference. To this end, an inter-agency consultation was held at Geneva on 16 and 17 May 1988. Participants reviewed preparatory arrangements for the Conference, exchanged views on issues relating to the development of the least developed countries and discussed the contributions of United Nations organs, organisations and bodies to the Conference and to its preparatory meetings. The next inter-agency consultation will be held in 1989.

4. The organs, organisations and bodies of the United Nations system have been requested in paragraph 4 of resolution 42/177 to submit, before the first preparatory meeting, reports containing a review of the implementation of the Substantial New Programme of Action within their fields of competence and proposals for further action as input to the preparations for the Conference. The Secretary-General of UNCTAD, in his capacity as Secretary-General of the Conference, has requested United Nations organs, organisations and bodies to submit their contributions to the UNCTAD secretariat by the end of January 1989. These contributions will be made available to the Meeting of Governmental Experts of Donor Countries and Multilateral and Bilateral Financial and Technical Assistance Institutions with Representatives of the Least Developed Countries scheduled for May 1989.

C. Preparations at regional level

5. Preparations for the Conference have also been initiated at the regional level. The Conference of Ministers of African Least Developed Countries, at their eighth meeting held in Niamey on 13 and 14 April 1988, decided to devote their ninth meeting in 1989 to the preparations for the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. Subsequently, the twenty-third session of the ECA/fourteenth meeting of the Conference of Ministers of the ECA, in its resolution of 15 April 1988 on preparation for the Second United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries, 1/ called upon all African least developed countries to undertake an evaluation of the progress made in the implementation of the Substantial New Programme of Action and to participate actively in the preparatory meetings for the Conference. The Conference of Ministers requested African and international organizations, especially ECA, UNCTAD and OAU, to provide all necessary technical assistance to the African least developed countries in the evaluation of progress made in the implementation of the Substantial New Programme of Action and in the formulation of the new strategy to be presented to the Conference. Donor countries and international financial institutions were urged to accord high priority to the preparatory meetings and to participate in them at high level.

6. ESCAP, in its resolution of 20 April 1988 on the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, 2/ called upon all members and associate members of the Asian and Pacific region to participate actively in the preparatory process to ensure the success of the Conference. All Governments, intergovernmental and multilateral development institutions and others concerned were called upon to co-ordinate closely with UNCTAD in making adequate preparations for the Conference, and to participate effectively in the preparatory process. In accordance with this resolution, an in-depth review of the causes and consequences of the slow growth in the least developed countries of the ESCAP region during the 1980s will be prepared for consideration by an expert group meeting to be convened in October 1989. This meeting is to be followed by an intergovernmental meeting in February 1990 to consider and to work out recommendations and proposals for national and international action to accelerate the development process of those countries in the 1990s.

D. Participation of the least developed countries in the preparatory process

7. In paragraph 6 of resolution 42/177, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to obtain extrabudgetary resources to ensure the effective participation of the representatives of the least developed countries in the preparatory meetings referred to in paragraph 2 above through provision of the resources necessary to finance the travel expenses of at least two representatives from each least developed country.

8. The Governing Council of the UNDP, in its decision of 1 July 1988, 3/ requested the Administrator of the UNDP, in close consultation with the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, to assist the least developed countries to ensure that

they are able to participate fully in the preparations, including preparatory meetings for the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and in the Conference itself. The Governing Council decided that such assistance should be funded from the Special Measures Fund for the Least Developed Countries.

9. Following the decision by the Governing Council of the UNDP, the UNCTAD Secretariat has begun consultations with UNDP concerning the provision of advisory services to the least developed countries for the preparations of the Conference and the financing of the travel expenses of representatives from the least developed countries to attend the two above-mentioned preparatory meetings.

10. In order to facilitate the work of the Conference, the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, in his capacity as Secretary-General of the Conference, has sent a note verbale to the Governments of the least developed countries requesting them to prepare a brief presentation encompassing the following elements: (a) an assessment of socio-economic progress made by the country during the 1980s, in the light of ongoing national and international measures; (b) identification of areas which call for strengthened national and international efforts during the 1990s; (c) national measures and policies envisaged by the country to accelerate the development process during the 1990s and international measures needed to support such national efforts. These country presentations will be made available to the Intergovernmental Group on the Least Developed Countries in March and April 1990 and to the Conference itself. They will also provide input to the report of the Secretary-General of the Conference. Existing arrangements for implementation, follow-up and monitoring of the Substantial New Programme of Action at national level are also expected to provide inputs to the preparatory work for the Conference.

E. Meeting of eminent persons

11. As part of the preparations for the Conference, the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, in close collaboration with the Government of the Netherlands, convened a meeting of eminent persons at the Hague on 15 and 16 September 1988. This meeting, bringing together 24 high-level experts on development problems invited in their personal capacity, provided an opportunity to elaborate innovative ideas and proposals for the preparatory process. The meeting focused on the identification of constraints and bottlenecks that have hindered the development efforts of the least developed countries during the 1980s, and on national and international measures required to accelerate least developed countries' development process in the 1990s, including areas and problems which call for strengthened national and international efforts during the 1990s. 4/

F. Other meetings of experts

12. As further input to the preparatory process for the Conference, UNCTAD, in close collaboration with the Government of Finland, is planning to organize, at Helsinki in April 1989, a high-level meeting of experts on the role of the business sector in the development of least developed countries. This meeting will focus on

ways and means to develop indigenous enterprises, including those in the rural sector. UNCTAD is furthermore planning to convene meetings in 1989 on the role of non-governmental organizations and on the role of women in the development of the least developed countries. In addition, it is proposed that a high-level meeting of experts focusing on trade, technical and economic co-operation between the least developed countries and the socialist countries of Eastern Europe be held in Moscow in the latter half of 1989 in close collaboration with the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Notes

- 1/ ECA resolution 643 (XXIII).
- 2/ ESCAP resolution 272 (XLIV).
- 3/ UNDP Governing Council decision 88/30.
- 4/ The conclusions and recommendations of the eminent persons will be available in the report of the meeting, to be issued as UNCTAD/LDC/EP.4.
