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## Second Committee

### Summary record of the 14th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 18 October 2010, at 3 p.m.

*Chairperson:* Ms. Würtz..... (Hungary)

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*In the absence of Ms. Ochir (Mongolia), Ms. Würtz (Hungary), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

**Agenda item 23: Groups of countries in special situations** *(continued)*

**(a) Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries** *(continued)* (A/65/80-E/2010/77)

**(b) Specific actions related to the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries: outcome of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation** *(continued)* (A/65/215)

1. **Mr. Seyoum** (Eritrea) said that in the declaration issued after their ninth annual meeting held in New York during the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the least developed countries had expressed their concern that their countries were lagging behind in meeting many of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets. Indeed, half the population of the least developed countries was living below the poverty line. Although their share of global trade had increased since 2002, those countries still needed to be granted duty-free and quota-free market access for all their exports. He therefore welcomed China's announcement at the recent High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the MDGs that it would phase in zero-tariff treatment for most products from the least developed countries. More foreign direct investment was also crucial, as was serious follow-up of the Aid for Trade Initiative and the Enhanced Integrated Framework for Least Developed Countries.

2. While his country was on track to achieve Goals 4, 5 and 6 of the MDGs, given the failure to deliver on official development assistance (ODA) and other commitments, the promise of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 remained unfulfilled. He hoped that the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, scheduled to be held in Istanbul in 2011, would be a turning point in that regard.

3. **Mr. Mohamed** (Maldives) said that his country was a vivid example of the "island paradox". It had achieved relative prosperity in terms of domestically generated income, but continued to be subject to external shocks and high structural costs owing to its geographic characteristics. The decision by the Committee for Development Policy that the Maldives should graduate from least developed country status had been based largely on the success of its tourism and fisheries industries, both of which were largely dependent on environmental factors, notably the health of coral reefs. Despite its apparent prosperity on the basis of per capita income, his country had still not met the economic vulnerability threshold set by the Committee for Development Policy or the Economic and Social Council.

4. In fact, all of the graduating least developed countries during the preceding decade had been small island developing States. In the outcome document of the High-level Review Meeting on the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (A/65/L.2), the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to review shortcomings in the institutional support for small island developing States, as well as other constraints to the full and effective implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation and the Barbados Programme of Action. He hoped that such a review would result in recognition of the need to create a special category for small island developing States in view of their unique vulnerabilities.

5. **Mr. Lukwiya** (Uganda) said that the level of attention being paid by the international community to the problems of the least developed countries had been declining in the four decades since that category had been created. He hoped that the forthcoming Istanbul Conference would reverse that trend and provide those countries with the boost they needed to graduate within the next decade. While South-South cooperation would be an important factor in that process, coherence in the aid, trade, investment and technology transfer policies of the more advanced developing countries remained crucial. The Doha Round was in the interest of all developing countries and should therefore be concluded swiftly.

6. Uganda, which was not only landlocked but was also responsible for providing transit to its landlocked

neighbours Rwanda and Burundi, was pursuing implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action within the framework of the Treaty for East African Cooperation. However, the failure of the World Trade Organization to recognize the specific challenges faced by landlocked developing countries continued to prevent them from reaping the full benefits of international trade. Further measures to grant preferential trade access to landlocked developing countries should therefore be considered within the context of negotiations on the Doha Work Programme. Furthermore, the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States should be strengthened to enable it to increase United Nations system-wide awareness of the special concerns of landlocked developing countries.

7. **Mr. Igenbayev** (Kazakhstan) said that his country was committed to immediate practical implementation of the roadmap for implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action. Welcoming the active participation of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in large-scale projects to improve transport infrastructure in the Asian region, he stressed that the elimination of non-physical barriers to transit was the basis of his country's transport strategy. Accordingly, Kazakhstan was actively involved in regional projects within the framework of the Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA) programme and the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA). Integration of Kazakhstan's transportation system into the Eurasian transit network could bring about a revitalization of the Great Silk Road. The United Nations should therefore pay greater attention to Central Asia as a potential international transit hub.

8. **Ms. Yakivu** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that while existing measures to assist least developed countries had been helpful, the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries would be an opportunity to fill gaps in the framework. Her country had made progress in the areas of rule of law and good governance, and had reached its completion point under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. However, the Democratic Republic of the Congo continued to be in need of external assistance. She was therefore grateful to the

partners and donors that had helped her country weather the global crises.

9. Development assistance on favourable terms and preferential treatment of exports were both needed to help the least developed countries overcome structural handicaps and vulnerabilities, and a speedy conclusion to the Doha Round was important in that regard. Capacity-building in industries such as agriculture and tourism, which provided opportunities for microenterprise, were also important. Technology transfer should be conducted in accordance with the principles of the Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action, with due consideration given to the views of national Governments.

10. **Ms. Ochir** (Mongolia) said that landlocked and transit developing countries had made progress in all five priority areas of the Almaty Programme of Action, and there had been improvements in ODA, foreign direct investment and debt relief targeted at the transportation and communication sectors. Nevertheless, landlocked developing countries continued to be particularly hard hit by the recent global crises owing to their geographical handicaps. Those challenges affected not only their economic growth but also their ability to implement the Almaty Programme of Action and achieve the MDGs. In that regard, she recalled that, at their ninth annual meeting held in September 2010, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the least developed countries had called for research on the vulnerability of their countries to external shocks and for the development of early warning vulnerability indicators.

11. Export diversification, infrastructure development, institutional capacity-building and better market access were all essential to counteract the marginalization of landlocked developing countries in the global economy. The Aid for Trade Initiative should also be implemented alongside targeted support for landlocked developing countries. Furthermore, trade facilitation negotiations should deliberate on the substantial improvement of articles V, VIII and X of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, and capital exporting countries should support incentives to attract foreign direct investment to landlocked developing countries. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development should also update its 2003 publication on foreign direct investment in landlocked developing countries in that regard.

12. As a strong advocate of regional and subregional cooperation to advance the objectives of the Almaty Programme of Action, Mongolia had established a number of national agencies for that purpose. For example, Ulaanbaatar would be the headquarters of an international think tank for landlocked developing countries, whose establishment had just been endorsed at the September 2010 Foreign Ministers' meeting. She also urged support for the initiative of the ESCAP Executive Secretary to organize a high-level Asia-Pacific meeting of landlocked developing countries in Ulaanbaatar in April 2011.

13. **Mr. Al Jeeran** (Kuwait) said that developed countries should step up their support for the national development strategies of the least developed countries. Trade and investment had an important role to play in accelerating development, and developing countries should be made full partners in the decision-making processes of the international financial institutions.

14. Kuwait had provided over 100 countries with grants and loans that amounted to double the internationally agreed upon ODA target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income. It also provided humanitarian aid to countries affected by natural disasters, and planned to increase substantially its annual contributions to a number of United Nations humanitarian programmes. As an oil producer, his country was aware of the need for safer and cleaner energy utilization. Technology for that purpose should therefore be made available to producing as well as consuming countries. He looked forward to a positive outcome of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

15. **Mr. Sammis** (United States of America) said that providing assistance to the least developed countries was not only a moral imperative, but also a strategic and economic one, because progress in the poorest countries advanced the prosperity and security of all. Development assistance should be measured not as an input, but by the outputs it produced, with the ultimate goal of creating conditions that rendered assistance unnecessary.

16. His country had increased its bilateral ODA to least developed countries by over 15 per cent to \$8.1 billion in 2009. Its \$3.5 billion "Feed the Future" initiative targeted global hunger in 20 priority countries, while its \$63 billion Global Health Initiative

was a six-year commitment to improve the health of women, newborns and children by combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other neglected tropical diseases.

17. Small island developing States and landlocked developing countries faced unique barriers to fully benefiting from the global economy. His country was especially committed to the Aid for Trade programme, and had provided tens of billions of dollars in both trade capacity assistance and foreign direct investment. The African Growth and Opportunity Act adopted by his country had resulted in a dramatic increase in trade with sub-Saharan Africa, where a large majority of the least developed countries were located.

18. Despite some areas of progress, many least developed countries were still struggling to meet the MDGs. However, the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries should provide an opportunity for all stakeholders to take stock of lessons learned and design a future plan of action.

19. **Mr. Adoumasse** (Benin) said the major problems facing the least developing countries had been exacerbated by environmental issues and globalization, which made those countries all the more vulnerable to external shocks, particularly the global financial crisis and climate change. They were especially disadvantaged by poor housing conditions, excessive dependence on natural resources and a lack of adaptive capacity. Moreover, in the least developed countries of Africa, the growth of poverty, including extreme poverty, among the vast majority of the population far exceeded that in other regions, essentially because their economies relied more heavily on exports of raw materials. Such countries had consequently suffered dramatically from the recent drop in international commodity prices. Rather than combating the spiral of poverty in the world, globalization had accentuated it.

20. The economic vulnerability of those countries was also due to the way in which ODA was currently distributed by countries of the North, with the bulk of it going to education and health, to the detriment of national productive systems. That created a risk of there being no suitable employment for persons benefiting from a high level of education in those countries, who would therefore emigrate to more developed countries. The best way of aiding the poorest countries would be to build the infrastructure

needed for national production. Those countries were also placed at a further disadvantage by economic liberalism, which meant that they were competing with subsidized products from developed countries. If current trends persisted, extreme poverty would be concentrated worldwide in the least developed countries in 2015.

21. **Mr. Traoré** (Senegal) said that the mixed results of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 were reflected in the fact that only two of those countries, Maldives and Cape Verde, had graduated from the group, which, moreover, had almost doubled in size since 1971. A new plan of action was urgently needed for those countries to enable them to meet the challenges presented by agriculture, infrastructure, trade, climate change and energy, in particular. In that spirit, the President of Senegal had recently suggested the appointment of a group of experts on candidate countries for graduation to explore innovative means of ensuring the economic take-off of countries still suffering from endemic poverty. His delegation hoped that the upcoming Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries would offer an opportunity for a new surge of international solidarity and, by developing bold and innovative measures, enable those countries to enjoy all-round, shared development and thus to graduate into the group of developed countries.

22. **Mr. Tiendrébéogo** (Burkina Faso) said the precarious position of countries in special situations had been exacerbated by the many crises faced by the world in recent years. It was therefore important to ensure that the Brussels and Almaty Programmes of Action were fully implemented and given special attention by the international community. The results of the Brussels Programme of Action fell short of the objectives set for it, arguably because commitments had not been honoured. Efforts should continue to be made to guarantee incentive prices for farmers, promote access to international trade and support emerging industries in the least developed countries. Capacity-building would also be useful for improved statistics, which would make for a better analysis and diagnosis of the socio-economic situation in those countries.

23. Despite the many challenges with which they had been confronted over the previous 10 years, the least developed countries remained determined to create a

better future for themselves and deserved to benefit from the support of other countries in achieving that aim. Innovative solutions were needed, and it was to be hoped that the upcoming Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries would provide the necessary impetus to that end, backed by real political will.

24. Lastly, he called for exports from landlocked countries to be given easier access to international markets, since the exclusion of those countries from world trade was at the heart of their development problems. Burkina Faso, as one such country, was making every effort to strengthen its cooperation with transit countries in order to participate fully in international trade. The watchword should be solidarity with all countries in special situations, not for themselves alone, but in the interest of everyone.

25. **Ms. Beck** (Solomon Islands) said that the hard-won development gains of the least developed countries were being reversed by the impacts of the current crises, which had further marginalized them. A redoubling of global effort was needed to put those countries back on track, while those emerging from conflict, and therefore particularly fragile, should be placed on a special watch list and benefit from a dedicated development package. In that connection, her delegation called for an enhanced international engagement to bring about sustainable peace, stability and poverty alleviation in conflict-affected countries and regions.

26. Many of the least developed countries were also seeing new pockets of poverty as a result of climate change, which had an impact on their food and water security and on the very livelihood of their populations. It was therefore essential for a legally binding agreement to come out of the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. She called on all parties to the Convention to contribute to that end.

27. The Solomon Islands had been hampered in its efforts to achieve the MDGs. While the Brussels Programme of Action was the proper vehicle for those efforts, the “one-size-fits-all” approach adopted through regional and international frameworks needed to be realigned with national development priorities in order to enhance national ownership and long-term sustainability.

28. Lastly, she called for a comprehensive, action-oriented outcome from the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, aimed at lifting those countries out of poverty; for an early conclusion to the Doha Round; and for the operationalization of the Aid for Trade Initiative. In order for commitments to be translated into concrete actions, political will was needed.

29. **Mr. Motter** (Observer for the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)) said that, with proper planning, the necessary resources and political will, it would be possible to meet the new challenges ahead for the least developed countries in a changing global economy. While the Brussels Programme of Action was a good plan, it remained silent about the role of parliaments in that connection in both developed and developing countries. That omission had to be corrected. Moreover, it must be recognized that the least developed countries would not be able to mobilize their own resources for development or make the most of external support until their main decision-making body, parliament, had assumed its rightful role in the development process. Indeed, parliaments had an essential place in the design, implementation and review of all international commitments, not only those related to the least developed countries. They could mainstream the objectives of the new programme of action into their national development strategies; they could also hold their Governments accountable for the implementation of those strategies. However, they continued to face many challenges in the context of good governance and needed to be supported by the executive as well as by donors and other development partners.

30. As the lead agency for the parliamentary track of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, IPU was encouraging parliaments to play their part: the achievement of development goals required their support, as representatives of the people. Their role should therefore be formally recognized through an explicit mention of their mandate in the programme of action itself. Similarly, the parliaments of the least developed countries should engage with their Government counterparts without delay to ensure the inclusion of their views in the new programme of action.

31. **Ms. Puri** (Director of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island

Developing States), summing up the preceding discussion, said that its richness had been due to the active participation not only of the target countries but also of their partners. The report of the Secretary-General on the least developed countries (A/65/80-E/2010/77) had been welcomed by the Committee as a good basis for the road map that was expected to emerge from the upcoming Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, particularly as it showed a correlation between the substantive issues and the processes for addressing them. The importance of that Conference not only for those countries but also for the development partnership in the coming decade had been recognized by everyone: there was general agreement that it should mark the end of “business as usual”. One heartening note was that solidarity had been recognized as not only a moral imperative but also an economic and strategic one for the entire international community, which was called on by all partners to seize the opportunity to demonstrate a level of commitment and political will that would give the best possible expression to the spirit of multilateralism and thus make a real difference to the development of those countries in the next 10 years.

32. The record of the previous 10 years had been described as mixed, with much remaining to be done. There was a gap between commitments and achievements, and any new programme of action must draw on the lessons learned. One area that had been somewhat neglected was agricultural development: that was seen as a key priority which must rest on the least developed countries’ own action, supported by the international community; another priority was the building of a critical mass of diversified productive capacity, offering possibilities of job creation and income generation. Those countries had also called for assistance in meeting environmental challenges, particularly those linked to climate change, and in leapfrogging into a green economy. With regard to trade, several representatives of the countries concerned had called for duty-free and quota-free treatment and aid-for-trade measures. In the matter of finance, which was regarded as the lifeblood of their development, calls had been made for ODA to be scaled up in quality and quantity, both for itself and as a facilitator of other financing and of other flows like technology which, not sufficiently emphasized in the Brussels Programme of Action, was important for the future.

33. It had been repeatedly emphasized that any new programme of action should be flexible and take account of differences between countries; it should be tailored, as appropriate, to food- and energy-importing countries, countries in conflict, and commodity-dependent and climate-vulnerable countries, in particular. It should be marked by actionable goals and targets; promote multi-stakeholder ownership and solidarity; and reflect a results-oriented approach. It should address the key topics of remittances as a key source of financing, national governance, empowerment, crisis mitigation, South-South cooperation and regional integration. The concern was to provide the countries concerned with a cushion to withstand shocks, which had been sadly lacking in the past, and enable them to graduate from least developed country status.

34. Turning to the Almaty Programme of Action, she said that Member States had underscored its importance, while expressing the hope that the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries would take up the challenges still facing small island developing States and landlocked developing countries. They had all called for conclusion of the Doha Round and for enhanced implementation of the Aid for Trade Initiative, with particular reference to their geographical challenges. Their need for transport infrastructure development, for them and for their transit partners, had also been stressed, particularly in view of their high transport and transit time and costs due to distance from sea, which was affecting their ability to attain the MDGs and develop diversified and competitive economies. Trade was seen as the engine of growth for those countries and it was clearly in the interest of everyone that every possible measure should be taken to facilitate it, particularly through increased financing for development.

*The meeting rose at 5 p.m.*