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## Second Committee

### Summary record of the 14th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 21 October 2013, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Rebedea (Vice-Chair)..... (Romania)

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*In the absence of Mr. Diallo (Senegal), Ms. Rebedea (Romania), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.*

## **Agenda item 22: Groups of countries in special situations**

### **(a) Follow-up to the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries** (A/68/88-E/2013/81, A/68/88/Corr.1-E/2013/81/Corr.1 and A/68/217)

### **(b) Comprehensive 10-year Review Conference on the Implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action** (A/68/157)

1. **Mr. Acharya** (Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 (A/68/88-E/2013/81), said that progress towards achieving the goals and targets of the eight priority areas of the Istanbul Programme of Action had been mixed. A number of least developed countries, albeit fewer than during the previous decade, had recorded strong and rising investment rates, rapid urbanization, improved human development and robust expansion of sectors other than agriculture, possibly as a result of structural changes. However, most were unlikely to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.

2. Efforts had been made by the least developed countries and development partners to integrate the Istanbul Programme of Action into national development and development cooperation strategies. His Office had provided system-wide coordination and had played a strong advocacy role. It had prepared a flagship publication entitled *State of the Least Developed Countries 2013*.

3. Productive capacity-building must be the centre of the domestic, regional and global agenda in order to enable the least developed countries to sustain high economic growth and build resilience. He highlighted the need for adequate means of implementation in that regard, including increased domestic investment, fulfilment of official development assistance (ODA) commitments and efforts to improve the quality and effectiveness of such assistance. Steps should be taken

to strengthen South-South and triangular cooperation, and resources from innovative financing should be made available for the development of the least developed countries. In the interests of mutual accountability, the international community should develop robust, enhanced and coherent global support measures to advance the efforts of the least developed countries to achieve inclusive and rapid sustainable development.

4. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on a technology bank and science, technology and innovation supporting mechanism dedicated to the least developed countries (A/68/217), he said that those countries were lagging far behind other developing countries in the generation and application of scientific and technological knowledge, and had been unable to take meaningful advantage of three key avenues of technology transfer: imports, foreign direct investment (FDI) and licensing. The report did not provide a blueprint of specific arrangements relating to the technology bank, but proposed, in paragraph 4, some possible activities. He expressed gratitude to the Government of Turkey for its offer to host the technology bank.

5. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action: addressing the special needs of landlocked developing countries within a new global framework for transit transport cooperation for landlocked and transit developing countries" (A/68/157), he said that the report provided an assessment of the social and economic performance of the landlocked developing countries, as well as of the progress made in implementing the priority areas of the Almaty Programme of Action and in preparations for the 10-year Review Conference. Geographical factors, including remoteness from major markets, inadequate infrastructure and the high cost of export and import, had an impact on development in the landlocked developing countries. Despite advances in some areas, progress remained slow in many others and was undermined by the negative effects of climate change. The needs of the landlocked developing countries must therefore be embedded firmly in international development processes.

6. The report described measures taken by landlocked and transit developing countries and expressed the hope that the Doha Development Round, ODA and FDI would successfully address issues

affecting the cross-border trade of many landlocked developing countries.

7. Preparations for the 10-year Review Conference on the Implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action were well under way. The Review Conference was a crucial milestone and all stakeholders should actively engage in the preparatory process. He thanked the Governments of Kazakhstan and India for their contributions to the trust fund, and encouraged other countries to contribute so as to ensure adequate financial resources for the Conference.

#### *Question time*

8. **Mr. Zinsou** (Benin) requested clarification of the important role that productive capacity-building was expected to play and of the link between the Secretary-General's report in document [A/68/88](#) and the publication prepared by the Office of the High Representative. He also sought further information on the role of that Office in coordinating United Nations system-wide action and on the parallel processes involving landlocked developing countries and least developed countries.

9. **Mr. Acharya** (Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States) said that his Office had engaged in a deeper analysis of the binding constraints faced by the least developed countries. Progress in a number of areas was uneven and not sustainable or rapid enough to bring about structural change. If the least developed countries were to experience a strong, sustainable, inclusive and rapid transformation in their economies, a special focus should be productive capacity-building, which encompassed elements including the economy, infrastructure, energy and private sector development as well as human and social development.

10. As regards system-wide coordination, his Office was part of the United Nations System Task Team on the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda and was playing a leading role in bringing together those involved to ensure that productive capacity and the social and environmental dimension were emphasized.

11. Noting that almost half of the least developed countries were also landlocked developing countries, he drew attention to a number of cross-cutting issues for both groups: infrastructure, diversification,

enhancement of trading capacity, and regional and subregional cooperation. Collaboration would help to ensure a coordinated response to the challenges facing both sets of countries in the global agenda for the post-2015 period.

#### *General discussion*

12. **Mr. Thomson** (Fiji), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, expressed concern that most of the least developed countries continued to face pervasive poverty, serious structural impediments to growth, low levels of human development and high exposure to shocks. More worrisome was the decline in FDI and ODA caused by the deteriorating economic environment that threatened to undermine the modest gains achieved. To enable at least half of the least developed countries to meet the graduation criteria by 2020, strengthened partnerships for development were necessary, including fulfilment of ODA commitments, provision of duty-free and quota-free market access on a lasting basis for all least developed countries, and action to reverse the decline in resources for the Aid for Trade initiative. The international community should assist the efforts of the least developed countries to attain the MDGs by giving specific attention to productive capacity-building, structural transformation and the creation of decent jobs.

13. All least developed countries were lagging behind in the important areas of science, technology and innovation; efforts to enable those countries to acquire new technologies, develop domestic capacity and build a knowledge base were essential to enhance productive capacity and would help to bridge the digital divide. The Group of 77 and China welcomed the proposed structure of the technology bank and science, technology and innovation supporting mechanism. The bank should become fully operational as soon as possible, and the General Assembly should take a decision on its establishment at the current session. Commending the Government of Turkey's offer to host the technology bank, he called on all development partners to give meaningful support to the least developed countries in connection with the functioning of the bank.

14. The international community must enhance development assistance to help the landlocked developing countries to overcome the unique challenges they faced, build resilience and embark on a path of sustainable social and economic development.

It must also strengthen partnerships and support to help landlocked and transit developing countries to implement the priorities of the Almaty Programme of Action.

15. Regional, global and thematic preparations for the 10-year Review Conference should be well structured and broadly participatory, so as to set priorities for a more comprehensive, common action-oriented framework for landlocked developing countries for the next decade.

16. **Ms. Nazaire** (Haiti), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that the least developed countries as a whole had made limited progress with regard to the goals and targets of the Istanbul Programme of Action. Of particular concern was the continuing effect of the global economic and financial crisis on FDI, which had decreased for the third consecutive year, and on ODA, particularly as the number of least developed countries to have achieved a growth rate of 7 per cent had fallen from 15 between 2001 and 2010 to 11 in 2011.

17. Welcoming advancements in the area of productive capacity, she said that technological progress alone was not sufficient to ensure sustainable development but had to be accompanied by progress in other areas, including literacy and education. Continued efforts must also be made with respect to infrastructure development, energy and the transfer of technology; sustainable agricultural practices must also be adopted.

18. Although positive progress had been made with respect to market access, duty-free and quota-free access had yet to be achieved on a lasting basis for the least developed countries, and administrative hurdles and rules of origin were impeding the utilization of preferential trade schemes. The development of South-South cooperation and the increase in preferential agreements between least developed and emerging countries was conducive to reducing external shocks and economic instability, and should be encouraged.

19. Noting that progress in the area of human and social development had been particularly slow, she said that urgent action must be taken to protect vulnerable groups and mitigate the negative effects of shocks on education, health and poverty. Least developed countries should also be afforded greater macroeconomic flexibility to enable them to strengthen their climate change mitigation mechanisms. The

provision of financing for development was essential and ODA should be reviewed from a quantitative and qualitative perspective to make it less fragmented and more predictable. The macroeconomic implications of aid should also be carefully reviewed.

20. She praised the efforts of United Nations bodies and international development organizations in helping the least developed countries to implement the Istanbul Programme of Action. Noting that Haiti had particularly appreciated assistance from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean on issues relating to protection of the environment and human development, she said that the international community should provide particular support to that country, which had experienced the second lowest rate of growth between 2001 and 2010 and a number of severe natural disasters. The assistance pledged in March 2010 and December 2012 must be provided to enable the country to face such exceptional development challenges.

21. Finally, she said that the least developed countries and the priority areas of the Istanbul Programme of Action should be given pride of place in the post-2015 development agenda.

22. **Ms. Tan** (Singapore), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that, unless the vulnerabilities of the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States were adequately addressed, the gap between those countries and the rest of the world would widen. She urged all stakeholders to work together to ensure the success of forthcoming initiatives, including the 10-year Review Conference on the Implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, and called for further consultations on the institutional arrangements for a technology bank.

23. Although each country bore primary responsibility for its own economic and social development, the international community must meet its commitments and shared responsibilities. Discussions on the post-2015 development agenda should involve a wide variety of stakeholders with a view to identifying strategies to assist the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States in attaining their development goals.

24. With a membership that included those three categories of countries, ASEAN was committed to alleviating poverty, narrowing the development gap and promoting sustainable development in the region. To that end, it had undertaken a number of initiatives, including the Initiative for ASEAN Integration, which promoted cooperation and mutual assistance, and the ASEAN Framework for Equitable Economic Development, which sought to ensure that economic integration in the region addressed development issues. The Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity was intended to promote a well-connected ASEAN community.

25. Lastly, ASEAN was working closely with external partners, including the United Nations Development Programme, on issues of common concern, such as climate change, environmental degradation, natural disasters and pandemic diseases. At the recent ASEAN Summit, which had affirmed the importance of continued efforts towards strong, inclusive, sustainable and balanced growth, the United Nations had reiterated its support for the implementation of the ASEAN Roadmap for the Attainment of the MDGs.

26. **Mr. Kommasith** (Lao People's Democratic Republic), speaking on behalf of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, said that particular attention should be given to the full and effective implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action — the first and only United Nations framework that aimed to address the special needs and challenges of the landlocked developing countries. Although considerable progress had been made in its implementation over the previous ten years, notably in the establishment of efficient transit transport systems, much remained to be done. Landlocked developing countries were facing a number of newly emerging challenges and their economies remained fragile and vulnerable to external shocks. The unique geographical challenges faced by them were unlikely to be resolved without the effective cooperation and support of the international community and a genuine partnership with transit neighbours.

27. The comprehensive 10-year Review Conference on the Implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action would provide a unique opportunity for landlocked and transit developing countries and all other relevant stakeholders to undertake a critical review of the implementation of the Programme, identify best practices and constraints, and adopt

effective policies and support measures to promote sustainable development. The Group of Landlocked Developing Countries encouraged participation at the highest level in the preparatory process and the Conference itself with a view to developing a new action-oriented strategic framework for the next decade and achieving structural transformation in the landlocked developing countries, including through the establishment of efficient transit transport systems, increased investment and enhanced trade and productive capacity. Lastly, the special needs and challenges of the countries concerned must be adequately addressed in the intergovernmental process to formulate the post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development goals.

28. **Mr. Zinsou** (Benin), speaking on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries, said that despite the sustained efforts of the least developed countries to implement the Istanbul Programme of Action over the previous two years, the situation in the majority of those countries remain a cause of concern: one half of the population continued to live on less than \$1.25 a day and, although levels of maternal and infant mortality, illiteracy, hunger and malnutrition were decreasing, they were falling much more slowly than in other developing countries.

29. Against that background, increased global solidarity and international cooperation were more important than ever, yet bilateral net ODA to the least developed countries had decreased by 12.8 per cent between 2011 and 2012. Development partners must honour their commitments towards those countries. He also called for the provision of further assistance in the eight priority areas of action identified in the Istanbul Programme of Action, and noted that his Government was organizing a ministerial conference on new partnerships for productive capacity-building for the least developed countries, that sought to intensify the benefits of South-South and triangular cooperation. The Group of Least Developed Countries welcomed the Inter-Agency Consultative Group led by the Office of the High Representative and the actions taken by United Nations bodies and other international organizations in support of the least developed countries. Structural reforms, in particular economic diversification, were essential for a gradual and smooth transition from least developed country status and to ensure that the graduation process was irreversible. The Group of Least Developed Countries endorsed the

recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/68/88), considering that the objectives of the Istanbul Programme of Action could not be achieved unless all stakeholders met their commitments.

30. The least developed countries lagged far behind in the area of science, technology and innovation, and were therefore prevented from addressing challenges in a number of the priority areas of action outlined in the Programme of Action. Access to appropriate modern technology was essential for the least developed countries to become internationally competitive and move closer to the middle-income countries. However, because of a lack of resources and financial capacity, they were unable to invest in research and development, acquire the latest technologies and bridge the digital divide, leaving them at a disadvantage in a number of areas. Noting that no global framework or comprehensive agreement currently existed in the area of science and technology for development, he said that the establishment of a technology bank and science, technology and innovation supporting mechanism dedicated to the least developed countries would help to foster the development of endogenous science and capacity-building and might even support structural transformation. Lastly, the support provided to the least developed countries by developing countries through the dissemination of technology and know-how should not be seen as a replacement for North-South cooperation.

31. **Mr. Vrailas** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that the European Union and its member States remained committed to the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action. Efforts would continue, including through trilateral cooperation, to promote structural reforms, enhance productive capacity and unlock domestic potential for sustainable and inclusive growth in the least developed countries. The European Union and its member States would continue to provide the least developed countries with increasingly focused Aid for Trade and with duty-free and quota-free market access for all products, with the exception of arms and ammunition.

32. While the European Union and its member States were committed to accompanying the least developed countries in their national transition strategies for graduation and encouraged other partners to do the same, there was a need for predictability in the United Nations decision-making process to ensure expeditious action by the General Assembly on graduating countries. It looked forward to action from the General Assembly on elements of the draft resolution on graduation of countries from the least developed countries category (A/67/L.31/Rev.1), which had not been adopted.

33. The European Union and its member States would engage constructively in the preparations for the 10-year Review Conference on the Implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and looked forward to fruitful discussions on key issues, such as the high cost of transport and commercial transactions, transit and trade potential. Finally, it was important to ensure that the particular situation and concerns of the most vulnerable countries were reflected in work up to 2015 and beyond.

34. **Mr. Bame** (Ethiopia) said that results achieved so far in the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action had been mixed. The deteriorating global economic environment, which had contributed to a further decline in development assistance to the least developed countries, was particularly worrisome to those countries that had begun a process of structural transformation. Noting that the adoption of the Istanbul Programme of Action had provided impetus for the least developed countries themselves to make more effort to address their development challenges, he said that Ethiopia had aligned its Growth and Transformation Plan with the objectives of the Programme's priority areas of action. Although his country had continued to register double-digit economic growth for more than a decade and had also begun implementation of its climate-resilient green economy strategy with a view to achieving a carbon-neutral economy by 2025, it continued to face enormous development challenges, including the need to enhance productive capacity, adapt to new and emerging challenges, strengthen domestic resource mobilization efforts and continue to develop human resources. Investment in renewable sources of energy would expedite the efforts of the least developed countries to eradicate poverty and ensure sustainable development. Development partners should supplement

the efforts of the least developed countries by honouring their ODA commitments. Ethiopia was grateful to those countries that had already done so and to others that had made efforts to align their development aid strategies with the priorities of the least developed countries.

35. He outlined some of the steps taken by his country to address the problem of landlockedness since the adoption of the Almaty Programme of Action. However, much remained to be done if landlocked developing countries were to overcome their remoteness and isolation from major international markets. Infrastructure development was crucial and, although many countries were working closely with transit countries to increase connectivity, adequate financial and technical assistance was also required. The pressing needs of landlocked and transit developing countries to be identified at the 10-year Review Conference on the Implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action should be incorporated into the post-2015 development agenda, and he called for the effective participation of the international community in that Conference.

36. **Mr. Shah** (Malaysia) said that, despite the progress made by the least developed countries on many of the goals and targets of the Istanbul Programme of Action, poverty levels and gender inequalities in those countries remained high, physical infrastructure was largely below international standards and dissemination of knowledge and ICTs was limited. Moreover, flows of FDI and ODA were declining as a result of the deteriorating global economic environment.

37. Malaysia remained committed to the success of the Istanbul Programme of Action through South-South cooperation and endeavoured to assist the least developed countries in attaining the MDGs and other internationally agreed development goals by 2015 and beyond. The role of developed countries as development partners was as crucial as least developed country ownership and leadership in formulating policies based on national priorities, conditions and requirements. More than 26,000 participants from 141 developing countries had benefited from the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP) since its inception in 1981, including more than 10,000 participants from 49 least developed countries and former least developed countries.

38. Malaysia welcomed triangular cooperation involving developed partners and recipient countries as part of South-South cooperation. It had worked with Governments and institutions in various countries under the Third Country Training Programme (TCTP) to offer short courses to participants from developing countries, including the least developed countries and would welcome extended cooperation with new development partners within that framework. Malaysia would continue to share its development experience, notably in the field of poverty eradication and capacity-building, with the least developed countries and looked forward to the successful implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action and the Almaty Programme of Action.

39. **Ms. Patil** (India) said that, without rapid, sustained and inclusive development in the least developed countries and landlocked developing countries, little headway would be made in achieving internationally agreed development goals. Noting that growth rates in the least developed countries had fallen during the first year of implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action, she said that the decline in ODA, particularly in flows to the least developed countries, was a matter of serious concern. ODA commitments to least developed countries must be met urgently, and scaled up in the post-2015 period if half of those countries were to graduate by 2020. Noting that technology transfer, enhanced market access, debt relief, infrastructure and productive capacity-building should be prioritized to promote structural transfer in the least developed countries, she said that India was confident that the \$1 billion line of credit it had offered to support implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action and the \$5 billion provided for follow-up would facilitate achievement of the Programme's objectives.

40. Although the Almaty Programme of Action had led to encouraging results, the international community should continue and strengthen its support to landlocked developing countries in coming decades, while also addressing the constraints and challenges of transit developing countries. India engaged in special bilateral cooperation agreements with its landlocked neighbours to facilitate the transit of their goods and attached the highest priority to strengthening its ties with those countries. Noting that large developing countries had emerged as important trade partners for the least developed countries and landlocked

developing countries, she said that India had already extended its duty-free tariff preference scheme to all the least developed countries. It would continue to provide enhanced economic and technical support to the least developed countries and landlocked developing countries in the context of South-South cooperation, and had made a contribution of \$100,000 for the organization of the 10-year Review Conference on the Implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action.

41. **Mr. Aslov** (Tajikistan) said that the interests of those countries that were vulnerable because of their geographical situation must be taken into account in consideration of development issues. Lack of access to the sea hindered effective integration into the multilateral trade system and had serious repercussions on other aspects of development, including economic growth, poverty reduction and achievement of the MDGs. He called for the removal of all economically unfounded barriers to transport.

42. Full and effective implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action would facilitate the development of regional and international trade and economic cooperation. Broad participation and the use of intergovernmental mechanisms at the regional and global levels would ensure a smooth and effective preparatory process for the 10-year Review Conference on the Implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action. As part of its preparation for that Conference, his Government had recently hosted the tenth annual meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission for the Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia (TRACECA) and a high-level conference on transit potential in Central Asia for the period up to 2023, at which a number of decisions had been taken on issues of international transport and transit.

43. Tajikistan was making every effort to improve its own transit transport and communication links. Particular attention was being given to the development of a transport infrastructure that would promote greater domestic, subregional and regional trade, and active efforts were being made to implement the "Single Window" system. His country, which had become a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in March and was continuing to liberalize its trade regime, considered that landlocked developing countries should enjoy a more beneficial trade regime. Lastly, as part of the preparations for the 10-year Review Conference, consideration should be given to

means of promoting trade between landlocked developing countries. Developing the communications capability of the countries in Central Asia would help to increase the volume of trade between those countries and with other regions.

44. **Ms. Ulziibayar** (Mongolia) said that the development endeavours of landlocked developing countries were severely constrained by factors including lack of territorial access to the sea, and the high costs of transit transportation, which in the case of Mongolia accounted for 6.2 per cent of gross domestic product. Landlocked developing countries must be proactive in addressing geographical challenges, and should be assisted by the international community through the provision of increased financial support, enhanced and predictable market access, and the involvement of multilateral and regional financial and development institutions.

45. As part of its action plan for 2012-2016, Mongolia was seeking to achieve tangible results to protect the interests of landlocked developing countries and had intensified its collaboration with a number of United Nations agencies and regional development partners. Her country invited those States that had not already done so to become party to the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of an International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries, and had allocated approximately \$350,000 for the 2014 fiscal year to support its operation. Lastly, she hoped that the 10-year Review Conference on the Implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action would provide an opportunity for the international community to consider critically the special needs and challenges of landlocked and transit developing countries, and develop priorities for a new, more comprehensive, action-oriented framework for the next decade.

46. **Mr. Çevik** (Turkey) said that, while some progress had been made in achieving the goals and targets of the Istanbul Programme of Action, much remained to be done. Turkey had doubled its development assistance in 2012 as compared to 2011, as part of a comprehensive assistance package.

47. Technological advances and productive capacity-building were essential if the least developed countries were to reduce significantly their exposure to global economic risk. The establishment of a special technology transfer and technological capacity-



building mechanism was crucial to facilitate technological leapfrogging by the least developed countries, and would contribute to rapid structural transformation. His Government supported the establishment of a technology bank and had offered to host such a facility.

48. **Ms. Medvedeva** (Russian Federation) said that she welcomed the efforts of the least developed countries to ensure that national development programmes and strategies were consistent with the priorities and goals of the Istanbul Programme of Action. Graduation from the list of least developed countries must be carried out in accordance with General Assembly resolution 59/209, consistent with the spirit and letter of the Istanbul Programme of Action and with agreements and principles in the outcome documents of the International Conference on Financing for Development and the Doha Review Conference.

49. Noting the importance of implementing political agreements supporting the least developed countries, she said that the Russian Federation continued to call for increased multilateral cooperation for the least developed countries. It was willing to engage constructively with all partners, including the private sector and civil society in order to address the special needs of the least developed countries in the context of the achievement of the MDGs and the development of the post-2015 agenda. In 2012, the Russian Federation had provided approximately \$460 million in assistance to developing countries. It applied a preferential regime for imports from those countries, thereby promoting the development of their export industries.

50. The Russian Federation was committed to the objectives of the Almaty Programme of Action and trusted that the comprehensive 10-year Review Conference would result in a development agenda enabling landlocked developing countries to integrate into the global trading system and move closer to achieving internationally agreed development goals in the coming decade. Her country promoted the development of partner relations with countries in north-east Asia under the Greater Tumen Initiative, particularly in the area of transport infrastructure and the construction of transport corridors linking Europe, Russia and Japan, and Europe and Asia. Such action would facilitate the development of a global partnership for transport between landlocked and transit developing countries.

51. **Ms. Yeshmagambetova** (Kazakhstan) said that her Government had carried out targeted action within the framework of the Almaty Programme of Action in order to develop trade and transport sectors, and the main issues to be addressed formed the basis of the country's transport strategy up to 2015. Efforts were being made to build transcontinental transport connections between Europe and Asia, and the construction of the Western-Europe Western-China international transit corridor, which was over 8,400 km in length, would reduce significantly cargo delivery times in comparison to sea shipping. Land cargo terminals would stimulate the growth of international trade and transportation for landlocked developing countries, and Kazakhstan intended to join the Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports in the near future. Her Government was finalizing the procedures for accession to the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of an International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries, and encouraged other landlocked developing countries to accede to that instrument. Her country appreciated the active participation of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe in the implementation of projects to improve transport infrastructure and build institutional capacity in the Asian region, and would welcome the establishment of a mechanism for South-South cooperation with landlocked developing countries.

52. Noting that landlocked developing countries should continue to strengthen their productive capacities so as to increase competitiveness and create conditions to attract FDI and public sector partnership, she said that the 10-year Review Conference on the Implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action should result in an agenda for development that would facilitate the integration of landlocked developing countries into the global trading system, and the achievement of internationally agreed development goals. She called on the international community and development partners to participate actively in the preparatory process and in the Conference itself.

53. **Mr. Sareer** (Maldives) said that, although his country was the most recent graduate from the list of least developed countries, it continued to suffer from the disadvantages associated with small island economies, such as remoteness, a small-scale economy and environmental fragility. The graduation process

had been far from smooth for Maldives owing to the challenges associated with the country's inherent vulnerabilities and a lack of coordinated commitment from bilateral partners. While welcoming the adoption of General Assembly resolution 67/221 on smooth transition for countries graduating from the list of least developed countries, which introduced greater oversight ability for the United Nations, she noted that Maldives continued to suffer the negative consequences of graduation because of the insufficiencies of its smooth transition strategy.

54. Countries on the list of least developed countries had access to concessional development financing and technical assistance in order to continue to progress towards more resilient levels of development. Maldives was exploring the viability of establishing a United Nations category similar to the WTO category of small, vulnerable economies, in order to better acknowledge countries requiring specific attention because of the inherent vulnerability of their small economies.

55. Maldives had engaged extensively with WTO in the implementation of its transition strategy, and had successfully campaigned for an extension of the exemption from application of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) for all least developed countries. Small and vulnerable economies should have access to the WTO Enhanced Integrated Framework for Trade-Related Technical Assistance to Least Developed Countries and should utilize trade policy reviews to draw the attention of WTO member States to the consequences of graduation and to negotiate an Everything but Arms agreement with the European Union.

56. Maldives had applied to join the European Union's Generalized System of Preferences scheme, the eligibility criteria for which included ratification of 27 international conventions. It had submitted reservations to two conventions, and had recently been informed by the European Commission that its application would be rejected unless all reservations were withdrawn. A rejection would lead to unprecedented losses in the fisheries sector, which was the second largest economic sector in Maldives.

57. Graduation from the list of least developed countries was based on flawed criteria. Maldives' graduation had been based largely on its per capita gross national income and the performance of its social indicators; little, if any, consideration had been given

to the high per capita cost of providing basic services and to the role of donor intervention. An innovative approach should be taken to capture the development dynamics of small, highly dispersed island countries, and regular studies should be conducted for review by the international donor community. The international community had an obligation to ensure that the progress made by graduating countries was not reversed during the transition process, and that inherent vulnerabilities were not disregarded.

58. **Mr. Momen** (Bangladesh) said that the report on implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 (A/68/88) painted a bleak picture. However, with the full commitment of the international community and the allocation of appropriate resources, the goals of the Istanbul Programme of Action, notably eradicating extreme poverty, could be achieved. Judging by global expenditure on defence in 2012, resources were available, despite the financial crisis. What was required was the mindset to help humanity and to prioritize the allocation of resources accordingly.

59. The least developed countries required international support in the area of science, technology and innovation. Bangladesh was grateful to Turkey for offering to host the technology bank and called on the United Nations and other international organizations to provide assistance in that regard and in establishing regional science and technology centres in the least developed countries. Trade was another area where the least developed countries remained extremely marginalized. Duty-free and quota-free market access should be provided in a timely manner for all products from least developed countries; other barriers to trade and services should be removed with immediate effect. A mechanism for trade financing should also be established with coordinated action from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and WTO.

60. Noting the decline in ODA, particularly in bilateral net ODA to the least developed countries, and the fall in Aid for Trade commitments, Bangladesh called on development partners to honour their obligations and, in the interests of predictability and stability, to factor their ODA commitment into their national budgets. Although his country was on track to achieve many of the goals of the Istanbul Programme of Action, the international community must do more to eradicate poverty and hunger, assist the least

developed countries in meeting their basic human needs and enable half of those countries to graduate by 2020.

61. **Mr. Achergui** (Morocco) said that, although four decades had elapsed since the list of least developed countries had first been approved, the structural challenges faced by those countries had not been overcome and the number of such countries had almost doubled. It was currently even more difficult for the least developed countries to meet three of the graduation criteria set out in the Istanbul Programme of Action, because of the impact of the economic and financial crisis. In addition to a shortage of financial and human resources, the challenges of climate change had serious social and economic repercussions in the least developed countries. Action to strengthen global governance in the area of the environment must be an integral part of any development policy, and Morocco looked forward to the proposal to be submitted by the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing. Also, the least developed countries should be more involved in regional cooperation programmes, notably concerning the utilization of renewable energies, rational use of groundwater and groundwater aquifers, and efforts to combat desertification and deforestation, and to protect the marine environment.

62. Although significant progress had been made with respect to landlocked developing countries, structural challenges persisted and other factors, such as poor integration into the global economy, increased the vulnerability of those countries. The international community must help landlocked developing countries to strengthen their capacities and implement fully the priorities of the Almaty Programme of Action.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*