

**Statement By Dr. Arjun Karki, International Co-ordinator at the Africa Regional Preparatory Meeting on The Review of The Implementation of the BPoA**

**8-9 March 2010, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

Mr. Chairman,

Mr. Cheick Sidi Diarra, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and High Representative, OHRRLLS

Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ECA, Honourable Ministers and Members of Parliament,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great honour that I address this important meeting that is taking place as part of the preparatory process for next year's 4th UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC IV). It is appropriate that we meet on 8 March, International Women's Day. Women are key to development and, and to creating the environment that is essential for development to be realized. Until we recognize this, not just in words, but in reality we will not achieve our goal. I stand here as a representative of LDC Watch, to share with you our perspectives on the challenges facing the citizens of LDCs. As the only LDC civil society network engaged in policy advocacy and campaigns in the interest of the LDCs, we have been entrusted by the UN High Representative to take the leading role in preparing civil society's engagement with the process. We are honoured to take on this role and we are pleased to share that we are also encouraged by the assurance of support extended by the Chair of the LDC group, members of the LDC Global Coordination Bureau and Permanent Representative of the government of Turkey in New York.

In our preparations, we have been organising national civil society consultations, targeting all of the 49 LDCs, focusing on review of the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action (BPoA) including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These national consultations have proven to be building blocks for our regional interventions which in turn will feed into the international engagement process towards the LDC IV. At the end of last week on 4-5 March, we organised an Assembly of African LDC civil society representatives, in collaboration with the ECA, UN-OHRRLLS, and UNDP. Drawn from African LDCs, we sought to analyse the obstacles and challenges facing African LDCs in their struggle to get onto the path of sustainable development.

Our preparations at national, regional and international level will feed into the Istanbul conference where we will organise a Civil Society Forum in collaboration with Turkey as the

host country, and UN-OHRLLS. This will draw on the experiences of the successful NGO Forum organised in Brussels at the time of the 3rd UN Conference on LDCs.

Mr. Chairman,

As identified in General Assembly Resolution 63/227, civil society has a crucial role to play in all our countries if the challenges we collectively face are to be overcome. And, this we can only do together.

As LDC Watch, we are campaigning for NO MDGs without LDCs! In the advanced version of the Secretary General's report on the implementation of the MDGs, the LDCs are most severely challenged in being able to meet these goals. Without doubt, many of the challenges that we face today were not envisaged when the international community met in Brussels in 2001 and adopted the Brussels Programme. Since that time numerous global challenges have come to the fore, hindering the development opportunities for LDCs. As we know, these have included the multiple crises of hunger, fuel, unsustainable debt and in particular, climate change - drastically ranging from desertification in Africa, sea-level rise in the Asia-Pacific including the catastrophic melting Himalayas. Greater still, remains the uphill task of addressing the structural causes of vulnerability, exclusion, marginalisation and exploitation that creates and perpetuates poverty in LDCs. It is in the context of these alarming challenges that the development strategies for LDCs must be conceived and agreed upon in Turkey.

In last week's Assembly of African LDC civil society, we reflected that after 3 Programmes of Action established to address and overcome the challenges facing LDCs, the number of African countries in the group has more than doubled from 15 in 1971 to 33 today. It concluded that using any rationale criteria, this has to be judged to have failed. There is an urgent need for a paradigm shift. The fundamentals underpinning approaches to development have to be radically reviewed. The Assembly reiterated civil society's calls for food sovereignty, debt cancellation, climate, gender and trade justice and universal access to basic services in LDCs.

Mr. Chairman,

Our challenges are common, and we have a shared responsibility to face them collectively. All parties need to honour the commitments that are made, and which are the very basis for constructive collaboration. As LDC Watch, we seek to bring meaningful and substantive contributions to the debate. We will play the role of both partner and pressure group, as we articulate people's perspectives on pro-poor development in LDCs. In the process, we strongly hope that we will receive optimum support and cooperation from member states and the UN system in terms of space for effective advocacy and campaigns, political will and adequate resources. Towards the LDC IV, we therefore look forward to be recognized in the entire preparatory process not just at the event in Turkey.

In conclusion, it should be our utmost priority to come up with a realistic development agenda for the LDCs that is people-driven, appropriate for addressing the human rights challenges faced by LDC citizens today, and that builds upon the important lessons learnt over the last decade. The strategies adopted in Istanbul must lead to development processes in LDCs that enable them to graduate from the group. It is around this consensus that we should unite. On behalf of LDC civil society, I look forward to working together with you to make the LDC IV process a genuine success.

Thank you.