

Asia LDC Civil Society Strategy Assembly towards Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the LDCs for the Decade 2011-2020 (IPoA)

15-16 May 2012, Bangkok

(CONCEPT NOTE)

Background and Rationale

The Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC-IV) that was convened on 9-13 May 2011 in Istanbul adopted the Istanbul Programme of Action for the LDCs for the Decade 2011-2020 (IPoA) as well as the Istanbul Political Declaration.

The **overarching goal of the IPoA** is to overcome the structural challenges faced by the LDCs in order to eradicate poverty, achieve internationally agreed development goals with a special focus on the millennium development goals (MDGs) and enable graduation from the LDC category.

The IPoA states that “guided by the overarching goal, national policies of least developed countries and international support measures during the decade will focus on the following specific objectives with the aim of enabling half the number of least developed countries to meet the criteria for graduation by 2020:

- (a) Achieve sustained, equitable and inclusive economic growth in least developed countries, to at least the level of 7 per cent per annum, by strengthening their productive capacity in all sectors through structural transformation and overcoming their marginalization through their effective integration into the global economy, including through regional integration;
- (b) Build human capacities by fostering sustained, equitable and inclusive human and social development, gender equality and the empowerment of women;
- (c) Reduce the vulnerability of least developed countries to economic, natural and environmental shocks and disasters, as well as climate change, and enhance their ability to meet these and other challenges through strengthening their resilience;
- (d) Ensure enhanced financial resources and their effective use for least developed countries’ development, including through domestic resource mobilization, ODA, external debt relief, foreign direct investment and remittances;
- (e) Enhance good governance at all levels, by strengthening democratic processes, institutions and the rule of law; increasing efficiency, coherence, transparency and participation; protecting and promoting human rights; and reducing corruption, and strengthen least developed country Governments’ capacity to play an effective role in their economic and social development.

The **eight priority areas** therefore are (1) productive capacity (2) agriculture, food security and rural development (3) trade (4) commodities (5) human and social development (6) multiple crises and other emerging challenges (7) mobilising financial resources for development and capacity-building and (8) good governance at all levels.

LDC member states have committed to undertake 126 actions, the development partners have committed to undertake 102 actions, and 16 actions will be undertaken jointly to implement the priority areas.

The **eight principles** that will guided the implementation of the IPoA are (1) country ownership and leadership (2) an integrated approach (3) genuine partnership (4) result orientation (5) peace and security, development and human rights (6) equity (7) voice and representation and (8) balanced role of the state and market considerations.

The **significant role of civil society** towards proper implementation of the IPoA has been recognised by both the Istanbul Political Declaration and the IPoA. Point 17 of the Istanbul Declaration states as follows, "We call on civil society, including non-governmental organizations, voluntary associations and philanthropic foundations, the private sector, academia and other relevant stakeholders at all levels to enhance their roles in the development efforts of least developed countries, as appropriate. We also take note of the Civil Society Forum Declaration of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries". The IPoA states that "The Programme of Action recognizes that civil society complements government and the private sector in its implementation. Civil society organizations will be involved in policy dialogue, as appropriate, to ensure a participatory and inclusive development process in least developed countries".

Additionally, the conclusions and recommendations of the Report of the Secretary-General on the outcome of the LDC-IV presented to the General Assembly, states that "Civil society organizations must use their wide reach at the global, regional and national levels and play a major role in drawing attention to gaps, challenges and opportunities in the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action. They should also be involved in focused campaigns on issues relevant to the implementation of the Programme of Action, which should be integrated into their advocacy activities. The United Nations should build on its partnerships with civil society organizations and foundations to advance the implementation of the Programme of Action".

Against this background, LDC Watch, the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and UN Office of the High Representative for least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States (OHRLS), are jointly organising the **Asia LDC Civil Society Regional Strategy Assembly towards the Implementation of the IPoA on 15-16 May 2012 in Bangkok**, immediately prior to the 68th ESCAP Commission session.

LDC Watch is the lead civil society alliance that has been advocating and campaigning in the interests of the LDCs since its formation in 2001 soon after the Third United Nations Conference on the LDCs (LDC-III) that was convened in Brussels. LDC Watch led the international steering committee of the LDC-IV Civil Society Forum, as the official co-ordinator of the civil society track towards the LDC-IV Conference.

Objectives

The overarching objective of the Asia LDC Civil Society Regional Strategy Assembly is to draw up the campaign and advocacy strategies of LDC civil society vis-à-vis the global review of the MDGs in 2013 as well as the mid-term review of the IPoA in 2013 in the context of the implementation of the IPoA. The Assembly will deliberate upon key thematic agenda from a regional perspective and conclude with an Asia LDC Civil Society Declaration. The key outcomes of the Assembly will be presented in a LDC Watch statement addressed to the 68th ESCAP Commission session.(see draft programme).

Participants

Civil society representatives from all of the 9 Asian LDCs – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Nepal, Timor-Leste and Yemen – will be invited, mainly from the LDC Watch constituency, with a special focus on gender balance. One civil society representative from the Pacific LDCs will also be invited to share

the outcomes of the Pacific LDC Civil Society Assembly that was organised in September 2011 in Auckland in parallel to the official Pacific Islands Forum meeting. Representatives from the UN system as well as other development stakeholders including LDC Watch partners and networks will also be invited.

Co-organisers

The Assembly is being co-organised by the UN Millennium Campaign (UNMC) and the UN Democracy Fund (UNDEF).

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