

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

ESCAP/OHRLLS Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting on the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries

14-16 December 2011

Bangkok

**Opening statement by**

**Mr. Shun-ichi Murata**  
**Deputy Executive Secretary**  
**ESCAP**

Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my honor to welcome you all to the first Asia-Pacific meeting on the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA), since its adoption in May 2011. We here at ESCAP have organized this meeting in cooperation with the Office of the High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS (OHRLLS) to find a common way forward for carrying out this important Programme. I am very pleased to see that many of the key stakeholders of the IPoA are here with us today - senior officials from the Asia-Pacific LDCs who are directly involved with its implementation, member governments, experts dealing with LDC issues, the UN system, relevant regional organizations, development partners and a broad spectrum of civil society representatives from Asia and the Pacific. This is a significant affirmation of your commitment to the task that lies before us.

As you know, ESCAP attaches a high priority to its member States which are Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, not just through the Istanbul Programme of Action and not just today, but through many years of technical cooperation activities and programmes, such as the Brussels Programme of Action 2010. I am pleased to report that our efforts have indeed helped to build productive capacities and achieve greater economic, social and human development in many of these LDCs.

But, as you also are aware, many challenges remain. These countries continue to have the lowest per capita incomes and highest population growth rates in the region. Many are off-track in the achievement of internationally recognized development goals, including the MDGs. They consistently find themselves at the bottom of Human Development Index rankings. Despite past efforts, these LDCs have still been unable to

overcome their economic vulnerabilities and structurally transform their economies to build resilience against internal and external shocks and crises. Their productive capacities remained limited, they have severe infrastructure deficits, and many of them lack adequate governance capacities and institutions, especially those emerging from conflict. Multiple, interrelated global crises and challenges, such as increased food insecurity, volatile energy and commodity prices, and the global financial and economic crises, partly reversed development gains that LDCs achieved over the years. Only three countries, in the entire world have graduated out of the LDC category so far in the past three decades. That is not enough. Clearly we must do better.

Fortunately, as we gather here this week to determine just how we can best address these pressing issues, we are equipped with a “Road Map”, which already identifies an extensive list of capacity development activities required for implementation of the IPoA, and the key players who should be responsible for that implementation, at regional, sub-regional and national levels. We have eight priority areas of action - productive capacity; agriculture, food security and rural development; human and social development; multiple crises and other emerging challenges; mobilizing financial resources for development and capacity-building, and good governance.

Our “Road Map” gives us identifiable goals and targets, supported by concrete deliverables and commitments. We are not starting from scratch, but rather from a very solid base with our paths already charted for us. It is now up to us to move forward, to help the LDCs in Asia and the Pacific meet their structural challenges in order to eradicate poverty, to achieve their goals and eventually graduate from the LDC category.

Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

Let me conclude by taking this opportunity to express my appreciation to other UN agencies, multilateral banks and regional and international organizations who will partner with us in implementing the Istanbul Programme of Action at the regional level. The IPoA represents the enhanced commitments of the LDCs, which have the ownership and primary responsibility for their own development, and their development partners to a renewed and strengthened global partnership. It is only in this spirit of cooperation and partnership that we can make a difference to the economic and social conditions of the LDCs including through the effective implementation of the IPoA. I reiterate that ESCAP stands ready to work with all the stakeholders to implement the IPoA for the benefit of the Asia-Pacific LDCs.

I wish the meeting a successful and productive outcome.

Thank you.

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