



Informal Interactive Civil Society Hearing of the General Assembly New York, April 1, 2011

in preparation for the Fourth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries

This session was convened in preparation for the Fourth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (UN LDC-IV) to be held in Istanbul, Turkey May 9 - 13, 2011. The session included UN Member States, NGOs and Civil Society Organizations.

Background Information:

In the late 1960s the UN first recognized the LDCs as requiring special support from the international community to overcome poverty and achieve sustainable development. Since that time, the number of LDCs has doubled and currently stands at 48 countries, with 33 in Africa, 14 in Asia and one in Latin America.

The UN has held 3 conferences on LDCs, the most recent was the Programme for Action (LDC III) introduced in Brussels in 2001 for the decade 2001 to 2010. It has become evident that there has been some progress in LDCs' situation such as an increase in trade, human development indicators, partnerships between public and private sectors, in access to schools and in increased women's participation in education and trade. However, they are faced with weak economic structures, geographical (such as land locked or small island) and environmental constraints. In addition they struggle with high debts and trade imbalance made worse by the global economic crisis, as well as conflicts, human rights violations, effects of climate change, food insecurity and increasing population numbers. Because of overwhelming challenges, the LDCs are unable to graduate to non-LDC status. The goal is for 50% of them to become non-LDCs by 2020.

The hearing was organized into three thematic sessions.

Session 1 was entitled "Harnessing Productive Resources for Sustainable Development."

The main issues that need to be addressed are:

- Lack of infrastructure for local, national and international trade.
- High level of unemployment.
- High debt which needs to be forgiven so that these countries can utilize funds to lift themselves out of LDC status and can provide adequate food, clean water, sanitation and education.
- High maternal mortality: the death of women in their most productive years has economic implications.

Session 2 was entitled "Enhancing Productive Capacity and Resilience against Global Crises."

Among the main challenges that need rectifying are:

- Cancellation of debt to developed countries and world entities so the LDCs can lift themselves out of poverty.
- There need to be mechanisms to ensure that products can be transported to markets.
- Productive capacity needs to be increased. Small enterprises need to be promoted as a means to improve economies, particularly among women.
- Attention to climate change which affects poor countries disproportionately and especially small islands which are adversely affected by a rising sea level.
- Climate justice implementation. The developed world has to adopt a sustainable life style.
- Disaster preparedness needs to be implemented in countries at risk.

Section 3 was entitled "Promoting Good Governance and Effective Monitoring Mechanisms for Development."

Challenges that need to be addressed are:

- Consequences of the world financial crisis such as illegal immigration because of lack of opportunities. The immigrants are at risk of abuse and sex trafficking.
- Many communities are unable to cope with calamities resulting from global warming; a global effort is needed for disaster preparedness.
- Government must work with civil society in formulating decisions for sustainable development and there must be accountability if there is failure.
- Government decisions need to be transparent.
- Development should not be subject to politics.
- Education of populations in these countries is paramount for sustainable development and prosperity.

In conclusion LDC-IV will have to develop a new paradigm for implementing sustainable development, social change and empowerment of the affected populations in order to lift these countries out of poverty.

LDCs want action, not more words and meetings.

Since education of the populations is a major component in these endeavors this is a possible project for IFUW involvement.

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