



STATEMENT BY MR. HASSAN ABOUTAHIR, MINISTER PLENIPOTENTIARY (MOROCCO) ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA, ON THE REVIEW AND COORDINATION OF IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES FOR DECADE 2001-2010, DURING THE SUBSTANTIVE SESSION OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (GENEVA, 16 JULY 2003)

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I would like, at the outset, to thank the Secretariat for the report on the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries which was submitted upon the request of the General Assembly in its resolution 57/276 as well as that of the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2002/33. This report gives us a clear picture of the current state of implementation of the Programme of Action and helps structure our debate on this very important issue.

Mr. Chairman,

The Brussels Programme of Action recognized that the objectives of the previous two decade-long programmes of action for least developed countries have remained basically unattained. Least developed countries, being unable to participate in and thereby take advantage of globalization, have remained marginalized and thus exposed to many risks and vulnerabilities that undermine their own reform efforts. The international community should learn lessons from the past in this regard, thereby avoiding the causes of these serious problems while strengthening efforts to achieve set objectives in the current Programme of Action.

The major challenge for all the actors of the international community is to honour the commitments made in Brussels.

The Secretary-General's report underlines the efforts made by the least developed countries, which are engaging in very intensive reforms. The majority of LDC Governments have adopted policies and pursued strategies to achieve the goals set out in the Brussels Programme of Action.

In recent years, many LDCs have redoubled their efforts to improve the investment environment in their countries in order to attract more substantial foreign direct investment flows.

The report also contains many illustrations of progress achieved by LDCs in mobilizing domestic resources which demonstrate their determination to fulfill commitments to the Brussels Programme of Action.

In this context, we are very concerned by the slow path of implementation and the lack of progress in the achievement of the objectives set in the Brussels Programme of Action. The mobilization of resources remains at a very low level.

The stagnation and decline of official development assistance flows to the least developed countries further delays the attainment of the Brussels Programme of Action objectives. It is only by decisions on the part of donors to increase their official development assistance to LDCs that will certainly advance the implementation of the Programme of Action.

In this regard, we note with satisfaction that Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway and

Sweden have surpassed the 0.20 per cent target. We also note that Government of the United States has announced a new foreign aid programme, "Millennium Challenge Account" which is designed to provide substantial assistance to low income countries by substantially increasing United States core development assistance. Also, in 2002, eight members of the European Union met the official development assistance/GNI target of 0.33 per cent. In 2003, another 10 States are expected to do so.

Mr. Chairman,

Trade is one of the most important engines for development and growth as well as a very important means to mobilize resources for the least developed countries.

In this regard, the international community has the responsibility to work towards enhanced market access for the products of the least developed countries. In this regard, we have noted with satisfaction the initiative of the European Union - "Everything But Arms" which provides duty-free and quota-free access for the exported products of the LDCs. The United States of America has established the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act. We express our hope that these initiatives and others like them will enhance the participation of LDCs in international trade.

Economic diversification is a critical component of trade policy for LDCs as a means of increasing exports. The least-developed countries need to enhance their capabilities in international trade and overcome their supply-side constraints with the support of the international community.

Mr. Chairman,

For many LDCs, debt continues to be a major domestic stumbling block. High levels of debt and debt service payments are draining away development resources. The debt burden continues to harm the capacity of least developed countries to concentrate on development and poverty eradication. Without a drastic solution to debt problems, the least developed countries will continue to participate in the capital export process.

Mr. Chairman,

We hope that appropriate measures will be taken to strengthen the Office of the High Representative for the Least-developed countries, the lands-locked developing countries and the small island developing countries.

We are also convinced that the facilitation of the participation of the LDC delegations in the substantive session of ECOSOC is crucial since the Council is reviewing the implementation of the programme of action of Brussels.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me conclude by reiterating the conviction of the Group of 77 that South-South cooperation could play a considerable role in complementing the overall international cooperation to support LDC's in their efforts to achieve development and growth.

In this regard, my country Morocco has organized on 24 and 25 June a Ministerial Conference of LDCs and will host from 15 to 19 December 2003 in Marrakech a Ministerial Conference on South-South cooperation in the context of which the LDC dimension will be well addressed.

I thank you.

