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**CONTRIBUTION OF THE MAJOR UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCES TO THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE LEAST
DEVELOPED COUNTRIES FOR THE 1990s AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR THE
THIRD UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES**

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I. Introduction

1. The United Nations General Assembly, by its resolution 52/187 decided to convene the Third United Nations Conference for the Least Developed Countries at a high level with the following broad mandates:

- to assess progress in the country-level implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s, adopted at the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC-II), which was held in Paris in 1990;
- to review the implementation of international support measures, particularly in the areas of official development assistance, debt, investment and trade;
- to consider the formulation and adoption of appropriate national and international policies and measures for sustainable development of least developed countries (LDCs) and their progressive integration into the world economy.

2. It is expected that the LDC-III, which will be hosted by the European Union, in Brussels, from 14 to 20 May 2001, in adopting a new Programme of Action for the LDCs for the first decade of the 21st century, would address the most critical constraints to the realization of the objectives of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s (PoA). The purpose of this note is to assist the substantive preparatory process of the conference by highlighting a number of key areas in which the major United Nations conferences contributed to the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s adopted at the end of the Second Conference. It also makes an attempt to identify areas in which results of these conference and their follow up in regard to a number of key cross-cutting thematic issues could be relevant for the preparatory process of the LDC-III, namely: (a) poverty eradication; (b) education; (c) health; (d) population; (e) women in development; (f) environment and development; (g) food security; (h) science and technology; (i) human settlements; and (j) natural disaster reduction.¹

¹ These have been addressed in the World Summit on Social Development (WSSD), World Conference on Education for All (EFA), the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW), the International Conference for Population and Development (ICPD), the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), the World Conference on Food Security (WCFS), the World Science Conference (WSC), the Second Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat), and the International Conference on Disaster Reduction (ICDR).

II. The Programme of Action for the LDCs and Major Global Conferences and Summits

3. The objectives and strategies of the Programme of Action for the LDCs (PoA) revolve around two main issues: mobilizing and developing human capacities; and, developing and mobilizing the economic base of these countries. The PoA provides an assessment of the situation of LDCs in a number of key areas and outlines actions to be taken regarding their implementation by countries, the international community and other partners, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The PoA called on developed countries to channel a substantial part of their resources for development, to those United Nations organizations and bodies, which have programmes of special interest and benefit to LDCs. It also noted that some UN organizations had developed programmes specifically focused on LDCs, while others had adopted programming criteria to ensure the needs of LDCs are given priority attention. Overall, the United Nations was called on to respond effectively to the needs and requirements of LDCs taking into account their different and complex conditions.

4. Against this backdrop, it was clearly evident that the participants to the Second Conference on LDCs (LDC-II), expected a comprehensive and active response from developed countries and the United Nations system to their attempts to structurally transform their economies and societies. Indeed, while the trend towards holding major conferences and summits was at its initial stages, the PoA was prescient in calling on the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED), scheduled for 1992 and which was then under preparation, to address, in accordance with its mandate, the environmental and developmental problems of the LDCs. The PoA also urged the UNCED to provide for measures to enable the LDCs to pursue their efforts to incorporate the environmental dimension into their development objectives and policies. This approach was more broadly confirmed in resolution 45/206 of 21 December, 1990, on the implementation of the PoA, which invited all the preparatory bodies of all major forthcoming meetings and conferences of the United Nations system to take into account the outcome of the conference.

5. Subsequently, many of the priority areas outlined in the PoA, were also addressed by other major United Nations conferences and summits, some of them in more details than others.² Given that the PoA dealt with the overall socio-economic development of LDCs, detailed elaboration of sectoral or thematic issues had been beyond its scope. Nor did it contain new measurable targets in a number of key areas, except reflecting those already agreed upon in previous global events, such as the International Conference on Primary Health Care and the World Conference on Education for All. Moreover, important changes took place following the LDC-II in both international economic relations and development thinking. Consequently, the

² The World Summit on Social Development is particularly noteworthy for having a separate commitment on Africa and the LDCs. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and the Second Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat) also made a number of references to the particular needs of LDCs on specific issues.

major conferences and their follow-up events helped close these gaps in the PoA by providing highly specified actions to be taken to achieve the objectives of the PoA. More specifically, the outcomes of these events made important contributions to the implementation of the PoA in a number of ways, including:

- viewing development in a more integrated manner by emphasising inter-linkages among economic, social, human, political and cultural factors in development and agreeing on a number of measurable goals and targets;
- elaborating in a more comprehensive manner policies and measures in certain key areas of development that are applicable not only for developing countries but also to the least developed among them;
- promoting international consensus on those issues, including articulating a number of important principles and formulating a series of policies and measures;
- taking into account new international developments, particularly globalization and liberalization in making policy recommendations;
- promoting national actions including setting up of broad-based and visible national institutional mechanisms and action plans for implementation and monitoring in different areas;
- highlighting special need of LDCs, particularly in the area of international support measures in key areas.

6. The reviews of some of the major conferences stressed the particular needs of LDCs in the light of national and global developments. For example:

- UNCED+5 drew attention to the need for strengthened international support to LDCs in the implementation of the Agenda 21, including in the formulation and adoption of national strategies for sustainable development and closing the technology gap;
- ICPD+5 called for special attention to the LDCs regarding the access to and use of modern communication technology, including satellite transmission and other communication mechanisms as a means to address the barriers to education in order to help implement the goals of the ICPD. It also called for the United Nations system and donors to strengthen LDCs to undertake censuses and surveys on a regular basis to improve vital registration systems, and to develop innovative and cost-effective solutions for meeting data requirements, especially for regular monitoring of the implementation of the goals of the Conference, including improved estimates of maternal mortality
- Beijing+5 underscored the need to identify and implement development-oriented and durable solutions which integrate a gender perspective to external debt and debt-servicing problems of LDCs;

- WSSD+5 identified a set of national actions and international support measures for LDCs under commitment 7 to accelerate economic, social and human resource development in these countries. It focused on, *inter alia*, market access, debt relief, development assistance, food security, science and technology development, capacity development, and HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment (see Annex I).

7. The principles and policy recommendations of these conferences and their follow-up will continue to be relevant to the development policies and actions of the LDCs in the future. Although the LDCs as a whole made limited progress in meeting the objectives and goals set out in these conferences (see Annex II), some LDCs have already been implementing a broad range of policies and measures in pursuance of the outcomes of global conferences with the support of their development partners, including the United Nations system. In light of this, it is important to identify ways and means to utilize the value-added from these major events by channelling consensus reached therein on key issues into the substantive preparatory work for the LDC-III. This note attempts to do this by briefly examining progress achieved by LDCs in the 1990s in the cross-cutting areas mentioned above, and by identifying, in broad terms, ways and means to ensure that the integrated follow-up of UN conferences and summits contribute to the implementation of the next PoA for LDCs. In preparing this note, use has been made of various reports of the United Nations, its funds and programmes and other organizations of the UN system, as well as of country submissions made by LDCs to global conferences and their follow up events.

III. Thematic Issues

a. Eradication of Poverty

8. *PoA, global conferences and commitment to poverty eradication.* As indicated in the Paris Declaration, eradication of poverty is at the heart of the policies and measures for the LDCs contained in the PoA. A major priority set out in the PoA, concerned adoption of policies to reduce poverty by creating employment opportunities and broadly-based growth, making more widely available the opportunities for, and the benefits of, the improved productive capacity, pursuing appropriate demographic and population policies, and enhancing the access to productive activities, as well as by initiating appropriate social programmes in such important areas as health, education, and nutrition of vulnerable groups, in particular, women and children.

9. Major recent global conferences, in particular the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in 1995, dealt with the issue of poverty eradication in a comprehensive and integrated manner. The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, in particular:

- drew the attention of the international community to the particular situation faced by the LDCs

- recognized that a large proportion of world population living in abject poverty, particularly in Africa and LDCs -- the majority of whom are women --, have very little access to income, resources, education, health care or nutrition.
- acknowledged that the gap between developed and many developing countries, particularly the LDCs, have widened and that the situation in LDCs in particular is critical;
- called for special attention and support of the international community to these countries.

10. The Copenhagen Declaration contains a number of agreed commitments, of which commitment 2 deals with eradication of poverty, which is elaborated further in chapter 2 of the Programme of Action. Poverty is seen as a complex multidimensional problem with both national and international origins and is not amenable to a uniform solution for global application. The integrated approach to poverty eradication included the principal areas of national actions, stated above, which are relevant for developing countries as well as LDCs. The international community was asked to focus attention on and support the special needs of countries and regions in which there are substantial concentration of people living in poverty, clearly the LDCs being one major group of countries.

11. *Progress in poverty eradication in LDCs.* The objectives of the PoA in the area of mobilization and development of human and institutional capacities as well as the relevant actions contained in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action in the area of poverty eradication have remained largely unmet in the LDCs. The LDCs remain the most impoverished group of countries of the world. According to the *Human Development Report, 1999*, the value of human poverty index for LDCs in 1997 stood at 44.9 per cent as compared with 27.7 per cent for the developing countries, 19 per cent for East Asia and 14.5 per cent for Latin America and the Caribbean. Out of the 41 LDCs for which data are available, people in as many as 19 countries were poorer in the 1990s than in the previous decade on per capita real GDP basis. For the LDCs as a group, per capita real GDP grew at an average annual rate of 0.5 per cent during 1990-97, which is insufficient to mount a credible struggle against poverty.

12. Despite these figures, serious efforts have been made at the national level to fight poverty. In a growing number of LDCs, poverty eradication programmes are an integral part of national development programmes. For example, in Lesotho and Zambia, where specific national poverty eradication programmes have been introduced, the main elements of these programmes include, inter alia, the encouragement of self-employment, the provision of micro-financing, the promotion of micro-enterprise projects and the identification of poverty zones in both rural and non-rural areas. The Gambia, Mali, Mauritania and Niger have articulated and are implementing poverty eradication strategies and both Mali and Niger organized roundtable meetings in 1998 in Geneva to mobilize resources for poverty eradication. Development policies in a number of countries such as Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia, also underline the importance of the need to develop access to basic social services and create a safety net for the poorest. In some of them, separate funds have been established for poverty eradication programmes as well as monitoring the implementation of programmes. A number of countries are also articulating poverty reduction strategies under the HIPC framework.

13. Notwithstanding progress in a few LDCs, fighting poverty in LDCs would continue to be an extremely daunting and longstanding challenge. The difficulties are further compounded by the lack of adequate international support measures, particularly reduction in the levels of ODA, continued heavy debt burden and lack of access to external markets. Furthermore, serious gaps in human and institutional capacities and financial resources affect ability of many of these countries to formulate and implement an integrated and broad-based national development strategy involving all actors in the society. For a significant number of countries, domestic political difficulties, including civil strife and wars have accompanied substantial reduction in the capacity of the State to formulate even rudimentary policies; in two cases, there has been virtual disappearance of a formal government structure. The experience of these countries illustrate the importance of political factors, including domestic peace and security and a well functioning and representative government, in implementing internationally agreed measures to fight poverty.

14. In many other countries, a weak State apparatus has meant an absence of the rule of law, raising transaction costs for public investments in economic and social sectors which, in turn, negatively affects legitimate private and non-governmental initiatives. The establishment of democratic forms of government recently in a growing number of LDCs is likely to improve the situation, but this development by itself cannot be regarded as a panacea.

15. LDCs will not be able to confront the challenges of poverty eradication by their own actions alone. Marginalized from economic, trading and financial processes in an increasingly globalizing and interconnected world economy, these countries will hardly make much progress in reducing levels of poverty without the full implementation of international commitments in favour of them, and adequate support measures in certain other areas such as achieving domestic peace and stability, rebuilding an efficient and effective public administration, and capacity building for formulating and implementing comprehensive and broad-based development policies and measures with a distinct pro-poor orientation, in partnership with all segments of the society. Assistance would also be needed to build supply capacity and capability in integrating information and communications technologies into economic and social development activities. Articulating external support measures on a broad front to eradicate poverty in LDCs, in the context of globalization, should therefore be an important priority for the preparatory process of the LDC-III and should be further supported through the integrated follow-up to other major United Nations conferences and summits which focus on poverty reduction, including the World Summit on Social Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women, the World Food Summit, and the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements.

b. Education

16. *PoA, global conferences and education.* The Second United Nations Conference on LDCs in 1990 was preceded by the **World Conference on Education for All** held in Jomtien, Thailand, also in 1990. The PoA took into account the declaration adopted at the Jomtien Conference. It outlined the main priorities for LDCs in the area of education during the 1990s which are consistent with the actions set out in the Jomtien declaration, including: redefinition of education policies in the light of each LDC's broad development objectives; development of basic education, in particular universal primary education; renewed commitment to combat illiteracy; special emphasis on improved access for girls and women to education facilities; elimination of disparities in education levels between rural and urban areas; boosting the quality of vocational training; improving administrative and financial management of educational systems; orienting secondary and higher educational systems towards growing transformational needs of the LDCs' economies.

17. Subsequent global conferences and their review processes, such as WSSD, ICPD, FWCWD and WSC, emphasized the centrality of education and development, and elaborated the inter-linkages between education and other key sectors of economic and social development.

18. *Progress in education in LDCs.* The Dakar Framework for Action notes that by the end of the 1990s, developing countries as a whole had achieved net enrolment rates in excess of 80 per cent with some limited improvement in gender equality with the critical exception of sub-Saharan Africa, which contains the majority of LDCs. The UNDP Human Development Reports reveal that there has been an increase in adult literacy rate in LDCs, which rose from 45 per cent in 1990 to 50.7 per cent in 1998. Primary enrolment also increased from 49 per cent in 1988/1990 to 60.4 per cent in 1997. The gender gap in literacy and school enrolment persisted during the same period and in 1998 was 41.0 percent for females compared to 61.4 for males. Combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment for females was 32.0 per cent while for males it was 42 per cent. This compares unfavourably to developing countries where the literacy rate for females was higher at 64.5 per cent (although still lower than males at 80.4 per cent) and the combined enrolment rates were 55 per cent (also lower than males which have enrolment levels of 63 per cent) in 1997.

19. *Constraints and lessons learned.* A number of constraints impede progress in LDCs in attaining international goals, including, qualitative deficiencies, as reflected in high pupil-to-teacher ratio and little educational expenditure on teaching material and equipment; poverty leading to engagement of children in productive activities; lack of adequate institutional infrastructure and human capacities in the planning and delivery of educational services programmes, as well as inefficiencies; persistent pro-urban and pro-male bias in educational programmes and service delivery; lack of broad-based participation in the formulation of education policies and programmes; and, inadequate resources for the education sector.

20. Recent trends in educational status and the record of implementation of policies and programmes in LDCs suggest that in order to accelerate educational attainment and close existing gaps with developing countries, LDCs would need to redouble efforts to reach universal free primary education in a time-bound manner. There is also a need to link basic education to poverty reduction strategies and to eliminate gender disparities by improving access of girls and women to education. In addition, it is important to enhance national investment and donor support, including through improved resource mobilization and allocation for education, and earmarking a greater share of ODA resources for the education sector. Furthermore, steps are required to improve institutional and human capacities in the education sector, including harnessing new technologies and reaping benefits from distance learning. Finally, the engagement of civil society and the disadvantaged, including women and the poor; and the targeting of secondary education to provide critical skills needed to run a modern and competitive economy, would help to improve the effectiveness of education programmes.

21. The Dakar Framework for Action adopted at the **World Education Forum** held in Dakar from 26-28 April 2000, has incorporated new strategies to deal with these constraints. The Framework also includes new commitments and targets for education for all, including ensuring that, by 2015, all children, particularly girls, have access to compulsory education of good quality; achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women; and eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, achieving gender equality in education by 2015. More importantly, it has called for priority attention to be given to LDCs in the implementation of these new measures and for increasing funding for education programmes from international development agencies. Future reviews of UNCED, ICPD, WSSD, FWCW which also address the issue of education also provide the opportunity for the integrated follow-up on Education for All for LDCs.

c. **Health**

22. *PoA, global conferences and health.* The LDC-II and its preparatory process took into account earlier work done at the international level on health and development, in particular the International Conference on Primary Health Care in Alma Ata in 1978 and the Global Strategy for Health For All by the year 2000, as adopted by WHO. The PoA stressed that all other measures of social and economic development will remain greatly ineffective without substantial improvements in the health standards prevailing in the least developed countries. In light of this, the priority tasks set for the LDCs was to make efforts to strengthen primary health care, including the coverage of expanded immunization programmes, diarrhoeal disease control and malaria control; to reduce infant and child mortality, as well as maternal morbidity and mortality by prevention of diseases and appropriate nutrition; to provide access to safe drinking water and proper sanitation; make efforts to combat HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases which emerged as a major threat to health and longevity in many least developed countries; provide more resources to primary health care centres with special emphasis on the rural network of the primary health care system; and involve the population actively in rural primary health care efforts.

23. Policies and measures for improved health services, as an important policy objectives for human resource development and overall development of LDCs, gained support and consensus at the major international conferences. For example:

- the World Summit for Children, held in 1990, adopted a set of goals for children and development up to the year 2000 that included a reduction in infant and under-five mortality rate to 50 and 70 per 1,000 live births, respectively;
- The ICPD provided that, in keeping with the Declaration of Alma Ata, all countries should reduce mortality and morbidity and seek to make primary health care, including reproductive health care, available universally by the end of the 1990s. It also set the target of achieving, by 2005, a life expectancy at birth greater than 70 years and by 2015 greater than 75 years;
- The WSSD highlighted that communicable diseases constituted a serious health problem in all countries and were a hindrance to social development and were often the cause of poverty and social exclusion. It provided that the prevention, treatment and control of these diseases, covering a spectrum from tuberculosis and malaria to HIV/AIDS must be given the highest priority.

24. *Progress in health sector in LDCs.* Within a narrow productive base and difficulties of choosing among priorities, the resources that can be allocated to better health services in LDCs are very limited. However, the experience of several countries suggest that some improvements can be achieved through policy interventions even with lower per capita income. Although the overall record is mixed, some positive developments have taken place in the health sector of LDCs:

- For LDCs as a whole, progress has been made in augmenting life expectancy at birth has been marginal at best. According to the UNDP Human Development Reports, average life expectancy at birth rose from 51.0 years in 1990 to 51.9 in 1998. This compares to 64.7 for developing countries in 1998. While the majority of LDCs made progress, some countries suffered declines in average life expectancy. This included countries that suffered armed conflicts (e.g., average life expectancy at birth for Rwanda dropped from 49.5 in 1990 to 40.6 years in 1998, and for Sierra Leone from 42 years to 37.9 years during the same period).
- Although the figures are dated, the percentage of adults living with HIV/AIDS in LDCs in 1997 was 4.13 compared to 1.18 developing countries, indicating the seriousness of the pandemic in LDCs. Fifteen out of 25 African countries most affected by HIV/AIDS are LDCs;
- The LDCs have been characterized by lower ratio of health professional to population. For example, the number of doctors per 100,000 people in LDCs in 1998 stood at 30 compared with 78 for developing countries, and number of nurses per 100,000 people were 78 and 98, respectively, for the two groups.

25. *Constraints and lessons learned.* A number of factors continue to impede improvements in the augmentation of health status in LDCs, such as the lack of health care facilities, particularly primary health care, as well as access thereto in order to deal with infectious diseases including HIV/AIDS; widespread malnutrition associated with poverty; poor living conditions including lack of access to safe drinking water; continued lack of physical and institutional infrastructure and human skills impeding planning and delivering health services; persistence of gender and pro-urban bias in Government funded health programmes; lack of adequate and reliable data, particularly on communicable diseases; lack of precise strategic goals and measurable objectives in national strategic plans on HIV/AIDS; and, inadequate financial resources.

26. An important lesson from the recent developments in the area of health and experiences with policies and measures in this regard is that with their current efforts, it is unlikely that many LDCs would be able to meet internally agreed objectives and targets in the immediate future. The WSSD+5 refocused attention on health in Commitment 7 by calling on the international community to “support and assist research and development centres in Africa and the least developed countries in the field of vaccines, medicine and public health, thereby strengthening training of medical personnel and counsellors, improving control and treatment of communicable and infectious diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, as well as assisting in making vaccines and medicines for the control and treatment of these diseases widely available at affordable prices.”

(d) Population policies

27. *PoA, global conferences and population.* The PoA underlined the linkages between population growth in LDCs with poverty eradication, allocation of economic resources and the quality of the natural environment. It identified the following key areas of action, including: intensifying efforts to achieve population growth rates that strike an optimal balance between their population, natural resources base and the environment, taking into account traditions and values as well as economic imperatives; making population policies an integral part of national development strategies and programmes and linking them to programmes on child survival, health, education, housing, and employment; launching vigorous innovative and comprehensive information and education programmes on voluntary family planning and providing voluntary family planning services, taking into account specific concerns of women and children and using educational institutions, work places, health centres and the mass media to disseminate information on such programmes; creating instruments to monitor population developments; providing stronger political and financial support for national population policies; and, ensuring financial and technical support by the donors.

28. Many of these actions have also been stressed by other global conferences. In particular, ICPD further elaborated actions in this area and set important goals. For example, the ICPD Programme of Action looked at population and development as part of a broadened approach to reproductive health and rights, and one of its primary goals is to make family planning

universally available by 2015. It also included goals in a number of related areas, such as

education, particularly for girls, and further reduction in the levels of infant, child and maternal mortality. Another important aspect of the ICPD Programme of Action is the provision of estimates of national resources and international assistance, as well as identification of LDCs as a priority group in deciding allocation of external support.

29. *Progress in LDCs in the area of population.* Since the ICPD, there has been increased awareness of the implications of population growth leading to adoption of population and legislative measures in to confront this challenge. In many cases, population policies have been made an explicit component of overall development strategies, linked to other key aspects of poverty reduction, education and health while some others have ensured that population concerns are reflected in the planning process. The main elements of national strategies include measures to reduce population growth, include the promotion of family planning, improved maternal and child health and nutrition, population education and the control of migration.

30. *Constraints and lessons learned.* The population situation in LDCs continues to exhibit two fundamental features. Mortality rates are higher on average than other developing countries, but fertility rates remain very high. Experience of LDCs in dealing with population policies in recent years, point to a number of continued difficulties. Widespread poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition and low status of women continue to contribute to slow improvements in demographic trends. In addition, inadequate funding affects the expansion of population programmes at the national level, while political, administrative and logistical difficulties affect the formulation and implementation of population programmes. Furthermore, lack of human resources in service delivery as well as information, have been major handicaps in implementing population programmes.

31. Progress in a number of developing countries as well as some LDCs indicates that, with a virtuous combination of effective population programmes and adequate and appropriate support from the international community, LDCs can begin to influence more strongly their demographic situation. Given the current trends, rapid progress would be needed if LDCs were to meet some of the key international goals and secure a better balance between population, natural resources and the environment.

32. In the report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the Twenty-first Special Session of the General Assembly to consider key actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the ICPD, it was noted that progress was limited in meeting the goals of the ICPD due to rise in mortality in many countries, in particular sub-Saharan Africa, which contains the majority of LDCs, due to HIV/AIDS. The report also noted that mortality and morbidity among adults and children from infectious, parasitic and water-borne diseases, such as tuberculosis, malaria and schistosomiasis, continue to take their toll. It also took note that maternal mortality and morbidity remain unacceptably high and many women still lack access to reproductive health information and services.

33. The report detailing new actions, called for special attention to the LDCs regarding the access to and use of modern communication technology, including satellite transmission and other communication mechanisms as a means to address the barriers to education in order to help implement the goals of the ICPD. It also called for the United Nations system and donors to strengthen LDCs to undertake censuses and surveys on a regular basis to improve vital registration systems, and to develop innovative and cost-effective solutions for meeting data requirements, especially for regular monitoring of the implementation of the goals of the Conference, including improved estimates of maternal mortality. In addition, participants to the ICPD+5 also called on the international community to provide the necessary financial and technical assistance to support developing countries, especially among others, LDCs, to implement the goals of the Programme of Action.

(e) Women and Development

34. *PoA, global conferences and women and development.* The PoA underscored the importance of actions by LDCs to fully mobilize and involve women both as agents and beneficiaries of the development process. It also highlighted the need to link their role in development with better access to health care, including voluntary family planning, education and training and rural credit. The PoA identified four key areas for action by LDCs during the 1990s, including: encouraging the media and educational institutions to convey information giving a positive image of women; promoting the establishment of women's associations in order for women to be conscious of their rights and to defend these rights themselves; creating greater awareness among men and associating them with the elaboration and implementation of measures to promote the role of women; and, ensuring women's full participation in the decision-making process, particularly in the design and evaluation of projects and the administration of funds intended to promote the role of women in development.

35. The role of women has been a central concern of recent global conferences, particularly the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) held in Beijing in 1995. The Beijing Conference highlighted the adverse affect of international economic developments, large foreign debt and structural adjustment programmes particularly on women in Africa and LDCs. The Platform for Action adopted at that conference substantially enhanced international consensus on the role of women in development by identifying strategic objectives and assigning responsibilities to various actors, with Government accorded the primary responsibility for implementation, among other things, in the creation of an enabling policy environment. The strategic objectives of the Platform linked the role of women with economic, social and sustainable development (e.g., role of women in the economy, poverty, education and training, health, environment); political process (e.g., women in power and decision-making, human rights, women in armed conflict); some other serious issues affecting daily lives of women (e.g., violence against women); advocacy and implementation (e.g., role of the media, institutional mechanisms).

36. *Progress made by LDCs in promoting role of women in development.* As mentioned above, gender differentials persist in many aspects of socio-economic life in LDCs ranging from disproportionate burden of poverty carried by women, to high mortality rate, to lower female school enrolment. In a number of LDCs, women have been disproportionately affected by the consequences of armed conflicts. Despite these realities, varying degrees of progress has been registered in LDCs, in the implementation of the objectives agreed in the major conferences as regards the role of women. In general, these include a growing recognition of a gender-equality approach to the design, formulation and implementation of development policies and programmes emphasizing women's equal participation in all levels of political and economic decision-making.

37. A number of LDCs formulated national action plans and strategies for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. Among the most visible actions include legal reforms covering gender equality, property ownership, employment including in the public service, political participation, as well as the trafficking of girls and women. National machineries have been established, restructured and strengthened, including the establishment of full ministries to deal with women's issues. There have been efforts to initiate special programmes for women in different areas, as well as mainstreaming gender equality perspectives into development programmes.

38. *Constraints and lessons learned.* Implementation of international objectives in the area of women and development is particularly difficult in LDCs because of their prevailing socio-economic conditions. As is the case with achieving the targets of the PoA for LDCs and the other major conferences and summits, a number of other obstacles have prevented the attainment of the goals of the Beijing Programme of Action in the LDCs. These include armed ethnic and national conflicts, which are accompanied by human displacement and sexual violence toward women; the feminization of poverty and effects of economic instability and natural disasters; international factors such as continued external debt, falling commodity prices and lack of market access, limiting resources availability; cuts in government spending on social services accompanying structural adjustment and macroeconomic reforms, affecting availability of such services and access of women thereto; attitudes that perpetuate the inferior status of women, as well as the stereotyping of women having the primary responsibility for household work and reproductive tasks; persistence of institutionalized gender discrimination including occupational discrimination; lack of specific targets against which to judge progress, gender specific information and data as well as weaknesses in monitoring and implementation mechanisms; and, inadequate resource allocation.

39. In view of the analysis provided by report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole on the Special Session of the General Assembly on Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century, there needs to be further work dedicated to: promoting and strengthening the practical implementation of mainstreaming agenda perspective into all development policies and programmes including removal of gender biases therein; establishing appropriate national targets in regard to promoting role and participation of women development;

enhancing the development and use of gender analysis tools and methodologies; promoting women's political and economic empowerment; promoting and protecting human rights of women; undertaking sustained, concerted and more focused action to improve women's and girls' access to education and health; increasing the participation of women in conflict resolution and protecting women living under conditions of armed conflict; facilitating women's equal access to resources, employment, business services and trade; promoting a balanced and non-stereotypes portrayal of women in the mass media, educational systems and the work place. The follow-up to further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action presents the international community with the opportunity to focus on these priority areas and those identified by LDCs themselves.

40. It is also worth noting that the report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole called on the international community to take effective measures to identify and implement development oriented and durable solutions which integrate a gender perspective to external debt and debt-servicing problems of developing countries, including the LDCs, *inter alia*, through debt relief, including the option of ODA debt cancellation, in order to help them to finance programmes and projects targeted at development, including the advancement of women.

(f) Environment and Development

41. *The PoA, global conferences and environment and development in LDCs.* The PoA emphasizes as one of its priority to reverse the trend towards environmental degradation, to manage the environment with a view to the effective and durable utilization of natural resources and to reinforce action to deal with natural disasters in LDCs. To this end Principle 3 in PoA outlines a substantial support of their development partners to enable LDCs to address environmental concerns effectively in the context of their accelerated development.

42. The PoA recommended an integrated and multi-disciplinary approach to sustainable development in LDCs, including the following main elements: incentives to motivate better environmental management and to ensure high efficiency of energy use, as well as to discourage environmental degradation; education of the local communities in both urban and rural areas aimed at enhancing awareness of the economic and social benefits of environmental protection; developing human resources to deal with environmental problems; addressing the intertwined problems of poverty eradication and improvement and management of the environment in an integrated way; facilitating the access to and the transfer of environmentally sound technology to the LDCs; developing new techniques to rationalize the use of traditional energy resources and developing low cost alternative fuel sources, in particular new and renewable resources; and, according special consideration for the LDCs which are prone to drought and desertification.

43. The PoA also called upon the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to address the environmental and developmental problems of LDCs, including providing for measures to enable the LDCs to pursue their efforts to incorporate the environmental dimension into their development objective and policies and renewing the commitment of the international community to support technically and financially major projects designed to avoid the recurrence of natural disasters and environmental degradation.

44. UNCED. Which was held in Rio De Janeiro in 1992, laid down a comprehensive blueprint for action to be taken globally by Governments, United Nations organizations, development agencies, non-governmental organizations and independent sector groups in every area in which human activity impacts on the environment. Principle 6, of Rio Declaration on Environment and Development states that "the special situation and needs of developing countries, particularly the least developed and the most environmentally vulnerable, shall be given special priority."

45. Agenda 21, adopted by the Conference, covers a wide range of issues relating to sustainable development under three broad areas, namely, social and economic dimensions of sustainable development; conservation and management of resources for development; and strengthening the role of major groups. It contains a comprehensive set of agreed national policies and actions and international support measures within each of these areas. By articulating policies and measures on such a wide front, Agenda 21 made a major contribution to international consensus on sustainable development, which remains relevant to LDCs.

46. Agenda 21 also contained certain provisions specifically relating to LDCs. For example, in the area concerning international cooperation to accelerate sustainable development, it called for particular efforts in the context of especially acute environmental and developmental problems of LDCs in implementing measures in promoting sustainable development through trade; making trade and environment mutually supportive; providing adequate financial resources; and encouraging economic policies conducive to sustainable development. Referring to the dependence of LDCs on ODA it underlined the need for substantial new and additional funding for sustainable development and implementation of Agenda 21. It called upon the UN system organizations to assist particularly LDCs on matters relating to national environmental and development policies, human resource development and fielding of experts, legislation, natural resources and environmental data.

47. *Progress made in the area of environment and development.* Sustainable development in LDCs is inextricably linked with environmental concerns. Although the current threats to global environment are of common concern to all countries, the LDCs are extremely vulnerable in the sense that they are associated with a specific set of environmental problems such as soil degradation and erosion, drought and desertification, which impair prospects for their development. These environmental problems are closely linked to a number of complex and interrelated factors: these include poverty, underdevelopment, farming method, population pressure, placing further demands on the natural resource base in a number of LDCs, a narrow technological base, geographical disadvantages, unregulated industrial operations, as well as the illegal trans-boundary dumping of hazardous and radio-active waste.

48. There has been some progress in a number of LDCs in integrating environmental, economic and social objectives into the decision-making process. National-level mechanisms have also been established to develop an integrated approach to sustainable development and there is growing public awareness of environmental concerns. Non-governmental actors, the media and educational institutions are involved in awareness and advocacy activities and a significant number of countries have ratified a number of United Nations conventions covering climate change, biological diversity and combating desertification and drought, important to many LDCs.

49. *Constraints and lessons learned.* These achievements notwithstanding, sound environmental management in LDCs during the 1990s was constrained by the lack of available resources for activities in the area of environment and development; continued and, in some cases deepening endemic poverty with negative implications for the conservation of the environment; slow progress in reducing population growth; continued loss of vegetation and soil degradation, particularly owing to deforestation and desertification. As many as 26 LDCs in Africa demonstrate negative nutrient balances in the soil, and nutrient depletion rates were found to be very high in Burundi, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Malawi and Rwanda, and high in Madagascar, Mozambique, Somalia, Uganda, and the United Republic of Tanzania.

50. The policies and measures agreed in Agenda 21, as well as the actions recommended in the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, adopted by the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, remain valid for LDCs. However, such policy packages would be largely reliant on external resources, through financial transfers and capacity building since most LDCs have neither the expertise nor financial capacity to tackle by themselves the complex links between environment and development. The Programme notes that many developing countries, in particular the LDCs, face the urgent need to provide adequate modern energy services, especially to people in rural areas. It also noted that this requires significant financial, human and technical resources and a broad-based mix of energy resources. In this context, it was noted that there is also a need to encourage the reduction and gradual elimination of subsidies for energy production and consumption that inhibit sustainable development. It is further stated that such policies should take fully into account the specific needs and conditions of developing countries, particularly LDCs, as reflected in the special and differential treatment accorded to them in the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures.

51. In calling for strategies to be worked out for increasing donor support, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 also noted that ODA to developing countries, particularly LDCs, remain an essential element of the partnership embodied in Agenda 21 and plays a significant role in capacity building, infrastructure, combating poverty and environmental protection. An important part of the work of the preparatory process of LDC-III should relate to support by the development partners of LDCs in these areas.

(g) Food security

52. *The PoA, global conferences and food security in LDCs.* The PoA for LDCs described food security as a major policy objective for the 1990s. Further, it called for the formulation of comprehensive food security policies and programmes to improve access to food of vulnerable groups, focussing on linkages with health, water, and nutrition and education issues. The PoA identified early warning systems, adequate storage and transportation facilities as important components of policies and plans and called for the international community to provide the necessary support to help LDCs achieve its objectives in this area.

53. The **World Food Summit**, held in Rome, Italy, from 13-17 November, 1996, provided the opportune moment for a renewed commitment to the food security by pledging to achieve food security and to eradicate hunger in all countries. It further pledged to reduce the number of undernourished people to half their present level no later than 2015. While the Summit did not specifically accord priority attention to LDCs as a group of countries in the implementation of the World Food Summit Plan of Action, it did draw attention to and called for the full implementation of the **Decision on Measures Concerning the Possible Negative Effects of the Reform Programme on Least-Developed and Net Food-Importing Developing Countries** adopted in Marrakech, Morocco in 1994. It also encouraged international financial institutions, where appropriate, to help least-developed and net food-importing developing countries to meet short-term difficulties in financing essential food imports.

54. *Progress made in the area of food security.* According to the FAO in its 1999 report "The State of the Food Insecurity in the World", there has been a reduction of the number of people considered undernourished, from 20 per cent in the period 1990/92 to slightly less than 18 per cent in 1995/97. The report also acknowledges that the pace of progress has not been fast enough to reach the goal set by the Summit. The report identifies Burkina Faso, Gambia and Mali as LDCs having the largest reductions in undernourishment (an average of 30 per cent while Afghanistan, Burundi and Madagascar are some countries which are losing ground by as much as 20 – 30 per cent.

55. In addressing the problem of food security, the United Nations is paying particular attention to the Horn of Africa. In April, 2000, the Secretary General created the Inter-Agency Task Force on the UN Response to Long-Term Food Security, Agricultural Development and Related Aspects in the Horn of Africa led by FAO to end the chronic malnutrition in the region. All of the countries of the Horn (Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda) are all LDCs. The Framework for Action has proposed a ten-year strategy to prevent famine and achieve better livelihoods for the people of the Horn.

56. *Constraints and lessons learnt.* A number of constraints continue to hamper the attainment of the goal of the World Food Summit for the LDCs, including drought, which have been made worse by conflicts, and poor economic performance and governance and poverty. Because more than half of the region survives on less than US\$1 a day, much of the integrated follow-up to the Summit and the Task Force's Framework for Action will have to focus on improved economic performance and poverty reduction, in particular.

(h) Science and technology

57. *The PoA, global conferences and science and technology in LDCs.* As wealth in today's global economy becomes increasingly driven by scientific knowledge, the LDCs continue to be largely excluded from the creation and benefits of scientific knowledge. As a whole, LDCs suffer from an ever-widening technological gap, between themselves and other countries largely due to severe budgetary constraints, limited science and technological personnel and inadequate managerial and organizational culture. In addition to their low technological capacity, their telecommunications infrastructure, which is essential to benefiting from and participating in the knowledge and information-based global economy and closing the gaping digital divide, is poor.

58. Strengthening the scientific and technological base was one of the key themes of the Programme of the Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s. The programme recognized that the LDCs faced special difficulties in acquiring modern technology and strengthening their technological capacities due partly to the lack of domestic research and development capabilities. Against this background, the international community was called on to:

- (i) Assist least developed countries to acquire an adequate infrastructure in order to, *inter alia*: support and participate in programmes of research and development of technology in selected areas; facilitate the transfer of technology to small and medium enterprises; exploit the immense impact and potential of biotechnology;
- (ii) Give least developed countries the freest and fullest possible access to technologies whose transfer is not subject to private decisions, and facilitate access, to the extent practicable, to technologies whose transfer is subject to private decisions;
- (iii) Continue to provide and strengthen support of programmes of technical assistance for least developed countries from other developing countries. Possible arrangements for least developed countries to benefit from the co-operative exchange of skills among developing countries should be considered;
- (iv) Consider, as part of the process of accelerating the transfer of technology to the least developed countries, an increase in the number of scholarships for studies and training in science and technology;
- (v) Assist the least developed countries in the formulation of appropriate laws, regulations and policies relating to the import of technology and promotion of the development of indigenous technologies.

59. Despite numerous resolutions on science and technology since the PoA was adopted and its review in 1995, very little has occurred in concrete terms to assist LDCs in this area. The **World Science Conference** held in Budapest, Hungary, from 26 June – 1 July, 1999 agreed upon a *Science Agenda: Framework for Action*, in which broad actions were identified to assist developing countries in strengthening their capacity in the area of science and technology. However, delegates to the Conference did not seize the opportunity to restate the above goals or encourage action in these areas for the LDCs. In its *Declaration on Science and the Use of Scientific Knowledge*, participants to the conference only noted that “helping to create a critical mass of national research in the sciences through regional and international cooperation is especially important for small States and least developed countries.” Towards that end, the Framework for Action called on Governments to provide increased support to regional and international programmes of higher education and to networking of graduate and postgraduate institutions with special emphasis on North-South and South-South cooperation to help small and least developed countries strengthen their scientific and technological resource base.

60. *Progress made in science and technology.* While it is too early to assess progress made in the LDCs since the WSC in 1999, it is clear that the LDCs are by and large excluded from the creation and benefits of scientific knowledge. While many countries, including advanced developing countries, have built strong capacity for science and technology innovation, the LDCs have not solved basic needs. While many of the African LDCs, in particular, are richly endowed with natural resources, they have yet to begin the process of converting their rich biodiversity and genetic raw materials to processed, value-add goods and in the process improve its competitiveness in international trade. They are also yet to deal with, at a technological level, with the problem of water scarcity: thus, even for survival questions, the LDCs are far behind. The digital divide for LDCs, while not a survival issue, cannot be ignored, as information can be a critical input to solving some of these basic questions.

61. *Constraints and lessons learned.* The key constraints to progress in science and technology development in the LDCs revolve around the lack of basic education, the low numbers of students enrolled in science subjects in secondary, vocational and tertiary institutions, the low levels of expenditure on science and technology education, national research and development, and lack of institutional and physical infrastructure in S&T.

62. The Third Conference on LDCs should benefit from highly specific recommendations for LDCs and their development partners based on the framework established by the World Science Conference. The Secretary-General has begun the process in his recently released report for the Millennium Summit, entitled *We the peoples: the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century* (A/54/2000), by making specific recommendations on how technology can be used for practical purposes to enhance the living conditions of the poor. He announced the formation of a new Health InterNetwork for developing countries which will operate 10,000 on-line sites in hospitals, clinics and public health facilities and a UN Information Technology Service to train groups in developing countries in the uses and opportunities of information technology. Some concrete measures along the lines of the Secretary General’s proposals could be considered.

(i) **Human settlements**

63. *The PoA, global conferences and human settlements in LDCs.* Like many other developing countries, LDCs are faced with rapid increase and concentration of population in urban areas. Because of their limited financial resources and lack of capacity, LDCs have been unable to cope with the urgent need to increase the availability of shelter, infrastructure and other services which has led to increasing urban poverty, crime and homelessness. For this reason, the PoA for LDCs called for policies that encourage the informal sector and local communities to provide low cost shelter, with public institutions providing off-site infrastructure, land registration and credit. The PoA also called for LDCs to promote innovative measures by which bilateral and multilateral financial institutions would support the human settlement strategies of LDCs and provide resources for construction materials and technology to complement domestic resources.

64. The **Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements**, held in Istanbul, Turkey, from 3-14 June 1996, did focus attention on the LDCs referring particularly to their special needs in the area of the resources, technology and capacity building. The Habitat Agenda called on multilateral and bilateral donors to raise the priority of adequate shelter for all in their development cooperation programmes and to increase the share of funding for sustainable human settlements development programmes commensurate with the scope and scale of activities required to achieve the objectives of the Agenda in the LDCs. The Agenda also calls upon the international community to facilitate access to international financial resources for developing countries, especially those in Africa and the LDCs so that they could benefit from growing international financial markets in order to promote investments in shelter, including social housing, and infrastructure for sustainable human settlements. The Habitat Agenda also called upon the international community to promote access to appropriate technologies and capacity building in order to cope with the impact of changes in the global economy on human settlements.

65. *Progress made in human settlements.* According to the UNCHS, the rate of urbanisation on the African continent is currently the highest in the world and it is anticipated that the urban population will double, from 229 to 525 million, between 1996 and 2020. While the figures are not desegregated for the African LDCs, it is clear that these figures can probably be extrapolated to these countries as well since the majority of African countries are LDCs (33 of 53 countries). Although specific data are scarce, it is clear that, like African LDCs, the Asian and Pacific LDCs have not made significant progress in providing adequate shelter for all. The reasons include: increasing poverty, inadequate urban services, and the degradation of the environment and the natural resource base as well as natural disasters and increasing civil strife.

66. *Constraints and lessons learned.* An example of the 1998 flood in Bangladesh reveals some of the difficulties faced by LDCs in meeting the goals of the PoA and the Habitat Agenda. According to the UNCHS, the floods affected 30 million people and destroyed more than 900,000 houses. The 1998 flood broke all previous records for its duration and intensity of damages with many areas of the country covered in water for up to two months. Many families were uprooted from their homes and neighbourhoods, their cash crops and property destroyed depriving them of

their main source of income in the agricultural sector and/or by forcing them to sell their assets or take loans to rebuild their houses. Losses were compounded in cases where they had to relocate due to the loss of land by cutting them off from their traditional sources of income. As a result, many families have been pushed below the subsistence level and have migrated to towns and cities increasing the population of poor urban dwellers living live in slums, squatter areas and other sub-standard settlements.

67. The upcoming Special Session of the General Assembly for an Overall Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the Habitat Agenda scheduled for 2001 provides an opportunity for more focussed attention on a number of areas critical for sustainable human settlements in the LDCs, including, build the capacities for national strategic planning and policy formulation and for integrated urban management as well as the infrastructure required for improved access to safe water and sanitation. During the period 1990-1997, according to the 2000 Human Development Report, 41 and 63 per cent of the population of LDCs respectively did not have access to safe water and sanitation compared to 28 and 57 per cent for all developing countries.

(j) Natural disaster reduction

68. *The PoA, global conferences and human settlements in LDCs.* The PoA for LDCs notes that natural and man-made disasters continue to cause heavy losses of human lives and property, with particularly severe and lasting impact on the national economies for LDCs. The programme also points to the fact that considerable knowledge exists of techniques for minimizing the impact of disasters, which have not been systematically applied in the majority of LDCs. In that context, the PoA called for assistance from the international community to assist them in undertaking measures to prevent, alleviate and mitigate the consequences of disasters.

69. Although the **World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction** held in Yokohama, Japan, from 23-27 May, 1994, may not be not considered a major UN Conference it did state quite clearly in its Yokohama Message that it would give priority attention to least developed countries in disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness and relief. Indeed, the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World adopted at the conference referred specifically to the PoA for LDCs and noted that it called for priority attention to LDCs in the activities of the Decade for the International Decade for Disaster Reduction. It further recommended that the Trust Fund for the Decade should give priority in financing the establishment and strengthening of the early warning systems of the disaster prone least LDCs.

70. *Progress made in natural disaster reduction.* While the Yokohama Strategy admirably focused attention on the LDCs, the 1998 UNCTAD report on Least Developed Countries noted that a number of natural disasters continued to affect LDCs, including extensive crop failures in southern African and Sahelian LDCs caused by drought and subsequent rains while Eastern African LDCs were devastated by severe floods during the last quarter of 1997 and early 1998. The cyclones and floods in Mozambique in 1999 and early 2000 which resulted in not only significant food shortages but also heavy loss of human life and severe damage to the agriculture and transportation infrastructure is still vivid.

71. One of the objectives of the decade was that by the year 2000 all countries should have in place comprehensive national assessments of risk from natural hazards integrated into development plans as well as mitigation plans at national and/or local level that address long-term prevention, preparedness, and community awareness; and ready access to global, regional, national and local warning systems. Since Yokohama, actions have been taken at national and regional levels to implement the strategy and plan of action in many LDCs. Many countries have established legal frameworks for disaster reduction; however, additional work remains including mobilizing resources for the Trust Fund or alternatively other innovative sources of funding, putting in place early warning systems, increasing public awareness in risk management and institutional capacity building to respond to early warnings. Attention also needs to be focussed on the recurrent, small-scale disasters or longer-term disasters with slow onset such as drought have terrible social, economical, and environmental impacts in many LDCs. The most obvious effects are: overgrazing, soil erosion, desertification, population displacement, epidemic risk, hunger and malnutrition and environmental degradation.

72. *Constraints and lessons learned.* Some of these issues have been highlighted in the new International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) which was adopted at the Programme Forum, an international conference held in Geneva, from 5-9 July, 1999, to mark the end of the IDNDR. While the Geneva Mandate on Disaster Reduction did recognise the particular need for establishing an institutional arrangement to coordinate disaster reduction in Africa, which contains the majority of the LDCs, no specific mention was made of the LDCs as a group of countries. These countries are particularly vulnerable because of several aggravating factors, including poverty, environmental degradation and lack of information. The new substantive programme which will benefit from new institutional arrangements, namely an Inter-Agency Task Force and a secretariat, established by the Economic and Social Council in Resolution 1999/63. The Third Conference on LDCs may wish to request the Task Force and secretariat to accord priority attention to LDCs in the implementation of their programmes.

IV. Conclusions

73. In the years to come, the commitment and resolve of the international community in terms of achieving the goals and objectives of major conferences and their follow-up events will be severely tested by the development performance of LDCs. LDC-III should provide the forum for launching a vigorous development strategy for LDCs with a view to meeting this challenge.

In formulating such a new partnership for accelerated development of these countries and their speedy and beneficial integration into the world economy, the principles, objectives, targets and policy recommendations adopted by the major global conferences and their follow-up will continue to be relevant. The WSSD+5 outcome augurs well for a new and substantial development partnership between LDCs and their development partners. The most recent consensus on future policies and actions on behalf of these countries, particularly under Commitment 7 of WSSD, highlights a number of key areas, which need to be borne in mind during the substantive preparatory process of LDC-III.

74. The new Programme of Action for LDCs, besides attempting to articulate ways and means for speedy and effective implementation of the outcomes of the global conferences and their follow-up events in the particular context of LDCs, should also provide an umbrella framework for coordinated follow-up of these outcomes. The PoA of the Second Conference did specify concrete mechanisms for follow-up and monitoring of implementation at national, regional and global levels. However, many of these did not function, as envisaged. While some of these mechanisms continue to be relevant and useful, given the new emphasis within the United Nations on the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major conferences and summits, it will become necessary to incorporate the new PoA into the mechanisms that are now being discussed within ECOSOC. In addition, it would necessary to closely monitor the implementation of the outcomes of the major conferences as relate to LDCs and that of LDC-III itself, to ensure that actions are indeed taken to address the particular problems of LDCs.

75. While many of the issues relating to LDCs have been and are being dealt with by the global conferences and their follow-up mechanisms, LDC-III is important, as it provides the opportunity to pool the various elements together and refocus attention on this particular group of countries that have been earmarked for special attention by the international community. Whatever follow-up mechanisms are put in place should ensure that this focus be maintained.

76. In ECOSOC Agreed Conclusions at this year's coordination segment on "Assessment of the progress made within the UN system, through the conference reviews, in the promotion of an integrated and coordinated follow-up to major UN conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields," the Council proposed four options, including, (i) holding a single event to review conferences in a sequential manner; (ii) clustering the review of the implementation of several related conferences' programmes of action at a single event; (iii) staggering the follow-up processes so that there is only one conference review in any given year; and, (iv) ensuring that plus five conference reviews and appraisals be carried out by the functional commissions, the Council and the Assembly while special sessions of the Assembly or conferences should take place only for ten year reviews. The Council also invited its functional commissions and the Commission on Human Settlements to review these and other options for reviewing the conferences of the 1990s and reporting to its substantive session in 2001.

77. Bearing in mind that the new PoA emerging from LDC-III, like the old, will doubtless address all the cross-cutting themes as well as specific issues found in the major conferences and summits, it will be important to find ways of highlighting LDCs in the reviews. In this context, distinct and identifiable processes should be put in place to review implementation of the outcomes of the conferences in the particular context of LDCs. Each functional commission may wish to consider spending one or more sessions to evaluate how the LDCs and their development partners are faring in the implementation of the goals of the specific conference for which it has responsibility. An Inter-Agency Task Force could assist in monitoring the progress in implementation of the new PoA, towards meeting international development goals.

78. At present, the LDCs are benefiting, like other developing countries, from coordinated support at the country level by the United Nations system organizations through the programming of its operational activities for development primarily through the Common Country Assessment (CCA) and the United Nations Development Framework (UNDAF) including the thematic group concept, to frame development assistance programmes to meet national sectoral goals. Along with round tables and consultative committees, the UNDAF, along with the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) have the potential to contribute to a more coherent and coordinated approach to helping these countries meet national and international development targets.³ The LDCs should be fully supported in undertaking a coordinated follow-up of major global conferences and summits.

³ As of April 2000, 25 of the 74 UNDAF pilot countries were LDCs and 20 of these countries have or are formulating PRSPs.

ANNEX I:

Commitment 7 on Africa and the Least Developed Countries

To accelerate the economic, social and human resource development of Africa and the least developed countries

86bis. Encourage concerted national and international efforts to promote an integrated approach to people-centred sustainable development.

87. Make concerted national and international efforts for promoting an enabling environment that will facilitate the integration of Africa and the LDCs into the global economy and promote their participation in the multilateral trading system through, *inter alia*:

(a) Implementing appropriate debt relief initiatives that can lead to a sustainable solution to their debt burden;

(b) Improving market access for export products of Africa and LDCs, including through tariff- and quota-free treatment for essentially all products originating in least developed countries on as broad and liberal a basis as possible;

(c) Supporting programmes to assist them to take full advantage of the multilateral trading regime, both on a bilateral basis and through multilateral efforts, *inter alia*, through the World Trade Organization, the ITC, UNCTAD and through other relevant regional and subregional economic organizations;

(d) Pursuing structural adjustment programmes relevant to the needs of these countries by supporting growth-enhancing, poverty-reducing economic reforms;

(e) Supporting, *inter alia*, initiatives in the development of venture capital funds for investment in these countries in fields conducive to sustainable development.

88. Assist Governments in Africa and the least developed countries in enhancing their countries' productive capacity and competitiveness through, *inter alia*, policies and programmes to support agricultural and industrial diversification, establishment of cooperative business networks, public and private systems for sharing information, promoting technology, and encouraging domestic and foreign investment, especially in the field of technology.

90. Call upon donor Governments and international organizations to encourage investment in critical infrastructure services, including reconstruction in post-conflict and natural disaster situations, and invite Governments in Africa and the least developed countries to utilize infrastructure investments to also promote employment.

90bis. Encourage interested Governments to consider the establishment of a World Solidarity Fund to be financed on a voluntary basis in order to contribute to the eradication of poverty and promote social development in the poorest regions of the world.

90ter. Call upon the World Food Programme and other concerned agencies to strengthen food-for-work activities in low-income food-deficit countries, in particular in Africa, as an important measure to expand or rehabilitate needed community infrastructure, create employment and enhance household food security.

92. Strengthen support to South-South cooperation as a means to promote development in Africa and the least developed countries by enhancing investment and transfer of appropriate technology through mutually agreed arrangements, as well as promoting regional human resource development and development of technology through, *inter alia*, technology promotion centres.

93. Support increased efforts of Governments to promote and strengthen human resource development in Africa and the least developed countries, in partnership with civil society, to achieve quality basic education for all, while at the same time continuing to invest in secondary and tertiary education, and with enhanced cooperation of the international community.

93bis. Support the efforts of Governments to allocate additional resources to education and the management capacities of the educational sector, and improve enrolment ratios, particularly for girls and women.

93ter. Support steps taken by Governments to encourage skilled and highly educated Africans to remain in the region and to utilize and further develop their skills.

93quater. Urge developed countries to strive to fulfill as soon as possible the agreed target of earmarking 0.15 to 0.2% of GNP as ODA for the least developed countries.

94. Accord priority to the least developed countries by the international community, including by the United Nations funds and programmes as well as international and regional financial institutions, in the allocation of resources on concessional terms for economic and social development.

94bis. Encourage the United Nations and its affiliated agencies to enhance the provision of technical cooperation to the least developed countries. In this context, call for the strengthening of the Integrated Framework for Trade Related Technical Assistance to the least developed countries.

95. Encourage creditor countries to implement bilateral debt relief arrangements for the African and the least developed countries and stress that debt relief should contribute to national development objectives, including poverty eradication.

96. Give special attention to the least developed countries, in particular those in sub-Saharan Africa, in the implementation of the 20/20 initiative in cooperation with civil society in order to ensure access to basic social services for all.

97. Support the recommendations contained in the Report of the Secretary-General (A/52/871-S/1998/318) and in that context await the outcome of the open-ended ad hoc working group on the causes of conflict and promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa.

97bis. Encourage the 25 African countries most affected by HIV/AIDS to adopt time-bound targets for reducing infection levels, such as a target of reducing infection levels in young people by 25 per cent by 2005, and invite the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, in conjunction with its co-sponsoring agencies, to prepare and propose means for implementing a strategy for achieving this target.

98. Support African Governments in expanding and strengthening programmes related to young people and HIV/AIDS through developing a collective strategy with the donor community, international organizations and non-governmental organizations, facilitated by the establishment of national young people's task forces, in order to ensure the necessary multi-sectoral response and the interventions to raise the awareness and address the needs of young people, as well as the needs of those living with HIV/AIDS and children orphaned by AIDS.

99. Invite UNAIDS and its cosponsors, as part of the International Partnership Against AIDS in Africa (IPAA), to support countries most affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, upon request, in their efforts to:

(a) Allocate adequate resources, in particular financial, as well as wider access to quality medication by ensuring the provision and affordability of drugs, including a reliable distribution and delivery system; implementation of a strong generic drug policy; bulk purchasing; negotiation with pharmaceutical companies; appropriate financing systems; and encouragement of local manufacturing and import practices consistent with national laws and international agreements acceded to;

(b) Develop a strategy for resource mobilization for programmes on young people with their full involvement;

- (c) Consolidate resources by creating or strengthening technical resource networks and identifying best practices at country and regional levels;
- (d) Develop a core set of indicators and tools to monitor implementation of youth programmes and progress towards achievement of the target to reduce infection levels in young people by 25 per cent by 2005.

100bis. Support African Governments and civil society organizations, *inter alia*, through the International Partnership Against AIDS in Africa and national programmes, in the provision of key services linked to social security, care and support, prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections, reduction of mother-to-child transmission, access to voluntary and confidential counselling and testing, and support of behavioural change and responsible sexual behaviour, in order to scale up significantly efforts in Africa to curtail the spread of HIV, reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS, and halt the further reversal of human, social and economic development.

101. Support and assist research and development centres in Africa and the least developed countries in the field of vaccines, medicine and public health, thereby strengthening training of medical personnel and counsellors, improving control and treatment of communicable and infectious diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, as well as assisting in making vaccines and medicines for the control and treatment of these diseases widely available at affordable prices.

102. Encourage the international community to give its full support to an effective and successful outcome of the Third United Nations Conference of the Least Developed Countries in 2001.

ANNEX II:

Progress made by LDCs towards achieving selected goals for 2000 set by major global conferences and summits

Major recent global conferences established a number of targets in some key areas of development. Some of these targets were set for the year 2000. The following table shows that LDCs made only modest progress towards these goals, and none of them fully met these goals at the end of the 1990s. Their record suggests that much more vigorous efforts at both national and international levels would be needed to ensure faster implementation of the outcomes of the major conferences.

Target area	Target for 2000	LDCs' performance
Education	Universal access to basic education (<i>World Declaration on Education for All, para. 8; WSSD Programme of Action, para 36(a); FWCW Platform for Action, para 80(b)</i>) Reduction of adult literacy rate to at least half its 1990 level (<i>World Declaration on Education for All, para. 8; WSSD Programme of Action, para. 36(k)</i>)	1 LDC attained gross enrolment ratio of above 90 per cent; most LDCs below 50 per cent 1 LDC achieved adult literacy rate over 90 per cent; for majority LDCs, half or more of the population is illiterate
Access to health services	Making primary health care, including reproductive health care, available universally (<i>ICPD Programme of Action, para. 8.5; also WSSD Programme of Action, para. 36(g)</i>)	3 LDCs with access to health services more than 90 per cent; half of LDCs below 50 per cent
Malnutrition among children	Reduction of severe and moderate malnutrition among children under 5 by half (<i>WSSD Programme of Action, para 36(f); FWCW Platform for Action, para. 106(w)</i>)	3 LDCs with underweight prevalence among pre-school children at 10-19 per cent; other LDCs above 20 per cent
Infant and under-5 mortality	Reduction of infant mortality by one-third, or to 50 and 70 per live births, respectively, whichever is less (<i>World Summit for Children Programme of Action, appendix I(a); ICPD Programme of Action, para 8.16; WSSD Programme of Action, para 36(c); FWCW Programme of Action, para 106(l)</i>)	Infant mortality: LDCs as a group registered 7 per cent reduction (i.e., from 116 to 108) between 1985-90 and 1997; it increased for 9 LDCs
Life expectancy	By the year 2000, life expectancy of not less than 60 years in any country (<i>WSSD Programme of Action, para. b)</i>)	51.9 years for LDCs as a group in 1998
Access to safe water	Providing access to safe drinking water in sufficient quantities for all (<i>WSSD Programme of Action, para.36(l)</i>)	Between 1990-1998, the percentage of the LDCs population without access to safe water was 36 percent
Sanitation	Ensuring the availability of and universal access to sanitation (<i>FWCW Platform for Action, para 106(x); WSSD Programme of Action, para. 36(l)</i>)	Between 1990-1998, the percentage of the LDCs population without access to adequate sanitation was 60 per cent

Source: UNCTAD, *The Least Developed Countries*, various reports; UNDP, *Human Development Report*, various issues; United Nations, 'Charting the Progress of Populations, 2000 (ST/ESA/SER.R/151).

