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COMMUNIQUE OF THE SECOND MINISTERIAL MEETING
OF THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES,
CARTAGENA DE INDIAS
10 FEBRUARY 1992

Note by the UNCTAD secretariat

On behalf of the least developed countries the Chairman of the Ministerial Meeting of the Least Developed Countries, the Minister of Commerce of Bangladesh Mr. M.K. Anwar has requested that the attached communique, adopted by the least developed countries' Ministers at their meeting on 10 February 1992, be circulated to the eighth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

Communiqué of the second Ministerial Meeting
of the Least Developed Countries
Cartagena de Indias
10 February 1992

1. The Ministers and Heads of Delegations of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) participating in the eighth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in Cartagena de Indias met on 10 February 1992. The meeting provided the Ministers with an important opportunity to continue the co-ordination of their position on issues concerning the LDCs, including those before the Conference, the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations and the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

2. The Ministers stressed that the recent development performance and socio-economic prospects in many LDCs continue to be of great concern. The LDCs' economies, characterized by their serious structural constraints, have been further burdened as a result of natural disasters, famine, refugees and large population displacements, as well as by unfavourable external environments. Moreover, the land-locked and island least developed countries face special geographical disadvantages. In this connection, the Ministers noted the comprehensive analysis presented in the UNCTAD secretariat's The Least Developed Countries, 1991 Report of the LDCs' socio-economic situation and of the implementation to date of the Programme of Action for the LDCs for the 1990s adopted at the Paris Conference in 1990.

3. The Ministers underscored the policy reforms and adjustments that the LDCs have undertaken to create a favourable macro-economic environment and conducive conditions for viable long-term growth. In this regard, they called upon their development partners to adequately and effectively support these efforts.

4. The Ministers noted that the eighth session of the Conference is of special significance and is being convened at a time when the international community is facing momentous events and new challenges arising from the end of traditional political tension between East and West. While these political and economic changes are expected to provide an impetus to strengthening international economic relations and multilateral co-operation for development, the Ministers noted that the reforms in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as regional trading arrangements in developed countries, were attracting greater attention on the part of the international community. In this connection, the Ministers stressed that these developments should not lead to any slackening of the international community's commitment to the least developed

countries or have any adverse implications for resource flows to them or for their trade.

5. The Ministers noted the addition by the United Nations General Assembly of six countries to the list of LDCs after the Paris Conference. In this connection, the Ministers stressed that the set of aid targets adopted by the Paris Conference was designed to help meet the external resource requirements of the 42 countries which were identified at that time as least developed. With the addition of the new countries, the population of the LDCs as a group has increased by 15 per cent. The Ministers therefore strongly urged that ODA targets established in the Programme of Action should be increased by at least 15 per cent. The Ministers further noted the stagnating flow of ODA to LDCs in real terms and the fall in the level of per capita ODA, in view of which they strongly felt that donors should redouble their efforts to realize their commitments to provide LDCs with a significant and substantial increase in the aggregate level of external support. The Ministers invited the Governing Council of UNDP to adjust appropriately the allocation of IPFs to LDCs as a group consequent to additions to the list of LDCs. They also urged the multilateral financial and development institutions to augment their concessional funds to meet the increased needs of the LDCs.

6. The Ministers expressed their deep appreciation to those of their development partners who have already met or exceeded their commitments with regard to ODA targets, and urged others, particularly the richest developed countries, to make serious efforts to provide substantially increased ODA resources to the LDCs, especially bearing in mind the reassessed needs of the LDCs arising from the increase in their number and still-to-be-assessed burdens that they will inevitably be asked to bear in compliance with disciplines to be observed under the global commitment to ensure and enhance the physical environment.

7. The Ministers noted that the LDCs' external debt burden continues to be a major hindrance to their development efforts and called for further cancellation of all bilateral official debts, as well as for urgent and effective measures for reduction of LDCs' debt stocks and debt-servicing burdens, including those due to multilateral financial institutions and commercial debts. They further noted that the inclusion in the list of LDCs of six new countries, which all bear a heavy debt burden, has affected the level of the stock of debt owed by the LDCs.

8. The Ministers, while taking stock of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations, noted with disappointment that the Draft Final Act tabled by the Chairman of the Trade Negotiations

Committee on 20 December 1991 did not reflect the commitment made by the participants in the Punta del Este Declaration to accord special treatment to the least developed countries. The Ministers therefore urged all participants in the Round to take cognisance of the development dimensions of the least developed countries and, in all relevant areas of negotiations, to provide for them adequate measures to strengthen their production bases through provision of the necessary access to investments and technologies, to expand their trading opportunities through unrestricted access to markets - free of all tariff and non-tariff barriers - for products of export interest to them, and to enable them to become parties to the instruments negotiated in the course of the Uruguay Round, without requiring them to make concessions or contributions and undertake any additional or new commitments and obligations which are inconsistent with their development, finance and trade needs or are otherwise beyond their administrative and institutional capabilities.

9. The Ministers stressed that, in order to provide a sound basis for LDCs' long-term sustained growth and sustainable development, the twin problems of poverty and environmental degradation in these countries should be tackled effectively. They called upon the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to address the environmental and developmental problems of the LDCs in a comprehensive manner and recommend action-oriented measures.

10. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of effective follow-up and monitoring mechanisms for the implementation of the Programme of Action. In view of the recent major global developments affecting the LDCs, they stressed the added significance of the mid-term review and called upon the Conference to urge all Governments, UNCTAD and other organs, organizations and agencies of the United Nations system to make early and adequate preparations for an effective and comprehensive mid-term review of the Programme of Action in 1995.

11. The Ministers emphasized, once more, the need to enable the LDCs to be adequately represented at the annual global-level follow-up and monitoring of the Programme of Action at the UNCTAD Trade and Development Board and in the mid-term review, and requested the Secretary-General of the United Nations to allocate the necessary resources for this purpose.

12. The Ministers noted with satisfaction the steps taken by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD to strengthen the secretariat's capacity, in particular to upgrade UNCTAD's Special Programme for LDCs to a Division, and to ensure the necessary follow-up and

monitoring of the implementation of the Programme of Action. They also expressed their satisfaction over the functioning of the UNCTAD secretariat in fulfilment of its mandate under the Programme of Action.

13. Bearing in mind the additional needs of the LDCs owing to the increase in their number and the likely increase in the burden they may be required to assume in the context of the global commitments to ensure and enhance the physical environment, the Ministers expressed the view that the role of UNCTAD in support of the LDCs should be further strengthened with a view to finding urgent solutions to their increasingly complex economic and social circumstances in a rapidly changing world.

14. The Ministers expressed their deep appreciation to Her Excellency Begum Khaleda Zia, Prime Minister of Bangladesh for her message of good wishes to the meeting of LDC Ministers and the special meeting of the eighth session of UNCTAD on LDCs.