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Opening Remarks

by

Mrs. Heidi Schroderus-Fox

**Director, Office of the
High Representative
for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked
Developing Countries
and Small Island Developing States**

**Briefing for LDC Delegates on
the post-Bali WTO Ministerial process**

**Monday 10 March 2014, 3 to 6pm
Trusteeship Council Chamber**

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Distinguished delegates,

I wish to warmly welcome all of you to a special briefing session this afternoon that will provide a focused update on the “LDC package” adopted by the 9th WTO Ministerial Conference that was held in Bali last December.

It is a great honor for me to welcome Ambassador Lissassi, Permanent Representative of Benin in Geneva, and Mr Stefano Inama, Chief of the Section on the Enhanced Integrated Framework in the UNCTAD Division on Africa, LDCs and Special Programmes in Geneva. They have closely followed the WTO negotiations leading to Bali and have come to New York today to give us a first-hand analytical account of what happened in Bali and very importantly of what needs to happen in the post-Bali process at the WTO from an LDC perspective.

As you know the LDC Group arrived in Bali very well prepared with the goal of seeing their needs and concerns on a number of specific agreed by Ministers as an important step forward in addressing their continuing challenges in integrating into the global economy.

The Bali LDC package contains a number of LDC-specific decisions that respond to specific commitments of the Istanbul Programme of Action, namely; (1) preferential rules of origin for LDCs, (2) the operationalization of the 15-year services waiver, (3) DFQF market access for LDCs. A decision on Cotton was also adopted.

In addition, Ministers in Bali adopted a Decision on Aid for Trade – an area where of course the LDCs have strong interests. Indeed the new Aid-for-Trade Work Programme for the period 2014-2015 will be framed by the post-2015 development agenda and will focus on issues identified in value chain work as impinging on the ability of developing countries - and in particular LDCs - to connect to value chains, i.e. trade facilitation, trade finance, labour skills, investment environment, and infrastructure.

Improving market access for all LDC products with full implementation of duty-free quota-free provisions on a lasting basis, for all LDCs, with simplified rules of origin and reduction of non-tariff measures continue to be at the core of the trade demands of LDCs, after Bali, in particular as delegations here in New York will soon embark on an intense and delicate phase of formulation of a post-2015 development agenda.

The briefing today will look into all of these decisions with an analytical approach and highlight where real progress has been made and what steps are needed to implement the decisions. For instance, the decision on rules of origin, as important as it is, constitutes only a best-endeavour agreement. My question to our experts will therefore be what are the real benefits arising for LDCs from such non-legally binding language? What is the way forward in these cases? Has Bali truly delivered for the LDCs?

I think that the largest gains for the LDCs will result from the agreement on trade facilitation – gains will accrue from simplified customs procedures and lower

transaction costs which will boost trade globally and especially at the intra-regional level where a considerable growth potential remains untapped by LDCs.

The agreement takes into account the fact that some countries, such as the LDCs will have concrete difficulties in implementing some of the costly reforms in the absence of technical assistance and capacity building. Meeting trade facilitation commitments will require investment, and many will be capital intensive.

It will be therefore extremely interesting to hear from our expert how the LDCs can benefit from the agreement's landmark provisions allowing flexibility in the scheduling and sequencing of implementation and linking commitments to acquired capacity resulting from technical assistance. The ability of development partners to fulfil those promises to provide timely and effective technical assistance for LDCs will prove to be critical for the whole of the trade agenda to move forward.

Allow me to only add that for the trade facilitation agreement to enter into force in good time and deliver the promised gains, the necessary ratification processes at national level must be completed as a matter of priority.

It is now with great pleasure that I give the floor to Mr Stefano Inama to lead us through today's briefing.