

Trade and Development Board, fifty-ninth session
Geneva, 17–28 September 2012

**Sessional Committee I – First plenary meeting
(Item 5) and UNCTAD’s contribution to the
implementation of the Istanbul Programme
of Action for LDCs: First progress report**

General statements by regional groups
Speaker: European Union

Friday, 21 September 2012

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European Union

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UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

**59th SESSION TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD
17-28 September 2012**

EU Statement

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TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD

59th Session

(Geneva, 17-28 September 2012)

Item 5

**UNCTAD's contribution to the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for
LDCs: First progress report**

Mr President,
Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

1. We thank the Secretariat for the background document 'UNCTAD's contribution to the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020: First progress report'. In our opinion these progress reports, requested by the Board, may become an interesting monitoring tool to analyse the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries

2. We welcome UNCTAD's contribution to the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) in the three pillars: policy analysis, consensus-building and technical cooperation. We recognise the specific attention UNCTAD is placing on the special needs of Least Developing Countries (LDCs) following the orientations provided in the Doha Mandate.

3. The EU and its Member States are determined to support the Least Developed Countries in reaching the ambitious objectives set in Istanbul. However it is first and foremost for the LDCs to take leadership and responsibility for their own development. Therefore we can contribute to help in

the implementation of the IPoA by taking it fully into account in our bilateral and regional programmes with the LDCs and by fully respecting their ownership and leadership.

4. Concerning the graduation of LDCs, we would like to facilitate a smooth graduation process and are fully committed to supporting the objective of enabling half of the least developed countries to meet the graduation criteria by 2020. In this regard, we believe it is of key importance that the LDCs put in place smooth national transition strategies. We also acknowledge the role that UNCTAD plays monitoring the LDCs' progress towards graduation thresholds and the debates organised to discuss issues related to graduation and structural reforms. We invite UNCTAD to continue on this line.

5. LDCs should aim to create the right economic and social environment to develop comparative advantages in different productive sectors; foster investment in productive capacities; diversify the economy – reducing the dependence on the exports of a few primary commodities; and stimulating the interaction between FDI and local productive capacities. This process will require investment in infrastructure, human resources and institutional capacities (capacity-building).

6. Concerning UNCTAD's technical cooperation and capacity-building schemes, we agree with the need to improve data collection systems. The EU and its Member States strongly support enhancing statistical capacity and data collection for monitoring and evaluation purposes and invite UNCTAD to continue its work in this area.

7. Structural reforms are necessary to unlock domestic potential for growth. These reforms may include exploiting the potential of a green and inclusive economy, developing and implementing effective policies to combat poverty, opening up competition in network industries, implementing reforms to improve employment levels, etc.

8. The (United Nations Conference on Sustained Development) Rio+20 summit served to discuss themes revolving around sustainable development and poverty eradication. These debates are very relevant in relation to the LDCs as these countries are confronted with the most severe constraints to growth and development. The Istanbul Programme of Action and the outcome document of Rio+20 conference ('The Future we want') possess common denominators and significant synergies. The provisions of these two processes should be implemented in a coherent manner.

9. We reiterate that the International Community needs to work together towards defining economic and social policies to reduce poverty and to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth

characterized by men and women's ability to participate in and benefit from wealth creation in an equal manner.

10. Our development policies are to concentrate our aid where it is most needed to address poverty reduction and where it could have the greatest impact. The LDCs stand to greatly benefit from these policies.

Thank you.