

JZ intervention

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Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Colleagues and Friends,

Allow me to join my voice to the others' in wishing all of you an excellent and happy new year.

On behalf of the JUSSCANNZ group, I would like to thank Mr. Kituyi for his remarks, and also Mr. Tesfachew for this morning's presentation. The JZ members recognize that UNCTAD's efforts to improve the economies of least developed countries, and thereby the lives of the citizens of those countries, is among UNCTAD's most important work. I congratulate the entire team, especially those from the Division for Africa, LDCs and Special Programmes, that worked on this year's report.

As always, the 2015 LDC report presented a host of statistical information of the highest relevance. It presents cause for both optimism, and concern. LDC's saw increased official development assistance inflows, increased foreign direct investment and average growth above five per cent. Unfortunately, that growth is projected to slow in response to global economic factors and low commodity prices.

This year's focus on transforming rural economies in LDCs is an opportunity for us to remember that rural areas are home to most of the poor in the majority of least developed countries. These areas must therefore be the focus of specific attention from policy makers and experts. The report illustrated key challenges and suggested a series of policy recommendations in order to overcome these challenges. It is not my intention to go through all of them but to focus on one in particular, regarding livelihoods. The report mentioned three potential primary routes out of poverty for rural people in LDCs. Market-oriented small holder farming, non-farm activities, and emigration to urban areas. In considering these approaches, I would like to draw your attention to the comments of Zambia's Dr. Evelyn Nguleka, the President of the World Farmers Organization.

Her comments, made last Wednesday right here in Geneva were timely and of the highest relevance to the questions raised by the 2015 LDC Report, and considered today in this session. In her remarks, she spoke of the central role of farmers as they are called to produce high quality food for a growing world population in a sustainable manner. Given the importance of their role, she said "it is essential that they are able to operate in favorable trading

environments.”

She also invited policy makers to look beyond the price of food as a commodity for local and international markets. She called for an examination of not only food availability and affordability for the consumers, but also at retaining the production of food as a commercially viable activity for the world’s farmers. I quote: “Only when farmers are compensated with proper income for their work, a virtuous circle can be established, with positive effects for the overall society. Furthermore, profitability ensures that farming remains a viable, sustainable career option for young people and boosts the transition between generations. Profitability is needed for agriculture to be able to compete with alternative employment opportunities in the city and to make further investments in the social and environmental pillars of the sustainability. Encouraging trade it is essential for the farmers to overcome also the many challenges they constantly live.”

UNCTAD’s LDC report ties in well with Dr Nguleka’s comments. It considers the options faced by farmers and their policy maker representatives. Diversification of rural activities, including non-farming, improving productivity in a sustainable manner, and connecting rural areas to urban markets and global value chains all offer potential pieces of the puzzle. The report examines these and importantly, the specific gender elements that must be weighed in addressing the challenges of the rural poor in LDCs. It offers valuable food for thought and analysis for LDC policy makers as they are increasingly looking at these issues in a more systemic manner and seeking an outcome whereby all stakeholders find a sustainable path forward through the proposed solutions.

I would like conclude by reiterating my group’s support for UNCTAD’s focus on LDCs with a view to supporting them in achieving the Istanbul Program of Action goals, including graduation from LDC status. As we are a few days away from starting negotiations in the lead up to UNCTAD XIV, identifying concrete ways in which efforts can be channeled optimally to deliver tangible results for LDCs will be central to our discussions. JZ looks forward to working with all of you in a constructive spirit in the next few months, recognizing the full gravity and scale of the challenges UNCTAD is working to address, including those outlined in the 2015 LDC Report.

Thank you.