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later: Mr. Iziraren (Morocco)

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Agenda item 23: Eradication of poverty and other development issues (*continued*) (A/69/223)

- (a) **Implementation of the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017)** (*continued*) (A/69/204 and A/69/392; A/C.2/69/2)
- (b) **Industrial development cooperation** (*continued*) (A/69/331 and A/69/392; A/C.2/69/2)
- (c) **Women in development** (*continued*) (A/69/156 and A/69/392; A/C.2/69/2)

1. **Mr. Thammavongsa** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that poverty eradication and rural development were top priorities in his country's seventh Five-Year National Socioeconomic Development Plan for 2010-2015. His Government had marshalled all available domestic resources with a view to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 and ultimately graduating from least developed country status by 2020. Its economy had grown at a rate of over 8 per cent over the past three years, and the poverty ratio had been reduced to just over 20 per cent. Nevertheless, some of the MDGs would not be achieved by 2015 and should be carried over into the sustainable development goals of the post-2015 development agenda, with poverty eradication as the top priority. The successful implementation of development plans for least developed countries like his own required enhanced and predictable support from the international community through development partners, the United Nations system, international organizations, South-South and triangular cooperation, and the private sector.

2. **Ms. Byaje** (Rwanda) said that the recent observance of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty had been a reminder that poverty was one of the greatest global challenges of the current times. Extreme poverty had indeed been halved in global terms since the turn of the millennium, but in Africa, despite positive economic growth, it had not undergone a significant reduction. In order for genuine progress to be made, the different dimensions and underlying causes of poverty in different regions needed to be understood. More attention must be paid to building individual and community-level capabilities, assisting national policies and strategies, and providing access to services, decent work, and information and communications technology. Ensuring a comparative

advantage for vulnerable groups and maintaining access to international financing were indispensable elements of job creation, especially in Africa. In particular, empowering women to become primary contributors to the economy could yield tangible results for poverty eradication.

3. Despite the complete destruction of its social and economic fabric as a result of the genocide against the Tutsi, and notwithstanding the impact of the world economic crisis, Rwanda had managed to sustain its economic growth since the turn of the millennium and to lift more than a million people out of poverty. It intended to further reduce poverty from around 50 per cent to 30 per cent by 2018, through a combination of increased agricultural productivity and enhanced social protection programmes. In addition to domestic resources, foreign direct assistance and official development assistance would be crucial for new infrastructure, industrialization and energy projects.

4. **Archbishop Auza** (Observer for the Holy See) said that bold commitments like the MDGs and the proposed sustainable development goals were important tools for shaping strategies and measuring results, provided that policies were based on evidence and lived experience. Ready-made solutions imposed from outside were not always devoid of ideological colouring. The fight to eradicate poverty should be inspired by solidarity rather than survival of the fittest, and it should avoid economic models that heightened inequality and marginalized those with fewer possibilities. A rising tide did not always lift all boats; sometimes it only lifted yachts, kept afloat some crafts and sank the rest.

5. Participation was the antidote to exclusion. In many places, women suffered from violence, discrimination and lack of access to education. Poverty often compounded that inequality. Poverty eradication meant more than merely increasing the amount of money that a person lived on per day. It also meant equal access for all individuals and communities to social, cultural, political and spiritual benefits that, although not always tangible, contributed to the authentic development of the whole person and of all peoples.

6. **Ms. Barth** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that decent work remained the best route for escaping poverty, and sound wage policies were among the simplest and most direct ways of preventing

a rise in working poverty. Although it was up to each country to set the right level of wages, ILO was pleased to see that decent work and a social protection floor were included in the Open Working Group's proposed sustainable development goals. Poverty was not just a problem of the poor. The ILO decent work agenda provided an efficient model for achieving a stable, prosperous and inclusive world economy.

7. **Mr. Richter** (Observer for the International Organization for Migration (IOM)) said that inclusiveness should be a central pillar of poverty eradication efforts. Lack of inclusiveness was often a primary barrier to positive development outcomes for migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons. Policy priorities outlined in the Secretary-General's report could not be fully successful unless accompanied by the empowerment of marginalized groups and people in vulnerable situations.

8. The report of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals had taken to heart the idea that the new development agenda should leave no one behind. There were a number of things could be done to fulfil the promise of an equitable and inclusive world made at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). Migrants needed to be included in targets such as universal access to health care, education and social protection. The development potential of migration could also be maximized by policies that promoted skills recognition, portability of social security benefits, and reduction of labour recruitment costs and remittance transfer fees. He hoped that the General Assembly would continue to recognize that human mobility should be adequately covered in the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda.

9. **Mr. Madiwale** (Observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)), said that an important aspect of poverty eradication was ensuring that gains were protected and sustainable. Building the resilience of vulnerable groups to disasters and emergencies was an essential aspect of that work. Poor people were the most likely to live in hazard-prone areas such as flood plains, informal settlements and degraded land. The potential for disasters to set back poverty eradication had been illustrated by the 2010 earthquake in Haiti and the 2011 drought in Djibouti, both of which had resulted in a return to pre-2001 poverty levels.

10. The sustainable development goals of the post-2015 agenda should not repeat the failure of the MDGs to address such risk factors, and his delegation was pleased to see the language on reduction of disaster risk and exposure to climate-related extreme events included in target 1.5 in the report of the Open Working Group. That target should be retained in full, and disaster risk reduction and resilience should be mainstreamed throughout the text. He also hoped that targets on universal access to basic services and strengthening the social safety net would be retained in the Secretary-General's synthesis report.

11. **Mr. de Looz Karageorgiades** (Observer for the Sovereign Military Order of Malta) said that he wished to draw attention to the needs of humanitarian workers in the field. The primary mission of his Order was to assist persons in distress, including victims of natural disasters and refugees. The Order was active in 120 countries and was increasing its activities in cooperation with IFRC, United Nations agencies, and non-governmental organizations such as Doctors without Borders. He expressed support for the Secretary-General's initiatives to protect journalists, who performed the important function of providing information about emerging humanitarian situations. The Order's international arm, Malteser International, together with the French Association of the Order of Malta, had just begun to provide assistance to combat the Ebola epidemic in Guinea and Liberia. He stressed that race and religion were irrelevant when it came to human suffering.

12. *Mr. Iziraren (Morocco), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

Agenda item 22: Groups of countries in special situations

(a) **Follow-up to the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries** (A/69/95-E/2014/81, A/69/270 and A/69/392; A/C.2/69/2)

(b) **Follow-up to the second United Nations conference on landlocked developing countries** (A/69/170)

13. **Mr. Acharya** (Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the

Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 (Istanbul Programme of Action) (A/69/95-E/2014/81), said that although there had been a moderate pickup in economic activity in many least developed countries, only a few had expanded at the 7 per cent target set by the Istanbul Programme of Action. Half of people in least developed countries lived on less than \$1.25 per day, and those countries were also the most exposed to economic, climate-related and environmental shocks. The recent Ebola outbreak was a vivid reminder of the kinds of vulnerabilities that could set back progress towards the Programme of Action's eight goals.

14. That progress had indeed been mixed. While access to mobile telephony continued to grow, the cost of access to modern energy remained abnormally high. Although undernourishment had declined, it continued to be a major problem owing to low agricultural productivity. There had been modest trade expansion, but it was concentrated in areas with low value addition and low technological content. Education enrolment had expanded, but completion rates had lagged. Health indicators had improved, but needs for affordable housing, drinking water and meaningful decent jobs remained acute.

15. Although preliminary indications suggested that official development assistance (ODA) would prove to have risen in 2013, due largely to debt relief provided to Myanmar, country programmable aid was expected to decline by 5 per cent in 2014. The Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative and the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative had reduced debt burdens, but susceptibility to debt burden would increase as least developed countries received more non-concessional loans. Progress on political, economic and corporate governance remained fragile in least developed countries, and they continued to lack an adequate voice in global governance.

16. In 2014, his Office had continued work to meet those challenges. Its flagship report would have poverty eradication as its theme. Civil society, the private sector and academia had also contributed to implementation of the Istanbul Programme, and least developed countries had continued efforts to mainstream the Programme into their development strategies. However, although domestic resource mobilization had increased, the least developed countries were still dependent on ODA for investment in productive capacities and infrastructure. Agreements

on market access reached at the 2013 WTO Bali Ministerial Conference should be fully implemented, and a larger share of Aid for Trade resources should be channelled to least developed countries. He expressed gratitude to Turkey for its generous support of the work of the high-level panel of experts on the proposed technology bank. Mainstreaming the concerns of the least developed countries would be crucial to the success of the post-2015 development agenda.

17. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening investment promotion regimes for foreign direct investment (FDI) in the least developed countries (A/69/270), he said that FDI accounted for the largest private capital flows to least developed countries but was disproportionately directed towards natural resource extraction. Many least developed countries had made strong efforts to attract increased FDI by liberalizing domestic investment policies, taking part in international trade bodies and agreements, and providing investment services and tax exemptions. FDI was also affected by ODA for infrastructure projects, arrangements for preferential market access, and international and regional initiatives such as the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency of the World Bank, which provided political risk insurance for foreign investment in developing countries.

18. Despite such efforts, the least developed countries had received less than 2 per cent of total FDI inflows for the 2011-2013 period. The countries themselves needed to establish better governance for FDI and work to enter into global value chains. They might also consider providing equity assistance and political risk insurance at the local level. Support should be provided for the negotiation of contracts with foreign investors, and the initiative announced at the June 2014 summit of the Group of Seven in that regard was encouraging. The Secretary-General's report proposed the establishment of an international investment support centre dedicated to the least developed countries that could provide such support, as well as a common information depository, advisory support for dispute resolution, and facilitation of risk insurance in collaboration with the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency.

19. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the 10-year review of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action (A/69/170), he said that landlockedness held back participation in international

trade, which in turn limited a country's prospects for sustainable development. Since the adoption of the Almaty Programme of Action, landlocked developing countries had registered faster economic growth, but progress had been volatile and uneven. During the reporting period, such countries continued to suffer from lack of export diversification, limited productive capacity and high transport costs. Despite improvements in some social indicators, poverty levels remained high and decent work continued to be lacking. Half of landlocked least developed countries remained stuck in the lowest bracket of the human development index.

20. Progress had been made on transit facilitation at the borders of landlocked developing countries. In Asia, in addition to the intergovernmental agreements on an Asian highway network and a trans-Asian railway network that had been reached in 2005 and 2009 respectively, an agreement on dry ports been opened for signature in Bangkok in November 2013. There had also been progress on a trans-African highway network. However, despite the existence of some 50 international instruments on transport and trade facilitation, accession and implementation had been limited. Road infrastructure remained lacking in landlocked developing countries, and railway infrastructure even more so. Although air transport had increased, its cost was prohibitively high. Despite progress, landlocked developing countries also lagged behind in Internet connectivity, cellular phone service and energy infrastructure. While aggregate exports had risen, most of the increase was concentrated in a few countries and was heavily reliant on primary commodities. Trade costs for landlocked developing countries were double those of transit developing countries.

21. Priority 4 of the Almaty Programme of Action had recognized that primary responsibility for implementing the Programme should rest with landlocked and transit developing countries, but it had also acknowledged that cost implications required strong support from development partners. Although development finance flows to landlocked developing countries had increased during the reporting period, there was a troubling decline in the ODA anticipated for 2014. In addition to the emphasis placed by the Almaty Programme on infrastructure and transit, attention needed to be paid to value addition, diversification, industrialization, job creation and

resilience-building. The second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries, scheduled to be held in Vienna in November 2014, would be a once-in-a-decade opportunity to reinvigorate global partnerships aimed at assisting landlocked developing countries in overcoming their unique constraints.

22. **Ms. Luna Tudela** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the ongoing global financial and economic crisis was threatening to undermine the modest gains that had been achieved in least developed countries. Full implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action was necessary to achieve the goal of graduating half of the least developed countries by 2020. A midterm review would be vital to assess implementation of commitments made under that Programme.

23. The Group welcomed the upcoming Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries. Such countries remained vulnerable to external shocks connected with the economic crisis and climate change. The international community needed to enhance development assistance to landlocked developing countries and help to develop priorities for a new comprehensive action-oriented framework for the next decade. Preparations for the 10-year review conference on the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action would be an important opportunity for landlocked developing countries, transit developing countries and their partners to broaden the Almaty Programme. The Group urged development partners to fulfil their commitments to provide adequate, reliable and predictable financial and technical assistance to help landlocked developing countries overcome the challenges posed by their geographical situations.

24. **Mr. Régis** (Haiti), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that CARICOM welcomed the progress made in implementing the Istanbul Programme of Action in 2013. However, gains remained fragile and uneven, with growth rates unacceptably low and poverty rates unacceptably high. That made the decline in ODA and Aid for Trade funding in the wake of the global economic crisis all the more disturbing. Additional challenges were being posed by various armed conflicts and, more recently, the Ebola epidemic. Quick, robust and concerted global action was

necessary if least developed countries were to achieve the Istanbul targets by 2020.

25. Expansion of mobile telephone and Internet services was a promising development, but less than a third of the population in least developed countries had access to electricity. CARICOM urged development of long-term energy programmes and supported the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a technology bank. Agriculture accounted for just under a quarter of the gross domestic product (GDP) of the least developed countries, and improved agricultural practices could contribute greatly to poverty reduction. With the least developed countries accounting for barely more than 1 per cent of global trade, CARICOM regretted the slowness with which the developed countries were opening their markets. It urged all parties involved to implement duty-free access in accordance with the Doha Development Agenda.

26. Human and social indicators were not improving at an adequate pace, and urgent action was necessary to protect vulnerable groups. CARICOM reiterated its support for synergies between implementation of the Istanbul Programme and efforts to achieve the MDGs. With regard to health and sanitation, CARICOM wished to commend the Secretary-General for accepting the moral responsibility of the United Nations and the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti to help combat the cholera epidemic in Haiti.

27. Like other least developed countries, Haiti hoped to graduate within a realistic time frame and was working to create a business climate attractive to FDI, which had been shown to be a driver for decent jobs, productive capacity and technology transfer. CARICOM welcomed the increase in FDI during the 2011-2013 period. It was particularly pleased to see FDI flowing to least developed countries from emerging countries, which demonstrated the vitality of South-South cooperation. Although FDI had accounted for over one quarter of the GDP of least developed countries in 2013, that statistic needed to be considered in the light of the decline in FDI as a percentage of fixed capital formation. CARICOM fully supported proposals to maximize the benefits of FDI by providing contract negotiation support and risk insurance in collaboration with the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

28. **Ms. Coto-Ramírez** (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that in the lead-up to the second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries it would be important to build on the vision of the Almaty Programme of Action and to incorporate the lessons learned in a new, time-bound programme of action. The new programme should differentiate between the responsibilities of development partners and transit developing countries and should address the economic, social and environmental issues that were most critical for the landlocked developing countries. Specific challenges for those States included broader access to and from coastlines, infrastructure development and maintenance, trade facilitation, structural economic transformation, and capacity-building for adaptation, mitigation and resilience in the face of climate change.

29. In view of those and other challenges, CELAC called on the international community to provide an enhanced level of financial and technical support to the landlocked developing countries. Continued ODA should remain a central component of support. It should be accompanied, however, by South-South cooperation as a complement to North-South cooperation, as envisioned in the Nairobi outcome document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation.

30. **Ms. Kasese-Bota** (Zambia), speaking on behalf of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, welcomed the report submitted ahead of the forthcoming 10-year review of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, to be held in Vienna in early November. The Group believed that there had been progress in a number of areas — the coordination and implementation of transport and transit policies, laws and practices; the construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of road and rail infrastructure; the streamlining of border facilities; higher rates of economic growth; increased trade; and increased international recognition of the special needs of landlocked developing countries — and that that had led to the doubling of ODA during the review period.

31. Many challenges remained, however, placing significant constraints on economic growth and impeding the efforts of the landlocked developing countries to attain their development goals, including the eradication of poverty. Given their persistent vulnerability to external shocks, their dependency on a

few primary commodities for export and the negative impact of climate change on climate-sensitive sectors, the landlocked developing countries had seen their share of global trade increase only minimally in the past decade. They wanted the new programme of action to include market-friendly rules that would reduce the widening gap in international trade between landlocked developing countries and other groups, including transit developing countries.

32. Both trade competitiveness and capacity-building, along with measures to ensure structural transformation, value addition and diversification, should be addressed in the implementation programme for the next decade. That programme should take into account the Agreement on Trade Facilitation that had been adopted at the Ninth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization in Bali, which had clarified and improved articles VI, VIII and X of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade concerning the movement, release and clearance of goods.

33. The landlocked developing countries expected that the outcome document of the Vienna conference would also provide for such key priorities as the need for cooperation on fundamental transit policies between landlocked developing countries and their transit neighbours; construction and improvement of internal and transit infrastructure; development and maintenance of information and communications technology and energy infrastructure; diversification of exports; implementation of measures aimed at improving productivity, including through industrialization; deepening of regional integration; and building the resilience of landlocked developing countries in the face of emerging challenges.

34. Finally, the Group urged its development partners to scale up support for the landlocked developing countries in recognition of their special needs.

35. **Mr. Tin** (Myanmar), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that the Association had long supported the use of global mandates to support countries in special situations, which faced daunting development challenges due to their innate structural constraints and vulnerabilities. The ASEAN countries included least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States and were thus well aware of the core issues critical to sustainable

development, which required financing from both traditional and innovative sources.

36. The third International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Addis Ababa in July 2015, would be a major stepping stone on the way to next September's summit to formulate the post-2015 development agenda. Ahead of that important gathering, it would be important to assess prior initiatives. ODA remained fundamental for all countries in special situations, and the Association urged its development partners to exert greater efforts to deliver on their pledges. However, such financing was only one part of the story, and there were still significant gaps with respect to the implementation of other important programmes.

37. Little progress had been made in promoting critically needed capacity-building under the Istanbul Programme of Action. The ASEAN nations therefore welcomed the successful conclusion of the ministerial conference on new partnerships for productive capacity-building in least developed countries that had been held in Cotonou, Benin, earlier in the year, and hoped that its outcome document, the Cotonou Agenda, would lead to new partnerships for productive capacity-building.

38. Progress on implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action had also been uneven, although all the landlocked developing countries had registered faster economic growth and increased trade over the past decade. ASEAN therefore looked forward to the forthcoming second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries in Vienna. The Association hoped that the Vienna conference would build on and reinforce the provisions of the Bali package, adopted at the ninth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization, in December 2013, to benefit both least developed countries and landlocked developing countries. In the same vein, ASEAN commended the success of the recent third International Conference on Small Island Developing States and supported the Samoa Pathway, which reaffirmed the special status of small island developing States.

39. ASEAN called for the renewed dedication of all stakeholders in North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation to further the development goals of the countries in special situations. It supported the establishment of a high-level panel of experts to define

the functions, structure and funding of the proposed technology bank for least developed countries, which it hoped would help transform the economies of those countries through technological leapfrogging.

40. As all three least developed members of ASEAN moved towards graduation from that category by 2020, the Association itself was moving toward greater regional integration. With the goal of promoting more equitable economic growth and reducing the economic disparity among its members, as well as enhancing its competitiveness as a region, the Association would transform itself in 2015 into the ASEAN Economic Community. ASEAN would welcome the continued support of its dialogue partners, the United Nations and other external partners as it moved towards full regional integration and sustainable development.

41. **Mr. Msosa** (Malawi), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that Africa was home to 34 least developed countries, 16 landlocked developing countries, 6 small island developing States and several conflict and post-conflict countries. Recalling the many international initiatives aimed at addressing the particular challenges of countries in special situations, the African Group urged the Committee to consider all those categories under agenda item 22 at future sessions.

42. While Africa had made significant strides towards its continent-wide objectives for greater regional cooperation and integration and had registered impressive results with respect to many of the MDGs, including achievements in education and gender equity, progress was still uneven. Despite rising enrolment rates in primary schools, the quality of education remained an issue. And despite progress in immunization and in stemming the spread of HIV/AIDS, progress on other health-related goals such as child and maternal mortality and access to sanitation had not been sufficient to meet the 2015 targets. Persistent inequities in access to basic social services accounted in large part for the continent's slow progress in attaining the health MDGs.

43. For Africa, it was vital going forward to focus on areas that could have a catalytic effect on overall development and address the unfinished business of the MDGs. Poverty eradication was the single greatest global challenge and would be an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. Africa was determined to end poverty in all its forms and achieve

an integrated, prosperous, stable and peaceful continent in line with the African Union's Agenda 2063. Moreover, the African Group was determined to eradicate hunger and achieve food security and nutrition through the promotion of sustainable agriculture. It was unacceptable that 227 million Africans were starving when the continent had the potential to feed not only itself but the whole world. Africa spent some \$35 billion each year on food imports — resources that could be spent to implement development programmes. In that context, at the culmination of the Africa Year of Agriculture 2014 in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, in June, the Heads of State and Government of the African Union, marking the reactivation of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, had adopted the Malabo Declaration on Accelerating Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods.

44. The African countries had repeatedly affirmed their commitment to industrialization as a powerful tool with the potential to generate economic growth, create productive employment and lift millions of people out of poverty. Through wealth creation and taxation, industrialization would strengthen the mobilization of domestic resources, which would help achieve other development goals. However, the African Group believed that expanded access to global markets was also crucial, inasmuch as Africa accounted for only three per cent of global trade. The post-2015 development agenda should incorporate measures to reduce trade distortions, including agricultural subsidies, in order to improve market access for African products, strengthen trade-related capacity-building, including export diversification, and develop intraregional trade.

45. In a similar vein, the African Group called on the international community to intensify its efforts to implement the commitments made under the Istanbul and Almaty Programmes of Action, as well as to fulfil outstanding pledges of ODA, which remained the largest source of external funding for the least developed countries. Reminding the developed countries of the Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration and the Ninth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization held in 2013 in Bali, the Group also welcomed the Cotonou Agenda adopted in July at the meeting on partnerships for productive capacity-building in least developed countries, which

highlighted the crucial capacity-building role played by North-South and South-South partnerships in trade, investment and technology transfer, *inter alia*. The Group also welcomed the adoption of the Samoa Pathway, which reaffirmed the special status of small island developing States and embraced both traditional and emerging forms of partnerships. The Group called for the full implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy and emphasized the need to accord due consideration to the challenges and priorities of small developing States in crafting the post-2015 development agenda.

46. Finally, it was crucial to add to Africa's continent-wide development issues the fact that more than 200 million Africans lived in countries affected by conflict or emerging from it. Such States faced unique a set of challenges that required special assistance in order to make a smooth transition from relief to sustainable development. Africa was determined to address the root causes of conflict and to strengthen its local, national, subregional and regional mechanisms in order to achieve an integrated, prosperous and peaceful continent that would be driven by its own citizens and that would represent a dynamic force in the global arena.

47. **Mr. Zinsou** (Benin), speaking on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries, said that, despite some progress, growth in the least developed countries had not yet rebounded to its pre-crisis level and that the Group overall had not yet been able to meaningfully enter global value chains. With progress in the reduction of poverty, malnutrition and maternal and infant mortality at a relative standstill, the least developed countries remained highly vulnerable to shocks, most recently to the massive assault of the Ebola virus, which had pushed health systems and infrastructure in West Africa to the verge of collapse. The Istanbul Action Plan had committed development partners to supporting crisis mitigation and resilience facilities, but it was now urgent to create a fund earmarked for that purpose. There should also be a strong inter-agency coordination mechanism to address public health emergencies in the least developed countries.

48. Earlier in the year, in partnership with the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Benin had hosted the Ministerial Meeting on New Partnerships for Productive Capacity, a broad first-time gathering that had brought together

representatives of least developed countries, the United Nations system, the World Bank Group and both the private and public sectors to focus on implementation of the Istanbul Plan. The Cotonou Agenda stressed the need for technology innovation and technology transfer as the least developed countries moved towards self-sufficiency. Both a dedicated General Assembly agenda item on capacity-building and the establishment of a proposed technology bank, which Turkey had agreed to host, would be important steps in that direction.

49. In order to double their share of global exports by 2020, the least developed countries would need to reduce their commodity dependence and diversify their export base. That ambitious goal could be achieved, *inter alia*, by implementing permanent duty-free and quota-free market access, eliminating arbitrary non-tariff barriers, and enhancing Aid for Trade resources by setting a minimum percentage target, along with policies and strategies to enhance productivity and vertical diversification as well as to ensure value addition and increase value retention.

50. Moreover, development partners should increase to more than 50 per cent the share of their ODA that was allocated to least developed countries, as agreed under the Istanbul Plan. In addition to providing outright debt relief, they should also immediately increase their grant-based and concessional financing to ensure debt sustainability. Special support measures were essential for least developed countries to access the non-concessional financial market, from which they were virtually excluded. As part of a strategic overall investment promotion regime, further robust measures and mechanisms were also urgent, including insurance, guarantees and preferential financing programmes. The Group therefore supported the Secretary-General's recommendation to establish an international investment support centre for the least developed countries and urged the General Assembly to take action in that regard at its current session. The Group further urged the Assembly to authorize the mid-term review of the Istanbul Plan in 2016, thereby allowing for its new outcome to fully integrate the goals of the post-2015 development agenda.

51. **Mr. Beviglia Zampetti** (Observer for the European Union (EU)), also speaking on behalf of the candidate countries Montenegro, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of

Moldova and Ukraine, reiterated the European Union's continued commitment to implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action and to promoting its acceleration through bilateral and trilateral cooperation. The EU looked forward to the midterm review of the Istanbul Programme in 2016. The least developed countries would continue to benefit from duty-free and quota-free access to the EU market for all products except arms under the reformed Generalized Scheme of Preferences, which had entered into force on 1 January 2014. Moreover, the EU was also committed to supporting the least developed countries with their graduation strategies and urged other partners to do likewise.

52. The EU looked forward to the ten-year review conference of the Almaty Programme of Action, to be held in Vienna from 3 to 5 November, which should focus on bottlenecks of specific concern to landlocked developing countries, including transit, transport and commercial transaction costs, as well as trade facilitation and regional integration. It was important to stress the particular situation of the most vulnerable countries and the need to collectively ensure that their concerns, as reflected in both the Istanbul and the Almaty agendas, were properly accounted for in the work of the Committee ahead of the September 2015 development summit.

53. **Mr. Zelner** (Brazil) said that many bilateral and regional initiatives could facilitate implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action without directly focusing on trade. As part of South-South cooperation, his country was engaged in a number of initiatives with developing countries, in particular with least developed countries, that aimed to improve both regional integration and the world economy as a whole.

54. The Brazilian Cooperation Agency, in collaboration with the Brazilian Agricultural Research Institute, was working to develop the cotton industry in the "cotton-4" countries — Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad and Benin — and Togo, by helping to increase productivity and yields with a view to promoting economic development and food security in West Africa. Now in its second phase after the establishment of a model farm in Mali that had been jointly staffed by Brazilian and African biologists, the "cotton-4" project focused on capacity-building and technology transfer along the cotton value chain. Much of the work had been financed with funds Brazil had received from the United States in payment for a bilateral trade

dispute in the World Trade Organization relating to subsidies to United States cotton farmers.

55. Along similar lines, Brazil was building a generic medicine plant in Mozambique that not only produced drugs to fight HIV/AIDS, hypertension, anaemia and diabetes but was part of a larger project that included technology transfer and capacity-building, with the goal developing a public sector generics industry in Mozambique.

56. As an important transit country for landlocked Paraguay, Brazil took part in a series of South American integration projects that had been funded under the umbrella of the Union of South American Nations. Designed to establish road links between Paraguay and Bolivia and ports in Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, as well as to create power links from the Itaipú Dam, on the Brazilian-Paraguayan border, to Asunción and the Yaciretá Dam, in Paraguay, the projects had received more than \$400 million from the Structural Convergence Fund of the South American Common Market. Brazil was also studying a Paraguayan project to build pipelines linking Asunción and the Brazilian port of Paranaguá, which would reduce Paraguay's costs for fuel imports and provide that country with a channel to export part of its biofuels production.

57. In the context of long-term sustainable development, Brazil believed that projects involving infrastructure integration should receive special and differentiated treatment from international development banks and financial institutions.

58. **Ms. Gopalakrishnan** (Malaysia), echoing other speakers, welcomed the recent ministerial conference on new partnerships for least developed countries held in Cotonou, Benin, the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, held in September in Samoa, and the second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries, to be held shortly in Vienna. The outcome documents of all three conferences would contribute to the successful implementation of the Istanbul and Almaty Programmes of Action.

59. Malaysia had long been committed to providing development assistance, in particular through programmes that emphasized the role of national ownership and leadership in formulating priorities for project design. Through its Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme, more than 20,000 participants

from 141 developing countries, including least developed countries and small island developing States, had received technical capacity-building since 1981. At the recent conference in Samoa, Malaysia had pledged \$1 million through its Technical Cooperation Programme to support courses and training programmes in the fields of public administration and management, tourism, the environment and other areas. It would continue to share its development experience with the least developed countries, particularly in the fields of poverty eradication and capacity-building, at the regional and international levels.

60. **Ms. Derderian** (United States of America) said that the Committee's attention to the needs and achievements of the poorest and least developed countries should not be limited to the agenda item under consideration. The Committee should focus on the particular needs of countries in special situations throughout all its discussions concerning the overarching issues of economic growth, eradication of extreme poverty and sustainable development.

61. Supporting those most in need remained a United States development priority. In 2013, the United States had provided an estimated \$8.4 billion in ODA to least developed countries. However, it was important to move the discussion beyond ODA levels and conventional economic development assistance programmes. It was crucial to recognize the effects of conflict in trapping the poorest countries at low stages of development. By 2015, over 50 per cent of the total population living in extreme poverty would be located in areas affected by conflict and chronic violence. That trend was expected to intensify, with over 80 per cent of the persistently poor living under such conditions by 2025. Violence and conflict, in addition to causing physical damage and taking a toll on human and social capital, also created uncertainty about the future and undermined the confidence that was necessary for economic activity and social support.

62. Conflict and post-conflict situations notwithstanding, major developmental progress in the least developed countries called for continued commitment to transparent and accountable government and to the promotion of truly inclusive, equitable growth that allowed for all members of society, including women, youth and disadvantaged groups, to contribute to development and share its benefits. The creation of stable, predictable and enabling investment environments was also critical.

Least developed countries that had emphasized accountability and transparency to attract greater foreign investment had also enjoyed greater success in unlocking domestic financing. The United States was deeply committed to assisting least developed countries in their effort to encourage increased FDI through bilateral assistance that included preferential financing programmes, export credits, risk management tools, co-financing, and private capital. Her country also welcomed discussions about potential mechanisms to help improve the scientific research and innovation base of least developed countries, as well as to encourage global networking among researchers and research institutions.

63. The United States applauded the leadership and constructive voices of the Group of Least Developed Countries over the past year and their advocacy of an ambitious, universal post-2015 development agenda. It looked forward to working with those countries and all other partners to ensure the success of the mid-term review of the Istanbul Programme of Action in 2016. Her country also welcomed the forthcoming graduation of Angola and Kiribati from least developed status, and it commended the other countries that had announced plans for graduation in the coming years. Echoing other speakers, she stressed the importance of ensuring a smooth transition to make sure that graduation did not result in an abrupt or disruptive change to a country's economy. In that regard, advance planning, including between donors and recipients, would play a crucial role. The United Nations, in particular the Office of the High Representative, could assist least developed countries with strategic graduation planning and provide needed support.

64. While landlocked developing countries continued to face very real challenges, the United States believed that the forthcoming second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries was taking place at an opportune time, and that it would provide an important update to the Almaty Programme of Action, whose focus should be preserved. While landlocked developing countries had achieved an average annual growth rate of 6 per cent and a roughly seven-fold increase in the nominal value of trade, the outcome document currently under discussion should target practical results that would stimulate productive capacity, diversify exports and strengthen resilience to external and internal shocks.

65. **Mr. Bhattarai** (Nepal) said that his country was a landlocked least developed mountainous country that was emerging from conflict; moreover, it lay in a region highly prone to earthquakes and other natural disasters and was severely challenged by climate change. Each of those separate situations and all of them collectively entailed prohibitive costs and made for an alarmingly vulnerable economy. Despite the challenges, his country was struggling to build its productive capacity, develop its human and natural resources and mitigate its structural vulnerability, with the aim of graduating from least developed status by 2022. Nepal therefore attached vital importance to the agenda item under discussion.

66. While recognizing that countries bore primary responsibility for their own development, Nepal was aware that it depended on the international community to assist in mitigating its plight. However, multiple pledges and programmes, including the Istanbul and Almaty Programmes of Action, had accomplished little due to lack of implementation. Without reliability, predictability and sustainability, implementation had been incoherent, leaving vulnerable countries, including Nepal, with more reason to worry than rejoice. The optimism that had accompanied the drafting of the MDGs 16 years earlier had faded. With one year left to go, the majority of least developed countries, including many landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, would remain off-track, because their deep-rooted structural constraints and specific vulnerabilities had yet to be sufficiently addressed. Almost half the population of least developed countries continued to live in extreme poverty, and the hard-won fruits of development remained elusive because of declining FDI, slow service growth and a huge shortfall in ODA, all of which had been compounded by the negative and disproportionate impact of climate change.

67. That trend could still be remedied, however, in the case of the least developed countries, through the full, swift and effective implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action. Nepal urged international development partners not only to fulfil their ODA pledges but to scale up their aid commitments to between 0.15 and 0.20 per cent of gross national product and to align their allocations with the priorities of least developed countries, with a particular focus on building productive capacity. The proposed technology bank would also support the Istanbul Programme goal

of graduating half the least developed countries by 2020. In that regard, Nepal would be hosting an Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference of least developed countries in Kathmandu from 16 to 18 December, in close collaboration with the Office of the High Representative.

68. Landlocked developing countries, due to their remoteness and lack of access to the sea, faced additional burdens that made development 20 per cent costlier for them than for their transit neighbours and doubled the price of their exports. It was time to convert the challenges of landlockedness into the solutions of “land-linkedness”, which would require new partnerships between the landlocked countries, their transit neighbours and development partners. Nepal hoped that such possibilities would be strategically addressed in the early November review of the Almaty Programme of Action in Vienna, whose outcome document should be integrated into the emerging global development framework.

69. It was vital to ensure that the new sustainable development goals and the instruments designed to support them, including financing for sustainable development, a facilitation mechanism for a technology transfer framework and the new climate change agreement, took full account of the special needs of the most vulnerable countries. Failure to do so would prevent the world community from achieving its goal of eradicating extreme poverty by 2030. Moreover, any development agenda that did not fully include the neediest segments of the world would remain incomplete and might even forfeit legitimacy.

70. **Mr. Sareer** (Maldives), echoing earlier speakers, said that the Maldives, an archipelago of 1,190 small islands, understood all too well the challenges facing least developed countries. His country was proud to have graduated from least developed status in 2011, but it now faced the risk of backsliding on some of its key social development indicators. In the absence of a transition support net from the international community, a host of post-graduation issues had emerged: ODA had completely dried up, major markets had erected tariff and non-tariff barriers to Maldivian products, and the country no longer had access to concessional financing from international financial institutions. His country’s experience should prompt the international community to rethink its strategy for the next graduates. In that regard, it would be important to bear in mind that the indicators currently

used for that process, such as GDP, did not provide a holistic view of the advancement of a given society.

71. As a small island State, the Maldives shared some of the challenges common to other developing countries, such as overdependence on a single economic sector and overreliance on imports for both goods and services, which hindered economies of scale. However, it also faced specific vulnerabilities because of its remoteness, its territorial dispersion and the fact that 80 per cent of its surface lay only a metre above sea level. Climate change and its associated sea-level rise, the bleaching of coral reefs, coastal erosion and the increasing number of natural disasters all presented a growing threat to the country's survival and would require new strategies to build resilience.

72. Special situations called for special solutions. The recent third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, held in Samoa, had drawn the world's attention to the particular vulnerabilities of such States; its outcome document, the Samoa Pathway, had charted a new vision for their sustainable development. In furtherance of that recognition, and as the year of small island developing States drew to a close, the Maldives urged the United Nations to introduce a category similar to one already in place at the World Trade Organization, namely that of small and vulnerable economies. Such a category, which might or might not overlap with that of the least developed countries, would acknowledge the inherent vulnerabilities associated with small economies and would provide special trade benefits to countries such as the Maldives.

73. The international community was showing increasing awareness of the inherent vulnerabilities of small island States and the measures needed to help them reach sustainable development. The Maldives hoped that the international community would remain committed to that goal.

74. **Ms. Elhassan** (Sudan) said that countries with special needs would require international assistance if they were to achieve the proposed sustainable development goals. New partnerships were needed to realize the ambitious goals of the Istanbul Programme of Action. The United Nations, and in particular the United Nations Development Programme, should continue to assist the least developed countries with capacity-building and market access. Developed countries should honour their commitments on

development assistance, debt cancellation and technology transfer.

75. Famine was a serious problem for countries that lacked the capacity to invest in agriculture and were dependent on food imports. Drought and desertification linked to climate change were a major challenge, and in that regard she expressed support for the proposals emerging from the September 2014 Climate Summit on promoting a green economy and reducing carbon emissions.

76. Her country had suffered heavily from internal conflict and burdensome debts. It had lost a third of its territory and three quarters of its oil resources in the wake of the recent peace process. She called on the international community to lift the unilateral economic sanctions that were having a severe negative impact on development efforts in her country.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.