



# General Assembly

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**Sixty-third session  
Second Committee**

Agenda item 52 (a)

**Groups of countries in special situation: Third United Nations  
Conference on the Least Developed Countries**

**Letter dated 17 November 2008 from the Permanent Representative of  
Bangladesh to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

I have the honour to transmit herewith a declaration that was adopted by the Ministerial Meeting of the Least Developed Countries, held at United Nations Headquarters on 29 October 2008 (see annex).

I would like to request that the present letter and its annex be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 52 (a).

*(Signed)* Ismat **Jahan**  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative



**Annex to the letter dated 17 November 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

**Ministerial Declaration of the Least Developed Countries  
New York, 29 September 2008**

*We, the Ministers of the Least Developed Countries, having met in New York, on 29 September 2008, during the general debate of the 63<sup>rd</sup> session of the United Nations General Assembly, held from 23 September to 1 October 2008,*

*Recalling* the Declaration and Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010,

*Recalling also* the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals,

*Recalling further* the 2005 World Summit Outcome, in which world leaders committed to address the special needs of the Least Developed Countries,

*Reaffirming* the Cotonou Strategy and the Cotonou Ministerial Declaration adopted at the Least Developed Countries Ministerial Conference held in Cotonou, Benin, from 5 to 8 June 2006 in preparation of the comprehensive global midterm review of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010.

*Reaffirming also* the Declaration adopted by the Heads of States, Governments and Heads of delegations on 20 September 2006, at the High-level meeting of the General Assembly on the Midterm Comprehensive Global Review of the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action,

*Reaffirming further* the Istanbul Declaration on Least Developed Countries: Time for Action, adopted at the Ministerial Conference of the Least Developed Countries held in Istanbul on 9 and 10 July 2007 on the theme “Making globalization work for the least developed countries”,

*Adopt* the following Declaration:

1. We stress that the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 constitutes a fundamental framework for a strong global partnership aimed at accelerating sustained economic growth, sustainable development and poverty eradication in the least developed countries.
2. We reaffirm our commitment to continue strengthening country ownership and leadership in the implementation of the Programme of Action by, inter alia, translating its goals and targets into specific measures within our national development frameworks and poverty eradication strategies, recognizing that, since its adoption, most Least Developed Countries have made considerable progress, inter alia, in the promotion of democracy, human rights, the rule of law, transparency, accountability, and other

legal and institutional mechanisms as well as in strengthening human and institutional capacities and macroeconomic reforms.

3. We also reaffirm that, for the further implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action, the LDCs and their development partners must be guided by an integral approach, a broader genuine partnership, country ownership, market considerations and result-oriented actions.

4. We reiterate that sustained economic growth, sustainable development, poverty eradication and full integration of the Least Developed Countries into the global economy are contingent, inter alia, upon the realization of commitments by the development partners including through fulfillment of Official Development Assistance targets, all outstanding debt cancellation, increased investment flows and unhindered market access and transfer of technology to Least Developed Countries.

5. While noting with optimism the recent progress in the overall economic performance of our countries as a group, largely driven by improved world commodity prices, growth in traditional and non-traditional exports, improved domestic policies and increased international support, we express our concern that this progress has not been accompanied by structural transformation in our economies, implying a high degree of vulnerability to shocks and crises.

6. We express our serious concerns on the slowdown in global economic growth and the volatility of the global capital market as well as the global food crisis, high and volatile energy prices and the impacts of climate change, land degradation and desertification that have adverse effects on our people and further compound the structural weaknesses of our countries, undermining their ability to sustain development efforts and jeopardizing the advances made so far to achieve the goals of the Brussels Programme of Action by 2010 and Almaty Programme of Action.

7. We recognize the specific geographical constraints and problems faced by the landlocked least developed countries (LLDCs) which continue to suffer from high transit transport cost, associated with poor transit facilities, transit policies and additional border crossings. In this regard, we call for greater attention to be given by the international community to help these countries address their special development needs as called for in the Brussels Programme of Action.

8. We recognize that the impacts of climate change severely hampers the lives and livelihoods of millions of poor living in the least developed countries, especially in the small islands and low-lying coastal States of them. We welcome the adoption of the Bali Plan of Action for a long-term cooperative framework to address mitigation, adaptation, finance and technology transfers. In this regard, we urge the developed countries to commit to deeper cuts in emission of greenhouse gases. We also urge developed countries to increase financial and technological support for adaptation to climate change and facilitate transfer of eco-friendly technologies for sustainable development of our countries.

9. We are concerned about the adverse impact of the current high and volatile energy prices, particularly on the economies of non-oil-exporting and net-food-importing LDCs, as reflected in high import bills, inter alia for their food imports, that impose major burdens on many of our countries. We

call on major oil-exporting and oil-importing countries to make concerted efforts to stabilize the energy market.

10. We are particularly concerned by soaring food prices, against the backdrop of global financial crisis and economic slowdown, which have negative and deep socio-economic consequences in our countries. In this regard, we take note of the adoption of the Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA) by the High Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis set up by the United Nations Secretary-General to address the crisis and its root causes. We urge our development partners to provide additional aid to our countries in order to enhance domestic agricultural production and build infrastructure, including distribution and storage systems, and to remove policy distortions such as subsidies that discourage food production and barriers to trade. We propose the establishment of International Food Fund to deal with the systemic threats to food security, under the auspices of the United Nations and its relevant agencies.

11. We attach high priority to the Financing for Development process and welcome the upcoming Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, to be held in Doha from 29 November to 2 December 2008. We reiterate that the Review Conference should assess progress made, reaffirm goals and commitments, share best practices and lessons learned and identify obstacles and constraints encountered, actions and initiatives to overcome them and important measures for further implementation, as well as new challenges and emerging issues. We stress that the Review Conference should fully reflect the special needs and concerns of the LDCs in the outcome document.

12. We strongly urge the development partners to fulfil their commitments, particularly made for Least Developed Countries in the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields so as to allow Least Developed Countries to achieve socio-economic development and beneficially integrate into the global economy.

13. We welcome the recent increase, in absolute terms, in net flows of official development assistance to our countries. We express our appreciation to donors who have already met or surpassed the special official development assistance target of 0.20 per cent of their Gross National Income (GNI) to least developed countries, and we urge those who have not done so, to fully and expeditiously meet their commitment before 2010.

14. We welcome also the debt relief granted under the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI) and the Enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC), which has released some resources. However, we regret that not all LDCs are eligible for HIPC and MDRI. We call on our development partners to cancel all LDC external debts both multilateral and bilateral, public and private owed by least developed countries forthwith, without discrimination or conditionalities.

15. We remain deeply concerned at the lack of progress on the WTO trade negotiations, which is a serious setback for the Doha Round. We underscore that development must remain at the heart of the Doha Round of trade negotiations, and we urge the international community to take on board the special interests and difficulties of Least Developed Countries, as the most vulnerable group in the

United Nations community, in order to effectively integrate our countries in the multilateral trading system.

16. We call upon developed countries that have not already done so, and developing countries in a position to do so, to provide immediate, predictable, duty-free and quota-free market access on a lasting basis to all products originating from all Least Developed Countries with simplified and transparent rules of origin so as to facilitate exports from the LDCs.

17. We remain concerned about the serious distortions in production and trade in agricultural products caused by the export subsidies, trade-distorting domestic support and protectionism by many developed countries, and we urge developed countries to eliminate all trade distorting barriers including tariff peaks and tariff escalation, high subsidies and other non-tariff barriers.

18. We call upon development partners to respond to trade-capacity needs of the Least Developed Countries by significantly increasing their contributions to the trust fund of the Enhanced Integrated Framework for Trade-related Technical Assistance for the Least Developed Countries.

19. We underscore the urgent need to operationalize the aid for trade initiative with sufficient additional, non conditional and predictable funding, which should primarily support Least Developed Countries to address their supply constraints, diversify, promote value addition and improve their infrastructural, human and institutional capacities.

20. We call upon the WTO members to facilitate the accession of all LDCs that apply for membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO), without political impediments, in an expeditious and transparent manner and with effective and faithful application of the World Trade Organization guidelines on accession by the least developed countries.

21. We welcome the graduation of a number of countries from LDCs. We recognize that graduation brings with it numerous significant challenges and opportunities. We therefore urge all development and trading partners to support the implementation of the transition strategy of countries graduating from the list of least developed countries, to avoid any abrupt reductions in either official development assistance or technical assistance provided to the graduated country and to consider extending to the graduated country trade preferences previously made available as a result of least developed country status for a period appropriate to the development situation. This would ensure their smooth transition and promote their further integration into the world economy.

22. We remain concerned that, two years after the Midterm Comprehensive Global Review of the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action, the progress achieved in the implementation of the Programme is still insufficient and uneven. Economic growth in least developed countries has not translated effectively into poverty eradication and improved human well-being of our people. If current poverty trends continue, many of our countries are unlikely to achieve the goals and objectives set out in the Programme of Action and will not be able to meet the MDGs and other internationally agreed development goals.

23. We welcome the convening of the Fourth UN Conference for LDCs towards the end of the decade, in accordance with paragraph 114 of the Brussels Programme of Action. We stress that the Fourth UN Conference on LDCs will represent an important opportunity for our countries and our development partners to critically review past performance, especially in areas of failures and weak implementation, and develop a new common action-oriented strategic framework for the next decade for effectively assisting our countries in their development efforts in a growingly complex and changing world.

24. We take note of the organizational modalities of the Fourth UN Conference proposed in the note of the Secretary-General contained in document A/63/284.

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