



## **LDC WATCH STATEMENT TO THE AFRICAN REVIEW MEETING LILONGWE, MALAWI (IN VIRTUAL FORM)**

**FEBRUARY 22, 2021**

### **Excellencies, distinguished guests and colleagues**

On behalf of LDC Watch membership, I express my sincere gratitude to the Government of Malawi and the UN-OHRLLS for inviting our network to take part in this regional meeting. This invitation illustrates the trust built between the UN system and LDC Watch since its launch in 2001 in Brussels, with the presence of the late Kofi Anan.

Since then, it has articulated the views of LDCs' CSOs at all major UN meetings. That was the case in 2011 in Istanbul, where LDC Watch mobilized more than 300 civil society representatives and held a successful Forum, in the presence of Mister Ban Ki-Moon, then UN General Secretary.

### **On the implementation of the IPoA**

One of the key objectives of the Istanbul Program of Action

. Obviously, this goal has not been achieved. In 2011, there were 49 LDCs, 34 in Africa. Today, there are 46 LDCs, 33 in Africa. Only 3 LDCs did graduate since 2011, with just one from Africa

This raises questions about the graduation process. The fixation on graduation surely misses the real issues that need to be addressed. LDCs still face tremendous challenges and vulnerabilities which persist despite the commitments made in successive Programs of Action, and because of the abject failure to meaningfully address the structural barriers that prevent real progress. In making graduation the primary goal, the criteria used to assess a country's performance will tend to be designed to make it happen irrespective of the reality. We have serious concerns about the criteria and the quality of the data being used. Taking GDP based on market processes is a false reflection of the reality of most LDCs. The indicators for measuring economic and social progress have to be reviewed to enable them to capture meaningful improvement in LDCs and non-LDCs alike, using Sustainable Development Goals indicators.

The Triennial Review of the Committee for Development Policy (CDP) takes place this week to consider proposals on the graduation of countries from the LDC category. The absence of 2020 data and hence, COVID-19 impact on the three key criteria that determine graduation may result in



Moreover, we strongly support the LDC Group's request for an extension of the WTO TRIPS LDC general transition period, for as long as a country remains an LDC as well as for an additional 12 year-period after its graduation from the LDC status in order to ensure a smooth transition. The request is fully justified since short, limited extensions granted to date have proven to be unrealistic, requiring LDCs to repeatedly seek extensions from the TRIPS Council as they last did in 2013. Developing a viable technological base and overcoming capacity constraints requires a long term strategy.

We therefore, we urge WTO members to honor their obligation under Article 66.1 and unconditionally grant LDCs their requested extension.

The 2020 LDC Report by UNCTAD warns that “*the pandemic will push LDCs to their worst economic performance in 30 years...*” and that

tariff barriers; ensure that preferential rules of origin are simple, transparent and predictable

It is also important to reaffirm the provision of Special and Differential Treatment (SDT) for LDCs, the possibility to invoke Special Safeguard Mechanism, allowing to curb unforeseen surges in the import of heavily subsidized agriculture products from countries in the North.

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