

**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY THE LDC COORDINATOR DURING THE
FIFTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE ON LEAST DEVELOPED
COUNTRIES**

12 MARCH 2010

Item B (I) Market Access for Least Developed Countries

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the LDC Group, I wish to thank the Secretariat for its revised report contained in document WT/COMTD/LDC/W/46/Rev 1, prepared as part of the Work Programme of the Sub Committee.

The LDC Group notes with appreciations the improvements made to the report in light of the suggestions made during our last meeting in November 2009. In particular, the Group notes the inclusion of LDCs' performance in trade in services; agriculture and non agriculture aspects of market access; and the trends in south-south trade among other issues.

The continued reflection of the impact of the economic crisis is an important element towards examination of factors affecting LDCs capacity to enhance their export trade. As highlighted in the report, LDCs are the most vulnerable economies due to their high export concentration ratio and dependency on primary commodities. The LDCs have continued to face challenges in expanding their product and market base due to many factors including the low degree of development of their productive sector and market access conditions maintained by trading partners. The LDCs as a group continue to face high imbalances in import and export ratio with the agriculture dependent countries being the most affected as highlighted in paragraph 59 of the Secretariat's report. Although the report reflects in paragraph 66 that markets for primary commodities were among the first to rebound, with prices rising in the second and third quarters of 2009, it will take a long time to address the overall impact of the crisis on our economies.

As regards new market initiatives, the Group notes with concern the slow progress made in fulfilling the mandate to extend duty free and quota free market access to products originating from LDCs. As noted in section IV (paragraph 43) of the revised report, no new market access initiatives in favor of LDCs have been notified since the last report made by the Secretariat. It is our hope that developing countries and developed countries in a position to do so will continue to support the development efforts of LDCs through improved market access.

Last but not least, the next report of the Secretariat could include more in-depth analysis of LDCs services trade and non tariff barriers faced in the goods sector.

Item B (II) Trade Related Technical Assistance and Capacity Building Initiatives for Least Developed countries

Mr. Chairman,

I wish to thank the Secretariat for their oral report on technical assistance and capacity building initiatives for least developed countries. Overall, the TRTA programmes maintained by the WTO have been useful in assisting officials from our countries to better understand the rules of the multilateral trading system in order to provide timely advice for effective engagement in the multilateral trading system. In particular, the LDC group appreciates WTO's continued support towards training government officials through national and regional seminars on issues relating to the regular work of the WTO and the negotiating sessions.

The approach taken by the WTO to keep these initiatives demand driven has been useful in ensuring that support sought meets trade capacity needs of individual beneficiary countries.

The introduction of e-learning programmes as part of your recent steps in your TRTA is an important training resource for outreach.

I also wish to commend Secretariat for

- the continued cooperation with regional bodies and other international organizations to ensure coherence and the creation of appropriate synergies in the implementation of your technical cooperation programmes, and
- For introducing regional programmes and outreach programmes for the academia, parliamentarians and the private sector, among others.

The LDC Group fully endorses the 2010 – 2011 Biennial Plan and welcomes the inclusion of Accession, Scheduling and notifications in the plan.

The LDC Group would also like to emphasize the importance of capacity building to enhance the supply capacity. Real impact on LDCs can only come about if productive sectors are adequately supported through a combination of measures including tailor made support for product development and diversification.

Standards and Trade Development Facility

Mr. Chairman,

As regards the submission on the overview progress made under the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF), I wish to thank the representative of the STDF Secretariat for the report.

From the outset, I wish to state that STDF will continue to be an important Facility for enhancing LDCs capacities to analyze and implement international standards.

Several LDCs that have accessed resources under this Facility as indicated on pages 7 to 13 have found this initiative useful.

The focus on cooperation with other technical cooperating partners (including the Enhanced Integrated Framework) makes the facility useful in assisting our economies to respond to challenges faced in this area in an integrated and coordinated manner. This facility provides added advantage to the planning and implementation of SPS intervention measures in a systematic and timely manner by focusing on both project preparation and implementation.

The LDC wish to commend the Secretariat of STDF for organizing global and regional events in the second half of 2009 including the seminar held in Washington on Climate Change and SPS, whose outcome highlighted useful suggestions on how our economies can reduce vulnerability to SPS risks through proper management of SPS related challenges, including through effective risk-based/disease surveillance targeted at points of entry.

The LDC Group welcomes the planned activities for 2010 on the use of economic analysis in SPS decision making process and policy consideration related to private- public partnerships in SPS capacity building.