

*Mission Permanente
de la République du Bénin
auprès des Nations Unies*



*Permanent Mission of
the Republic of Benin
to the United Nations*

**FIRST MEETING OF THE OPEN WORKING GROUP ON SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS
14 MARCH 2013**

(agenda item 3: general discussions)

**STATEMENT
OF
H.E. MR. JEAN -FRANCIS R. ZINSOU,
AMBASSADOR PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BENIN
TO THE UNITED NATIONS,
CHAIR OF THE GLOBAL COORDINATION BUREAU
OF LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES**

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Distinguished co-chairs
Honorable Ministers
Excellencies
Ladies and gentlemen,

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of LDCs. At the outset, let me commend you Mr. Co-chairs for your efficient steering of the session. We are confident that our discussions, today and tomorrow, will see fruitions.

Since this is the first substantive meeting of the open working group, LDCs would like to make some suggestions on both procedural and substantive matters.

On procedural issue, we have five suggestions.

First: Although the members of the OWG are elected on the basis of equitable geographical representation, as a whole, LDCs are under-represented. Out of 30 seats represented by 70 countries, only 7 are LDCs. 49 LDCs, representing more than 25 percent of the total membership of the UN, have only 11 percent of the total OWG members.

We would therefore request the distinguished co-chairs and the members of the OWG to ensure that the work of the OWG is not guided by the number of voices, and that the interests and concerns of the LDCs, which are the poorest and most vulnerable group of member states of the UN are fully and adequately reflected in the work and the outcome of the OWG. This will be a critical test of the success of our collective work in this forum.

Second: Most of our constituencies are Francophone. Since the discussions will be substantive and technical in nature, please make sure that always we have interpretation facilities.

Third: The discussions should be open, transparent and inclusive. Given the smallness of our missions and the severe constraints on our resources and capacities, we would request to avoid overlapping with other relevant meetings. We need sufficient time for our effective preparation for the meetings. The schedule of the meetings and the documentation should be made available with

sufficient lead time in order to ensure that our delegations and our capitals are able to fully consider them.

Fourth: The work of the open working group shall be guided by the rules of procedure, relevant rules and practices of the Committees of the General Assembly, unless decided otherwise by the open working group, and

Finally: the decisions and recommendations should be made in a transparent manner and by consensus. We would like to request you to ensure that the voice of the LDCs are fully heard and reflected in the outcomes of this exercise.

On substantive matter, I would begin by commending the Secretary-General for his initial input to the OWG containing a number of important elements, many of which are particularly significant for LDCs. On substantive issue, we would like to make the following seven suggestions.

First: Our primary objective in the OWG process is to ensure full integration of LDCs' interests and concerns in the goals, targets and indicators of SDGs. Paragraph 181 of the Rio+20 Outcome says "we agree to effectively implement the Istanbul Programme of Action and to fully integrate its priority areas into the present framework for action, the broader implementation of which will contribute to the overarching goal of the Istanbul Programme of Action of enabling half the least developed countries to meet the criteria for graduation by 2020." In paragraph 34 of the Rio+20 outcome, the international community commits to assist the least developed countries with the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action as well as in their efforts to achieve sustainable development. We therefore would like to propose that the working group devotes a full session to discuss the special vulnerabilities, challenges and priorities of LDCs in the context of the SDGs.

Second: There should be a balanced treatment among the three pillars of sustainable development, namely economic development, social development and environmental sustainability, with special attention given to the LDCs.

Third: The Rio+20 outcome considers green economy as one of the important tools available for achieving sustainable development. The outcome document emphasizes that it should contribute to eradicating poverty as well as

sustained economic growth, enhancing social inclusion, improving human welfare and creating opportunities for full employment and decent work for all, while maintaining the healthy functioning of the Earth's ecosystems. Adequate and timely international support has a critical role to play in helping LDCs leapfrog onto a new green growth trajectory, especially considering the fact that our countries are at an initial stage of development. Therefore, we would like to suggest at the outset that international support to LDCs be given high priority.

Fourth. While looking at the issue of poverty and its consequent challenges, three important issues should be considered: (i) the percentage of people living in extreme poverty, (ii) countries' status of progress in reducing poverty and (iii) the capacity of the country to meet its own financial, technical and technological needs to address poverty. These are critically important factors for the LDCs, given that they house the highest percentage of people in extreme poverty and do not have the endogenous resources and capacities to reduce such levels of poverty. In the context of extreme poverty reduction, international support should therefore match the depth of challenges that the LDCs are facing.

Fifth: Means of implementation such as ODA, trade, investment, debt relief and technology transfer are vitally important for us. In this regard, we want to put particular emphasis on special and preferential treatment to LDCs. Internationally community should review their ODA commitment with a view to enhancing their financial support to LDCs as committed in the IPoA. We specially put utmost importance on the implementation of the DFQF market access for all LDC products in the spirit of the WTO Hong Kong Ministerial declaration. The donor countries should also provide enhanced share of aid for trade to LDCs as per the IPoA commitment. International community should support the transfer of technology to LDCs including through the establishment of a technology bank as suggested in the IPoA.

Sixth: We need scaled-up support from all of our development partners as elaborated in the IPoA namely developed countries; developing countries within South-South cooperation; United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, other multilateral institutions and regional development banks; and the private sector, civil society and foundations.

Last but not the least: Although many goals would be universal, we would like to especially emphasize that some goals should be specific for LDCs. For

example the specific targets for ODA and the target of DFQF market access for LDCs, which are exclusive for them. We want similar kind of specific goals and targets for LDCs in other relevant areas as a special and preferential treatment to LDCs. During the course of the OWG we will make specific proposals in this regard.

In conclusion we would like to flag that, as we have just embarked on a new process, we need to bear in mind that the journey ahead of us is challenging. However, this is an opportune moment for the UN, which does not come often and may be once in a decade, to prove its centrality, legitimacy and effectiveness in addressing the challenges of the world. This will be a litmus test for the international community to prove whether they are really committed to address the challenges of the poorest and most vulnerable countries, namely LDCs. We are fully confident that together we will be able to set an ambitious set of goals and strong commitments to meet them, which would make a transformative difference in the LDCs.

I thank you for your kind attention.