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**IMPLEMENTATION IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC OF THE BRUSSELS  
PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES  
FOR THE DECADE 2001-2010: PROGRESS MADE, OBSTACLES  
ENCOUNTERED AND THE WAY FORWARD**

(Item 6 of the provisional agenda)

*Note by the secretariat*

**SUMMARY**

The General Assembly in its resolution 63/227 of 19 December 2008 decided to convene the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries at a high level in 2011. The mandate of the Conference would include undertaking a comprehensive appraisal of the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 by the least developed countries and their development partners. The General Assembly also decided that two regional-level preparatory meetings would be carried out in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, respectively, in the context of the regular annual sessions of each Commission. As part of the preparatory process of the regional review to be conducted during the sixty-sixth session of the Commission, ESCAP, in cooperation with the Government of Bangladesh, is organizing a high-level Asia-Pacific policy dialogue on the Brussels Programme of Action, scheduled to be held from 12 to 14 January 2010 in Dhaka.

Member States, especially the least developed countries, may wish to share their experiences on the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action and the Committee may wish to provide further guidance on the regional review being undertaken by the Commission.

\* Submission of the present document was delayed in order to include more up-to-date information on issues related to the review of the progress made in implementing the Brussels Programme of Action, including extensive peer review.

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### Introduction

1. The General Assembly in its resolution 63/227 of 19 December 2008 decided to convene the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries at a high level in 2011, with a mandate to include undertaking a comprehensive appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010<sup>1</sup> by the least developed countries and their development partners, sharing best practices and lessons learned, and identifying obstacles and constraints encountered as well as actions and initiatives needed to overcome them. The General Assembly also decided to convene, towards the end of 2010 and/or in early 2011, an intergovernmental preparatory committee, which would hold no more than two meetings. The preparatory committee meetings are to be preceded by two regional-level preparatory meetings in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), respectively, in the context of the regular annual sessions of each Commission, with the regional-level meetings to be supported by broad-based and inclusive country-level preparations.

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<sup>1</sup> A/CONF.191/13, chap II.

2. The objective of the present document is to inform the member countries of ESCAP of the actions that the ESCAP secretariat is taking at the regional level to assist the 15 Asia-Pacific least developed countries (including Yemen) in the appraisal of the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 in response to General Assembly resolution 63/227 (para. 4(a)) and to seek their guidance on the next steps required in the appraisal process. The document has been structured in the following way. Section I briefly discusses the Brussels Programme of Action in the context of other internationally agreed development goals and commitments so that the development challenges faced by the least developed countries can be seen in a comprehensive manner and a realistic assessment of the support measures offered by the international community in realizing the Programme of Action can be carried out when the final review is undertaken. Section II highlights the main findings of the midterm comprehensive global review of the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action, especially the constraints and challenges faced by Asia-Pacific least developed countries and their development partners, with a view to focusing more on these constraints and challenges in the final review. In order to ensure that the impact of recent events and trends on the performance of the least developed countries is given due attention, section III contains some discussion on the impact of the global financial crisis on Asia-Pacific least developed countries, especially with respect to their prospects for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The last section contains some proposals for a way forward in reviewing the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action.

### **I. BRUSSELS PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES FOR THE DECADE 2001-2010 IN THE CONTEXT OF OTHER INTERNATIONALLY AGREED GOALS AND COMMITMENTS**

3. The least developed countries represent the poorest and weakest segment of the international community. Extreme poverty, the structural weaknesses of their economies and the lack of capacities related to growth, often compounded by structural handicaps, hamper the efforts of these countries to improve the quality of life of their inhabitants. These countries are also characterized by their acute susceptibility to external economic shocks, natural and man-made disasters and communicable diseases. The current list of least developed countries includes 49 countries: 33 in Africa, 15 in Asia and the Pacific (including Yemen) and 1 in Latin America. Cape Verde graduated from the list at the end of 2007, Samoa will graduate in 2010 and Maldives is expected to graduate in 2011.

4. In the late 1960s, the United Nations began paying special attention to the least developed countries, recognizing them as the most vulnerable of the international community. The International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade (1971-1980)<sup>2</sup> incorporated special measures in favour of the least developed countries. In order to generate international attention and action to reverse the continuing deterioration of the socio-economic condition of these most vulnerable countries, the First United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries was held in Paris in 1981. It adopted a comprehensive Substantial New Programme of Action for the 1980s for the Least Developed Countries.<sup>3</sup> To continue the focus on the need for special measures for these countries, the Second United Nations Conference on the Least

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<sup>2</sup> General Assembly resolution 2626 (XXV).

<sup>3</sup> *Report of the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Paris, 1-14 September 1981* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.82.I.8), part one, sect. A.

Developed Countries was held in 1990, also in Paris, and adopted the Paris Declaration and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s.<sup>4</sup> The Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries was held in Brussels in 2001 and adopted the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010.

5. The Brussels Programme of Action, which was endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 55/279 of 12 July 2001, represents a time-bound comprehensive poverty reduction strategy with 30 internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, in seven interlinked commitments: (a) fostering a people-centred policy framework; (b) good governance at national and international levels; (c) building human and institutional capacities; (d) building productive capacities to make globalization work for least developed countries; (e) enhancing the role of trade in development; (f) reducing vulnerability and protecting the environment; and (g) mobilizing financial resources. The overarching goal of the Programme is to make substantial progress toward halving the proportion of people living in extreme poverty and suffering from hunger by 2015 and promote the sustainable development of the least developed countries (para. 6).

6. The specific concerns and issues of least developed countries have also been highlighted in other internationally agreed goals and commitments, such as those contained in the outcome documents of world conferences, including the 2005 World Summit Outcome,<sup>5</sup> and the Millennium Development Goals. The concerns of least developed countries have also been addressed through financing for development and the Doha round of multilateral trade negotiations and in the context of several global meetings that were recently convened to address the global economic and financial crises, such as the Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and its Impact on Development, which was held from 24 to 30 June 2009 in New York.

7. In General Assembly resolution 60/1 of 16 September 2005 on the 2005 World Summit Outcome, world leaders stated:

We reaffirm our commitment to address the special needs of the least developed countries and urge all countries and all relevant organizations of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, to make concerted efforts and adopt speedy measures for meeting in a timely manner the goals and targets of the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 (para. 64).

In the same resolution, it was further stated:

We welcome the increased resources that will become available as a result of the establishment of timetables by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance by 2015 and to reach at least 0.5 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance by 2010 as well as, pursuant to the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010, 0.15 per cent to 0.20 per cent for the least developed countries no later than 2010, and urge those developed countries that have not yet done so to make concrete efforts in this regard in accordance with their commitments (para. 23(b)).

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<sup>4</sup> A/CONF.147/18, part one.

<sup>5</sup> See General Assembly resolution 60/1.

8. The Doha Ministerial Declaration<sup>6</sup> explicitly recognized the particular needs, interests and concerns of least developed countries in 21 different paragraphs. These references fall into two broad categories. They touch on broad, systemic issues and they form part of the negotiating mandate of particular World Trade Organization (WTO) bodies. Taking into account the above-mentioned commitments, the WTO work programme for least developed countries focused on the following systemic issues:

- (a) Market access for least developed countries;
- (b) Trade-related technical assistance and capacity-building initiatives for least developed countries;
- (c) The provision of support, as appropriate, to agencies assisting with the diversification of the production and export base of least developed countries;
- (d) The mainstreaming into the work of WTO, as appropriate, of the trade-related elements of the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, as relevant to the WTO mandate;
- (e) The participation of least developed countries in the multilateral trading system;
- (f) The accession of least developed countries to WTO;
- (g) Follow-up to WTO ministerial decisions/declarations.

9. Effective participation in the global and regional trading systems remains both a priority and a challenge for least developed countries. In Asia and the Pacific, for instance, 8 of the 15 least developed countries are not yet members of the World Trade Organization. WTO membership is crucial, as it opens international markets to exports from least developed countries on a non-discriminatory basis, while least developed countries generally have few commitments under the multilateral trading system, with the exception of those that have recently acceded to WTO, such as Cambodia and Nepal. A successful conclusion to the Doha round of multilateral trade negotiations would also go far in helping least developed countries to boost trade, as such a deal would include virtually tariff- and quota-free access to exports from least developed countries to developed countries and major developing countries.

10. The Doha Declaration on Financing for Development,<sup>7</sup> which was adopted in 2008, reaffirmed the Monterrey Consensus<sup>8</sup> and included specific references to the issues and concerns of least developed countries, including a statement welcoming the decision to convene the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries at a high level in 2011 (para. 7). Concerning official development assistance (ODA), the Declaration noted:

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<sup>6</sup> Adopted on 14 November 2001, contained in World Trade Organization document WT/MIN(05)/DEC, available at <http://docsonline.wto.org>.

<sup>7</sup> The Doha Declaration on Financing for Development: outcome document of the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus is contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 63/239 of 24 December 2008.

<sup>8</sup> *Report of the International Conference on Financing for Development, Monterrey, Mexico, 18–22 March 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.II.A.7), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

The fulfilment of all ODA commitments is crucial, including the commitments by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of [gross national product (GNP)] for ODA to developing countries by 2015 and to reach the level of at least 0.5 per cent of GNP for ODA by 2010, as well as a target of 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of GNP for ODA to least developed countries. To reach their agreed timetables, donor countries should take all necessary and appropriate measures to raise the rate of aid disbursements to meet their existing commitments (para. 43).

11. The global financial and economic crisis, the most severe synchronized economic downturn that the global community has experienced in the past 70 years, has been at the top of the agenda of the United Nations system over the past year. In June 2009, in the Outcome of the Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and its Impact on Development,<sup>9</sup> world leaders requested United Nations agencies to take full advantage of their advocacy role to promote the recovery and development of the developing countries, especially the most vulnerable among them (para. 53).

12. The Secretary-General, in his report on the promotion and enhancement of a coordinated response of the United Nations development system and the specialized agencies in the follow-up to and implementation of the Outcome of the Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development (E/2009/114), noted the action of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB):

As early as October 2008, CEB initiated a review of the implications of the financial markets crisis, when it was clear that it had begun to take on serious global dimensions and to impact real economies and livelihoods. In its approach, CEB recognized that the major challenges facing the international community as a result of the crisis included: (a) a significant danger that progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals would be reversed; (b) further millions of people trapped in poverty in developing countries; (c) a fall in global trade in 2009 for the first time in 27 years; (d) worldwide increases in unemployment in 2009 and the expectation that, even with a return to positive growth in 2010, unemployment and underemployment would still remain high for several years to come; (e) a fall in investment growth in the developing world in 2009; (f) an expectation that commodity prices, while having fallen from their historic levels, would remain higher than during the 1990s for the next 20 years; (g) a decline in global gross domestic product (GDP) in 2009; and (h) expectations that human development impacts would be severe as individuals and households were pushed into poverty and malnutrition, disproportionately affecting the already vulnerable, while government revenues would fall precisely when safety nets needed to be made more effective. The Board also recognized that while the crisis impacted all countries, it was those who were least responsible—the poor in developing countries—who would feel its most serious repercussions (paras. 7 and 8).

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<sup>9</sup> General Assembly resolution 63/303, annex.

## II. FINDINGS OF THE MIDTERM REVIEW OF THE BRUSSELS PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR ASIA-PACIFIC LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

13. As mandated by the General Assembly, the midterm comprehensive global review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 was conducted in September 2006.<sup>10</sup> In preparation for the midterm global review, the regional review for the Asia-Pacific region, held in March 2006, adopted recommendations for action at both the national and international levels with a special focus on: (a) financing for development; (b) trade, migration and technology transfer; (c) the environment; and (d) conflict prevention and security.<sup>11</sup> The recommendations were then submitted as the regional input to the midterm global review.

14. The regional midterm review for the Asia-Pacific region agreed that the commitments made under the Brussels Programme of Action remained substantially unfulfilled in the Asian and Pacific least developed countries. Although several least developed countries in the Asian and Pacific region had made significant progress in their socio-economic development, others had failed to achieve similar results. Even in countries which had attained many of their development goals, constraints imposed by geography, limited human resources, and economic and environmental vulnerabilities continued to be significant factors affecting their progress.<sup>12</sup>

15. Asia-Pacific least developed countries noted in the national reports they prepared for the midterm review that the challenges in implementing the seven commitments of the Brussels Programme of Action were enormous and complex. The first task ahead was to strengthen the partnership between the least developed countries and their development partners and to ensure that the constraints and problems of implementation which bedevilled the implementation of the previous two programmes of action would not be repeated.

16. The second challenge was to mobilize all stakeholders and actors in development, at both the national and international levels, to fully and effectively implement the commitments of the Brussels Programme of Action that fell under their respective mandates and competences.

17. Although least developed countries in the Asian and Pacific region acknowledged that some progress had been made by the midpoint of the Brussels Programme of Action, there was consensus that overall progress in meeting the goals had been slow and uneven. Five years after the adoption of the Brussels Declaration,<sup>13</sup> concerns remained that progress had not been sufficient to achieve the goals of the Programme of Action and its objective of eradicating poverty and achieving sustained growth and sustainable development in least developed countries by 2010.

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<sup>10</sup> See General Assembly resolutions 59/244 and 60/228.

<sup>11</sup> See *Asia-Pacific Review of the Implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010*, Least Developed Countries Series No. 7 (ST/ESCAP/2417).

<sup>12</sup> See note 12, Foreword.

<sup>13</sup> A/CONF.191/12.

18. The least developed countries reported that the challenges of capacity-building and resource mobilization could, to some extent, be remedied by strengthening the partnership between them and their development partners. They urged developed countries to fulfil their commitments on overseas development aid, debt relief, trade and technology transfer fully and expeditiously to enable the least developed countries to achieve the goals of the Brussels Programme of Action by 2010. Furthermore, Asia-Pacific least developed countries recommended that the Brussels Programme of Action be integrated into the development policies, strategies and programmes of the development partners of the least developed countries, including monitoring and reporting.

19. For effective implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action, Asia-Pacific least developed countries noted that there should perhaps be more focused consideration of some of its elements. Rural development and agriculture should be brought more to the centre of the development efforts of least developed countries. In addition, the development of information and communications technologies and health services, and the production of consumer durables, should be actively pursued by the Asia-Pacific least developed countries.

20. They also highlighted that special international support measures, such as preferential market access and special and preferential treatment of the least developed countries under WTO provisions, needed to be expanded and deepened bearing in mind the supply-side constraints of the least developed countries. Enhanced market access for the products of least developed countries being sent to other developing countries could also contribute to the expansion of their trade opportunities. They noted that all efforts should be made to reach a successful outcome to the Doha round of multilateral trade negotiations no later than 2006 and to effectively implement the Doha Development Agenda,<sup>14</sup> which included, inter alia, special treatment of the least developed countries.

21. Asia-Pacific least developed countries also expressed the view that full cancellation of the external debt of least developed countries that were also heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) and significant debt relief for the non-HIPC least developed countries were critical to enable them to reduce poverty and achieve sustained growth. Furthermore, debt relief needed to be placed in a broader development agenda that included stronger national policies, more targeted and predictable development assistance and an enabling international environment for growth.<sup>15</sup>

### **III. IMPACT OF THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRISIS ON ASIA-PACIFIC LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES**

22. The global economic crisis initially manifested itself through a significant slowdown in developed country economies and has subsequently affected the Asia-Pacific region through various transmission mechanisms, including the trade of goods and services, foreign direct investment (FDI), remittances, ODA and financial markets. In particular, the slowdown in developed country economies reduced the demand for

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<sup>14</sup> See A/C.2/56/7, annex.

<sup>15</sup> United Nations Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, synthesis report drawn from national reports on the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action prepared for the regional preparatory meeting of Asian and Pacific least developed countries for the midterm comprehensive global review of the Brussels Programme of Action, held in Bangkok on 14 and 15 March 2006, accessed from [www.un.org/ohrrls](http://www.un.org/ohrrls) on 21 October 2009.



exports from the developing countries of the region. Since exports contributed significantly to the economic growth of many economies in the region, such a reduction in exports had the expected negative impact on GDP growth in many of them. Many transnational companies with headquarters in developed countries reduced their plans for FDI in the region. Such reductions in FDI also had a detrimental impact on the economic growth of many economies. With the economic slowdown, unemployment also increased. In many instances, immigrant workers returned home, reducing the flow of remittances to poor households.

23. The Asia-Pacific least developed countries are, in general, not well integrated into global and regional financial systems. They also receive very limited amounts of FDI. As a consequence, they have been less affected than other developing countries by the financial turbulence that spread across the world. They are still trying, however, to adjust to the food-fuel crises, which hit them hard in 2007 and 2008. When the global financial crisis turned into a generalized economic crisis, the downstream effects were also felt by many least developed countries. Several of them, particularly in the Pacific, saw their export earnings falling, remittances declining, tourist arrivals slowing down and income from trusts disappearing, which put severe pressure on their budgetary situations, forcing many of them to cut expenditures on health and education services. In a recent report to the Group of Twenty meeting in Pittsburgh, the World Bank cautioned: “While the global economy is showing tentative signs of recovery, low-income countries continue to suffer the consequences of the global recession which has left them with both external and fiscal financing gaps”.<sup>16</sup>

24. There are indications that suggest that the crisis has affected jobs in several least developed countries, thereby increasing unemployment, particularly in the export and tourism sectors. With ripple effects throughout the economy, many poor households face income and food insecurity. With lower income, more people have become vulnerable to being pushed into income poverty and to suffering from malnutrition and hunger. Preliminary findings from the forthcoming regional Millennium Development Goal report 2009<sup>17</sup> by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), ESCAP and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) indicate that prior to the global economic crisis, the Asia-Pacific region had been making impressive progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals in some areas. The region had been an early achiever in reducing gender disparities in primary and tertiary education, stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS and the incidence of and increase in death rates associated with tuberculosis, reducing consumption of chlorofluorocarbons and halving the proportion of people without access to clean water in rural areas. The Asia-Pacific region was on track to achieve two other targets, as well: to halve the proportion of people living on below \$1 a day and to ensure universal access of children to primary school.

25. The situation in the Asia-Pacific least developed countries in terms of their progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals was already critical before the onset of the food-fuel-financial and economic crises. The multiple global crises pose serious threats that could reverse gains made towards achieving the Goals in

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<sup>16</sup> World Bank, “Protecting progress: The challenge facing low-income countries in the global recession”, background paper prepared by World Bank Group staff for the G-20 Leaders’ Meeting, Pittsburgh, United States, 24-25 September 2009, p.1.

<sup>17</sup> *A Future Within Reach, 2009: Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in an era of global uncertainty* (forthcoming), table I-1.

the Asia-Pacific least developed countries. The increase in food-fuel prices during the period 2005-2008 reduced the purchasing power of households and consequently pushed more people into extreme poverty and hunger in many least developed countries. The economic slowdown caused by the global financial and economic crisis is likely to aggravate the development challenges of the least developed countries and return many of those who had previously made some progress during the early 2000s to conditions of poverty and hunger.

26. The progress of the Asia-Pacific least developed countries towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals is highlighted in the table, although it must be noted that data constraints make it extremely difficult to assess precisely the impact of the current crises on progress towards achieving the Goals in these countries. The table shows that the Asia-Pacific least developed countries have been slow in making progress in reaching many of the Millennium Development Goal targets, and the most worrisome aspect is that several indicators are regressing in many least developed countries. They still face formidable challenges in reducing hunger, reducing under-five and infant mortality, and ensuring access to clean water in urban areas and basic sanitation everywhere. At the present rate of progress, there is a distinct possibility that most of the Asia-Pacific least developed countries will fail to reach the Goals by 2015, raising serious doubts as to whether several of the commitments made in the Brussels Programme of Action can be achieved.

27. One key concern in the least developed countries is the possible reduction in Government expenditures on public services, many of which are directly linked to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Many least developed country Governments may be forced to reduce spending on public services and social protection schemes, further impacting poverty reduction efforts and adversely affecting health and education services. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable to the effects of reduced household and Government spending since they consistently have fewer educational opportunities and since they require a functioning health system in order to reduce the chances of death owing to pregnancy and childbirth. Rural households are disproportionately vulnerable to cuts in public sector spending. Therefore, disparities across economic groups and sectors could rise significantly.

28. Another key concern is the possible reduction of ODA flows from developed countries to the least developed countries, although several recent global meetings and conferences have emphasized the need to protect ODA flows to the poorest and most vulnerable countries. As the fiscal situation of several key developed countries has been seriously affected by the financial crisis, there is a distinct probability that ODA may decrease in the coming years if existing commitments are not met. There are also indications that further and broader debt relief will be needed to address resurging debt distress. ODA reached its highest level ever in 2008, but large delivery gaps remain in terms of meeting the commitments made. ODA to the least developed countries in 2007 was equivalent to 0.09 per cent of the gross national income of the countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). However, fewer than half of the countries of the OECD Development Assistance Committee are meeting the 0.15-0.20 per cent target for ODA to the least developed countries that was reaffirmed in the Brussels Programme of Action.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Millennium Development Goal 8: Strengthening the Global Partnership for Development in a Time of Crisis*, MDG Gap Task Force Report 2009 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.09.I.8), p. viii.

**Asia-Pacific least developed countries on and off track for the Millennium Development Goals before the 2008 global economic crisis**

	1 \$1.25/day poverty Underweight children		2 Primary enrolment Reaching grade 5 Primary completion rate			3 Gender equality, primary Gender equality, secondary Gender equality, tertiary			4 Under-five mortality Infant mortality		6 HIV prevalence rate TB prevalence rate TB death rate			7 Forest cover Protected areas CO <sub>2</sub> emissions CFC consumption Water, urban Water, rural Sanitation, urban Sanitation, rural								
Afghanistan	S					S	R		S	S		E	E	R	O	R	E	R	R	S	R	
Bangladesh	S	O			R		E	S	O	O		O	E	E	R	E	R	E	R	S	R	S
Bhutan			S	S	S	E	S	R	S	S		O	E	E	E	E	E	E	R	R	R	R
Cambodia	S	S	S	S	O	S	S	S	S	S		E	E	E	R	E	R	E	E	E	O	O
Kiribati			E		E	E			S	S		E	E	O	O	E	E	S	S	S	S	R
Lao PDR	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	O	O		R	E	E	R	E	R	E	O	O	E	O
Maldives		O	E		E	E			E	E		O	E	E	O		R	E	R	R	E	R
Myanmar		S			S				S	S		E	E	E	R	E	R	E	R	E	E	E
Nepal	S	S	S	S	S	E	S	S	O	O		O	E	E	R	E	E	E	R	E	S	S
Samoa			E		E	E			S	S		E	E	E	E	E	R	E	R	R	E	E
Solomon Islands						E	S		S	S		E	E	R	E	E	E	R	R	R	R	R
Timor-Leste		R				S			S	S		E	E	R	E	E		R	R	R	R	R
Tuvalu					E	E			S	S		E	E	O	O		E	S	S	E	O	
Vanuatu			R		O	E	S		S	S		E	E	O	E	E	R	R	R	R	R	R

Source: Asian Development Bank, ESCAP and the United Nations Development Programme, *A Future Within Reach, 2009: Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in an era of global uncertainty* (forthcoming), chapter I, adapted from table I-3.

Abbreviations: TB, tuberculosis; CO<sub>2</sub>, carbon dioxide; CFC, chlorofluorocarbon; E, early achiever (already achieved the 2015 target); O, on track (expected to meet the target by 2015); S, slow (expected to meet the target, but after 2015); R, regressing/no progress (stagnating or slipping backwards).

29. Many least developed countries depend on remittances from those working abroad to sustain growth and maintain foreign exchange reserves. Remittance flows constitute a significant portion of the income of many poor households in least developed countries. As employment becomes scarce in developed countries and as other destinations, such as the Middle East, face economic difficulties due to the global recession, remittances could be drastically reduced in some specific cases. As of July 2009, World Bank forecasts for remittance flows to developing countries in 2009 stood at

-7.3 per cent, lower than the earlier forecast of -5.0 per cent.<sup>19</sup> Least developed countries that receive a large amount of remittances as a proportion of their GDP may be particularly vulnerable.

#### **IV. WAY FORWARD IN REVIEWING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BRUSSELS PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION**

##### **A. National reviews of the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action**

30. A key principle underpinning the preparations of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries is effective ownership and leadership by least developed country Governments in country-level preparations, with the involvement of major stakeholders. Each least developed country is therefore responsible for preparing the national report on the review of the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010, based on a set of guidelines (see E/ESCAP/CMP/INF/3) in accordance with the above-mentioned General Assembly resolutions. ESCAP has offered to facilitate this process.

##### **B. High-level Asia-Pacific policy dialogue on the Brussels Programme of Action**

31. As part of the regional preparatory process, ESCAP will convene a regional meeting in the form of a high-level Asia-Pacific policy dialogue on the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries from 12 to 14 January 2010 in Dhaka in collaboration with the Government of Bangladesh.

###### **1. Objectives and format of the high-level Asia-Pacific policy dialogue**

32. The objective of the high-level Asia-Pacific policy dialogue is to bring together senior policymakers and other stakeholders from Asia-Pacific least developed countries and other countries to assess and develop a regional position on the progress made in the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action by least developed countries and to identify key issues that would require global and regional cooperation to further advance the objectives of the Brussels Programme of Action. The high-level Asia-Pacific policy dialogue will involve all key stakeholders of the Brussels Programme of Action.

33. The first session of the meeting will be organized in the form of a high-level exchange on progress towards implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action. The main objective of this session is to bring together high-level policymakers from selected least developed countries with eminent scholars and independent experts to decide on forward-looking medium- to long-term recommendations that would be useful for the regional review. Following the high-level exchange, discussions will be organized around five clusters, reflecting the commitments and priorities of the Brussels Programme of Action.

34. The representative of each least developed country will have an opportunity to deliver a brief (5-10 minutes) statement on the key implementation achievements and gaps and challenges in his/her country, with a focus on how positive results can be

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<sup>19</sup> D. Ratha, S. Mohapatra and A. Silwal, *Outlook for Remittance Flows 2009-2011: Remittances expected to fall by 7-10 percent in 2009*, Migration and Development Brief 10, Migration and Remittances Team, Development Prospects Group, World Bank (13 July 2009).

achieved. United Nations agencies and other intergovernmental organizations will also be invited to deliver brief statements.

## **2. Participants**

35. Invitations are being sent to the Governments of ESCAP member countries, including 14 least developed countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Kiribati, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. For purposes of the review, Yemen is being included in the Asia-Pacific region. Representatives of the United Nations system, relevant regional organizations, development partners, the broad spectrum of civil society and the private sector are also being invited. The Prime Minister of Bangladesh is expected to open the high-level Asia-Pacific policy dialogue.

### **C. Expected outcome of the high-level Asia-Pacific policy dialogue and follow-up**

36. Policymakers from the 15 Asia-Pacific least developed countries (including Yemen) and relevant stakeholders will exchange views and decide on a draft regional document during a three-day high-level policy dialogue in Dhaka. The draft outcome document from the high-level policy dialogue will be presented to the sixty-sixth annual session of the Commission, to be held in Incheon, Republic of Korea, in May 2010, for further discussion by ESCAP members. Based on the outcome document and the discussions that follow, a report will then be prepared containing an assessment of the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action by Asia-Pacific least developed countries during the decade 2001-2010. The report will also identify future priorities at the regional level. It will be transmitted as the input of the Asia-Pacific region to the global review. The outcome document of the high-level Asia-Pacific policy dialogue will be attached as an annex to the regional input.

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