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Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

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Agenda item 8

**Consideration of the draft outcome documents
of the Conference**

Draft Istanbul Declaration

Renewed and strengthened global partnership for the development of least developed countries

We, the Heads of State and Government and Representatives of the States participating in the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries,

Gathered here in Istanbul from 9 to 13 May 2011 to reiterate our commitment to the collective and shared responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at all levels,

Stressing that the least developed countries continue to confront high levels of poverty and hunger, and reaffirming that solidarity and partnership with the poorest, weakest and most vulnerable countries and their people are not only moral and ethical imperatives, but also economic and political ones, which correspond to long-term interests of the international community and serve the cause of peace, security and prosperity for all,

Emphasizing that enhancing good governance at all levels, the rule of law, respect for all human rights, including the right to development, gender equality, justice for all, democracy and peace and security are essential for sustainable development,

Underscoring the fact that while each faces specific challenges, all least developed countries share much in common,

Recognizing the progress made by least developed countries since the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries held in Brussels in 2001,

Recognizing that not all the objectives and goals set in the Brussels Programme of Action have been fully achieved and that least developed countries remain marginalized in the world economy and continue to suffer from extreme poverty, inequality and structural weaknesses,

Expressing deep concern that many least developed countries, particularly those that are affected by conflict and criminal activities and transnational organized crime, including piracy, which, among other things, can threaten trade routes, and smuggling of and trafficking in human beings, narcotic drugs and small arms and light weapons, are lagging behind in the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and recognizing that these challenges require concerted efforts to address them,

Underlining that limited productive capacity and financial resources, and weak and poor infrastructure, continue to pose serious obstacles to the development efforts of the least developed countries,

Reiterating our deep concern that the ongoing impacts of economic and financial crisis, combined with volatile energy and food prices, problems of food security, rising unemployment and increasing challenges posed by climate change, natural disasters and the loss of biodiversity, are threatening the development gains that least developed countries made arduously over the years,

Recognizing that least developed countries deserve particular attention and special and well-targeted support in line with their development strategies to address their development needs and specific challenges in a coherent manner in trade, investment, finance, including official development assistance (ODA), technology and capacity-building,

Expressing our full support for least developed countries' development efforts to achieve people-centred sustainable development,

Underscoring that least developed countries represent an enormous untapped human and natural resource potential, in particular their young populations, to contribute to national development, poverty eradication, and job creation, as well as global economic growth and welfare,

Recognizing the need for enhancing the voice and participation of least developed countries in relevant multilateral institutions and international forums,

Emphasizing the importance of the outcomes of all major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields, including the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development, the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development ("Johannesburg Plan of Implementation"), the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development and the outcome document of the High-Level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals, which play a vital role in shaping a broad development vision of the United Nations and constitute complementary frameworks for the development activities of least developed countries,

Having adopted a Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the decade 2011-2020,

Declare that:

1. We collectively commit to finding lasting solutions to the complex and mutually exacerbating challenges and problems of the least developed countries. We are committed to assisting the least developed countries with an overarching goal of enabling half of them to meet the criteria for graduation through the eradication of

poverty and the achievement of accelerated, sustained, inclusive and equitable growth and sustainable development. Thus, we solemnly commit ourselves to implementing this Programme of Action throughout the coming decade.

2. We are convinced that the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and the Istanbul Programme of Action provide positive momentum for the sustainable development of least developed countries by enhancing solidarity with the cause of least developed countries and increasing awareness of their specific conditions. Our renewed and strengthened global partnership will make a significant contribution to the common endeavours towards the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action and the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

3. We stress that the goals and targets of this Programme of Action can be achieved with renewed and strengthened global partnership, enhanced commitments, increased mobilization of resources for least developed countries' development and greater aid effectiveness. We commit to further strengthening our support to least developed countries in creating a favourable environment for sustainable development, increasing productive capacities, the diversification of economies and building necessary infrastructure.

4. We underscore that the ownership, leadership and primary responsibility for development in least developed countries rests with the least developed countries themselves. Good governance, inclusiveness and transparency, as well as domestic resource mobilization, are central to the development process of the least developed countries. These efforts need to be given concrete and substantial international support in a spirit of shared responsibility and mutual accountability through renewed and strengthened global partnership.

5. We recognize least developed countries' efforts to make progress in human and social development, including providing access to essential services such as education, health, water and sanitation, and shelter, as well as promoting participation in social, economic and political life. We encourage further progress in these areas.

6. We underline that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are central to achieving better development outcomes, including all internationally agreed development goals as well as the Millennium Development Goals, and are essential to making progress towards social and human development and the eradication of poverty in least developed countries.

7. We affirm that ODA has a key role to play in support of least developed countries' development. In this regard, donor countries take upon themselves to fulfil all the ODA commitments to the least developed countries. They should review their ODA commitments in 2015 and consider further enhancing the resources for the least developed countries.

8. We recognize that productive capacity-building is a development multiplier and that the renewed and strengthened partnership should give priority to this issue in the next decade in a coherent manner. In this regard:

(a) We underscore that reliable and affordable infrastructure services such as electricity, transport, information and communications technology and water, as well

as institutional capacity, are critically important for building viable productive capacity in the least developed countries;

(b) We underline that a dynamic, well-functioning and socially responsible private sector, small and medium-sized enterprises in particular, and an appropriate legal framework are crucial in promoting entrepreneurship, investment, competition, innovation and economic diversification as well as achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all; are committed to creating conducive domestic and international environments in which the private sector can invest and contribute more to economic growth and sustainable development; and take note of the contributions of the High-Level Meeting on Investment and Partnerships, the Global Business Partnership Forum and the Trade Fair at the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries;

(c) We recognize the importance of the mobilization of domestic and external financial resources, including ODA, foreign direct investment, concessional lending and private flows such as remittances, as vital parts of national and international development efforts; and underline the need for enhanced support for investments, including capacity-building, to improve the environment for investment in productive sectors and infrastructure that would help the least developed countries in diversifying their economies;

(d) We undertake to promote access of least developed countries to knowledge, information, technology and know-how and to support the least developed countries in improving their scientific and innovative capacity needed for their structural transformation; agree to undertake a joint gap and capacity analysis with the aim of establishing a Technology Bank and a science, technology and innovation-supporting mechanism dedicated to the least developed countries' building on existing international initiatives; and welcome the generous offer of the Government of Turkey to host an International Science, Technology and Innovation Centre and encourage commitments in this regard;

(e) We underscore that integrated and sustainable agriculture and rural development policies and practices, focusing particularly on small-scale farmers and agro-businesses, as well as increased investments in least developed countries, are essential to the eradication of poverty and hunger and the achievement of food and nutritional security;

(f) We acknowledge the great potential of regional economic integration and cooperation in creating new opportunities for trade, investment, production, supply chains, and markets through improved infrastructure and connectivity; and underscore that regional integration and cooperation efforts involving least developed countries should be further enhanced and supported with the contributions of relevant regional organizations and institutions.

9. We reaffirm that international trade remains a key driver of economic growth and sustainable development in least developed countries. We strongly call on all World Trade Organization members to intensify their negotiating efforts to bring the World Trade Organization Doha Round to a successful conclusion. We commit to the realization of the timely implementation of duty-free and quota-free market access, on a lasting basis, for all least developed countries, consistent with the Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration adopted by the World Trade Organization in 2005. We commit to ensuring that preferential rules of origin applicable to imports from least

developed countries are simple, transparent and predictable and contribute to facilitating market access. We emphasize the need for implementing effective trade-related technical assistance and capacity-building to least developed countries on a priority basis, including by enhancing the share of assistance to least developed countries for aid for trade and support for the Enhanced Integrated Framework, as appropriate, to help least developed countries to build their supply-side capacity, trade-related infrastructure and trade facilitation. In this regard, we emphasize the role of all relevant international agencies and organizations. We also underline that the accession of least developed countries to the World Trade Organization should be encouraged and facilitated.

10. New innovative finance mechanisms have potential to contribute to the development of least developed countries. Such voluntary mechanisms should be effective and should aim to mobilize resources that are stable and predictable, which should supplement and not be a substitute for traditional sources of finance and be disbursed in accordance with the priorities of least developed countries and not unduly burden them.

11. We are concerned that many least developed countries still struggle with a high debt burden. This situation demands the continued implementation of bold and comprehensive measures with a view to addressing the debt challenges of least developed countries effectively and equitably. Long-term sustainability of debt depends on, inter alia, responsible lending and borrowing by all creditors and debtors, sustainable economic growth, structural transformation in least developed countries and enhanced market prospects for least developed countries.

12. We emphasize the urgent need to strengthen the capacity of least developed countries in building long-term resilience to mitigate crises and effectively respond to economic shocks. We underline the need for appropriate regional and international support to be deployed in a timely and targeted manner to complement least developed countries' efforts to this end, such as the support mechanisms designed and implemented by international financial institutions, including regional development banks and others.

13. We acknowledge the adverse impact of climate change on least developed countries and share the aim to strengthen their capacity to adapt to and mitigate climate change, bearing in mind the provisions of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The mobilization and provision of additional, adequate and predictable financial resources are necessary to address least developed countries' adaptation and mitigation needs. We welcome the decision to establish the Green Climate Fund and are looking forward to its full operationalization. We also acknowledge the need to reduce their vulnerability to natural disasters through disaster preparedness and risk reduction, as well as resilience-building. We also underscore the need for access of the least developed countries to appropriate, affordable and clean technologies that foster their sustained economic growth and sustainable development.

14. We recognize that the graduation process of least developed countries should be coupled with an appropriate package of incentives and support measures so that the development process of the graduated country will not be jeopardized. In this context, we will work on the development and implementation of smooth transition strategies for graduating and graduated least developed countries. We look forward

to the establishment of an ad hoc working group to further study and strengthen the smooth transition process.

15. In view of the increasingly important role of South-South cooperation in least developed countries' development, we underline the need to fully harness the opportunities offered by South-South cooperation as a complement to, but not a substitute for, North-South cooperation. We are convinced that least developed countries benefit from enhanced and mainstreamed triangular cooperation. We seek to achieve specific development results as articulated in least developed countries' national development plans and priorities, based on solidarity and partnership within the context of South-South cooperation.

16. We acknowledge the important role of parliaments in debating development strategies, as well as in overseeing their implementation. The engagement of parliaments will ensure effectiveness, transparency and accountability in the design, the implementation and the review of the policies and programmes in the context of the Istanbul Programme of Action. We take note of the Parliamentary Message to the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

17. We call on civil society, including non-governmental organizations, voluntary associations and philanthropic foundations, the private sector, academia and other relevant stakeholders at all levels to enhance their roles in the development efforts of least developed countries, as appropriate. We also take note of the Civil Society Forum Declaration of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

18. We reaffirm the critical importance of effective and efficient follow-up and monitoring mechanisms at the national, regional and global levels to assess progress in the implementation of commitments and actions contained in the Programme of Action, including by conducting a high-level comprehensive midterm review. We invite the Secretary-General of the United Nations to ensure that the Istanbul Programme of Action is followed up in an effective, efficient and visible manner.
