



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

Second Committee of the General Assembly

Agenda item 55: Third United Nations Conference on the
Least Developed Countries

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Mr. Chairperson,

I am pleased to have the opportunity of today's debate on the Least Developed Countries to highlight the role of parliaments in support of the Brussels Programme of Action (BPOA) as well as the IPU's institutional support of the UN as we move toward the Fourth Conference on the LDCs in 2011.

As we all know, the achievement of the BPOA's broad objectives depends in the first instance on the improvement of governance in the countries concerned. Parliaments can and should play a robust role in putting together the building blocks of governance that create a propitious environment for the realization of the BPOA's goals. As we said in our parliamentary message to the Third United Nations Conference on the LDCs: *parliamentarians are particularly conscious of the imperative of good governance as a precondition for effective forms of sustainable development.*

Indeed, the institution of parliament is central to good governance and by extension to development. The BPOA and the MDGs give parliaments an opportunity to make a veritable impact on the lives of their peoples. Nevertheless most parliaments in LDC countries are weak in the face of dominant executive arms of government and are all too often beset by inefficient practices and a lack of resources and skills, which prevents them from fully exercising their oversight and legislative functions. This situation is aggravated by the fact that many LDC parliaments are operating in conflict and post-conflict contexts and are obliged to divert their efforts to restore normality to their States at the expense of long-term development planning.

We owe it to the peoples of the LDCs to work towards correcting these discrepancies. We are pleased to be working with the UN, particularly the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed, Land-Locked and Small Island Countries (OHRLLS), in a bid to address some of the challenges LDC parliaments are facing. Our efforts are focused on building strong coalitions within some of these parliaments to tackle the key issues of governance and mainstream the objectives of the BPOA into national development strategies. In so doing, we are anxious to ensure that these strategies reflect the priorities and needs of the people they are intended to serve. As part of the democratic process, we also want to ensure that parliaments can indeed hold their governments accountable for the implementation of these strategies.

One manifestation of the general weakness of parliaments in LDCs is that most of them are ill equipped to develop and sustain a consistent focus on the implementation of the BPOA. This is why the IPU and the UN-OHRLLS have developed a project that seeks a more active role for parliaments in sensitizing the public about the BPOA, in initiating debate around its various provisions, and in ensuring effective implementation. The project began with a meeting of 10 pilot LDC parliaments held in Tanzania in December 2007 which helped

conceptualize and assist participants in developing Parliamentary Support Groups to promote parliamentary involvement in the BPOA. The meeting also helped establish contact with national LDC focal points and UN representatives in the field who will eventually provide essential assistance to the parliamentary groups.

Participants to the meeting resolved to encourage their parliaments to be more active in fostering implementation of the BPOA, making maximum use of existing mechanisms within their parliaments. They also highlighted, among other things, the need for parliaments to be proactive in overseeing development assistance, ensuring that it corresponds to the real needs of society and does not reflect solely the perceived priorities of donors.

In its next phase, the IPU-OHRLLS project will be extended to all 49 LDC parliaments with a number of field missions to the parliaments organized with the support of focal points and UN resident coordinators.

As a corollary to this, the IPU is also working to strengthen parliamentary involvement in the management of official development assistance which will result in enhanced ownership of ODA at the country level. To this effect, we are initiating at least two case studies, one of which will be in Zambia, to illustrate how parliament interacts with the donor community to help improve the effectiveness of official development assistance at the country level.

Mr. Chairperson,

Institutional cooperation between the IPU and the UN with respect to the LDCs goes well beyond the project level. We are pleased to be part of the preparatory process for the fourth conference in 2011. As outlined in the note by the Secretary General (A/63/284), parliaments are invited to be involved in both national and regional levels of the preparatory process which are to take place beginning next year. The IPU will seek to facilitate this interaction. At the global level of the preparatory process, the IPU will organize a forum whose outcome will feed directly into the conference proper. In addition to this, the IPU will continue to contribute to the inter-agency consultations planned through 2011.

We are pleased with the way the preparatory process for the fourth conference has been articulated by the Secretary General. In particular, we share in his concern that the process be informed by key principles such as “genuine partnership” and “country ownership.” That is in fact the spirit with which we are coming to the table, and we are confident that it will bear the expected results.

Thank you.