



# INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

## Second Committee of the General Assembly

### Agenda item 23 (a): Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

United Nations, 18 October 2010

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#### **STATEMENT by Alessandro Motter, Senior Liaison Officer**

Chairperson,

This session of the General Assembly marks the end of the decade of the Brussels Programme of Action (BPOA). With preparations well underway for a new global programme to emerge out of next year's fourth conference in Istanbul, I would like to take this opportunity to once again look at this whole issue from a parliamentary perspective

Although progress has been made within the LDCs, a great deal of work remains to be done. Just consider this simple math: at the current graduation rate, it will take several more decades for the category of LDCs to be abolished altogether. We must do better than that - and indeed we can do better, if we plan appropriately and mobilize all the necessary resources and political will.

The BPOA was a good plan, but in the light of ten years of lessons learned, successes and failures, we now need a much stronger plan that captures the new challenges ahead for the LDCs in a changing global economy, and that recognizes the role of all actors involved in the development process. Governments can't do it alone. From our perspective, that means that the new plan must first and foremost correct an obvious omission of the BPOA, with its total silence on the role of parliaments in both developed and developing countries in supporting the renewal of the LDCs on all fronts – social, economic and political.

During a recent Briefing Session on LDC IV that we organized for our members in Geneva, the High Representative, Mr. Diarra, stated that "there have been incremental positive changes among the LDCs towards improving governance". This is certainly a step in the right direction. However, for further progress it must be recognised that the LDCs will only be able to mobilize their own human, natural, and financial resources for development, and make the best of external support, when their principal decision-making organ, parliament, assumes its rightful role in the development process.

Chairperson,

Parliaments, with their budgetary, legislative, representative and oversight functions, hold an essential position in the design, implementation and review of **all** international commitments, not only those related to the LDCs. The importance of the inclusion of parliaments in national and international affairs cannot be over-emphasised.

Good governance is a fundamental requirement for sustainable development. Indeed, the institution of parliament is central to good governance and by extension to development. Parliaments have the ability to mainstream the objectives of the new programme of action into their national development strategies. Parliaments can also hold their governments accountable for the implementation of these strategies.

In the context of good governance, parliaments continue to face many challenges. Many LDC parliaments continue to suffer the legacy of rubber stamp institutions, and their weak capacities continue to limit their participation in both national and international activities. In order to obtain a parliamentary dimension to the new programme of action, it is essential that the executive branch of LDC governments support their parliaments by providing them with the means to carry out their functions. The same support should be provided by donors and other development partners.

As the lead agency responsible for the parliamentary track of LDC IV, the IPU is encouraging parliaments to ensure that there is a parliamentary dimension to the LDC process. Parliaments are taking up the challenge, and many have participated in the national and regional reviews of the BPOA. The aforementioned Briefing provided parliaments with the opportunity to reflect on their role in this process so far, and discuss the priority areas they wish to see included in the new programme of action.

Firstly, parliaments recognized the need to become involved in all development activities, and not limit themselves to those related to good governance. It must be acknowledged that the achievement of development goals rests upon the support of parliamentarians, as the representatives of the people. Parliaments are key to ensuring a sense of national ownership of the programme of action.

Secondly, parliaments felt that the BPOA did not take the situation of "fragile states" into great enough consideration. It is not possible to have a "one size fits all" programme of action, but the programme must acknowledge, and cater for, the unique differences between LDCs.

Lastly, if parliaments are to ensure the implementation of the new programme of action, their mandate must be referred to within the programme of action itself. By formally recognising parliaments' role in this process, parliaments will be provided with an additional tool for assuming their responsibilities.

Chairperson,

This is the first time that parliaments have been involved at such an early stage in this planning process. The briefing was one of several IPU activities leading up to the Parliamentary Forum - an official pre-conference event - which will be held with the co-sponsorship of the host country's parliament (Grand National Assembly). Currently, the IPU is encouraging all LDC parliaments to engage with their government counterparts without delay, so as to ensure the inclusion of their views in the new programme of action. At the IPU, we look forward to working with the UN and partner agencies through the inter-agency process to help inform that discussion from the very start.

Despite remaining obstacles, there is a momentum of parliamentary participation being built within this process. We have worked hard to make that happen, and hope that you will support us in this effort in the critical months ahead.

Thank you.