



Remarks by H.E. Dr. A. K. Abdul Momen, Ambassador & Permanent Representative of
Bangladesh to UN as Moderator at the side event on MDGs in LDCs – Lessons Learned and Best
Practices

Conference Room 7, NLB, 14 November 2013, 1315 – 1430 hrs

Good Afternoon.

Honorable Speaker Dr. Shireen Sharmin Chowdhury, Excellencies, dear colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen.

In 2000, the global leadership had the vision to come up with the Millennium Declaration and soon they adopted 8 Millennium Development Goals popularly known as MDGs. They set the target date to achieve them by 2015. Goal-1 was to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger and reduce it by half, goal-2 achieve universal primary education, goal-3 to promote gender equality and empower women, goal-4 to reduce child mortality, goal-5 to improve maternal health, goal-6 to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, immunization coverage, goal-7, ensure environmental sustainability, halve by 2015 the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation, and goal-8, develop global partnership for development. Bangladesh either has achieved or on track in achieving most of MDG goals. For example, it has reduced poverty from 56.7% in 1991 to below 26% now and poverty gap also reduced to 6.5 against 2015 target of 8. Unfortunately, many LDCs are yet to achieve or on target in achieving these MDG goals. There are only around 800 days remaining to achieve the MDG goals and therefore, this special session of today that will outline the success stories of Bangladesh, a resource constraint, one of the most densely populated and climatically vulnerable country in achieving the MDG goals, and I have no doubt this session hopefully will provide food for thought in strategizing action program for others to achieve MDG goals in most expedited and efficient manner.

While we share success stories, let me remind the audience that although since 2000, progress has been made in reducing poverty rate yet nearly a billion people go to bed without food. In 1971, there were only 25 LDCs, now there are 49 countries where nearly 880 million people live and half of them live below the poverty level. In 1971, the share of LDCs to global trade was

only 1% and after almost 42 years, their share is still stagnating at around 1.19 per cent and secondly, most of the LDCs are still dependent on a limited number of primary commodities and thus highly exposed to price volatility and global market conditions. This situation has thus led them to high balance of payment deficits and has weakened their fiscal space. They are still dependent on aid or Official Development Assistance or ODA that is dwindling. For example, the development partners repeatedly promised to provide 0.7 of their GNI to developing countries and more specifically .15 to .20 of their GNI to LDCs. Unfortunately, except few, they hardly kept their promise. In fact, gap of not meeting their commitment is bigger than their payment. Let me share couple of statistics.

As per their commitment, the Development Partners were supposed to extend \$300.6 billion ODA in 2012. Unfortunately, they paid only \$125.9 billion in 2012 leaving a gap of \$171.7 billion. In case of LDCs, as per commitment, they were supposed to pay \$64.7 to \$86.2 billion in 2012. In fact, they paid only \$44.7 billion in 2012. Instead of .15-.20 of their GNI, the gap is between 0.05 and 0.10 per cent of their GNI.

This is not all. We all know that 'trade is a vehicle of development'. Our development partners agreed to allow duty-free-quota-free access of LDC goods to their markets. In fact, all UN member states agreed to establish, I quote, 'an open, equitable, rule-based predictable and non-discriminatory multilateral trading and financial system', unquote. Unfortunately, the poorer countries, the LDCs, the most vulnerable ones are being denied of free access to developed markets. In addition, the G-20 pledged to resist protectionism measures and to rectify any protectionist measures taken in response to global financial crisis. Sadly, 79% of the protectionist measures introduced since the onset of the crisis are still to be eliminated and the gap to the DFQF access for LDC exports is still very high, nearly 17%. Under the circumstances, one may rightfully conclude that MDG-8, i.e. developing a solid Global Partnership is a long way to achieve.

In order to graduate from LDC status by 2020, the Istanbul Program of Action, or 4th LDCs Summit in 2011 adopted 8 priority areas and among which (1) enhancing Productive Capacity for example, developing R & H, Railways, Maritime and Air Transport, ICT, Energy, Science, Technology and Innovation and (2) ensuring Food Security, (3) Doubling the LDC trade, (4) higher investment in Human and social development like education, training, health, youth development, shelter, water, sanitation, gender equality and empowerment and social protection and more importantly, (5) mobilizing financial resources for development and capacity building like ODA, FDI, etc. It was also agreed that development partners will not only meet their ODA commitments by 2015 but will also review further enhancing resources to LDCs. Unfortunately, we are still a long way in this critical area.

In 2010, the LDC HOSs/HOGs while reviewing and taking stock of the MDG achievements stated that LDCs can achieve the MDG goals provided the financial gap could be met.

The slow pace of development of the LDCs and their failing to achieve MDGs are their serious structural impediments to growth, and their low levels of social and human development. Therefore, it is essential for LDCs to improve their productive capacities for which they need adequate and predictable funding and such can only be achieved through a solid global partnership for a win-win situation for all. If LDCs improve, then the global community will move to a cycle of security, prosperity and stability. One cannot think of or achieve an inclusive development without development of LDCs. May I remind you all that MDGs were a partnership agreement between developing and development partners.

Good news is, few LDCs are performing well and Bangladesh is one of them. However, the LDCs can neither reach their MDG goals nor the IPoA goals within the stipulated time if the global community follow 'business-as-usual' approach. There has to be a big push..... without such a big push, LDCs are not going to reach their goals. Good news is, funds are available. Only we need to have a better mindset and prioritize our goals. As per SIPRI report, in 2012, the global community spent \$1,734 billion, I repeat \$1,734 billion for defense and it may be time to divert a significant portion of such resources to LDCs to help the humanity, to eradicate poverty and hunger. Once Mahatma Gandhi said and I quote. "God has created enough to meet the needs of people but not enough to meet the greed of few". To have a pro-people and pro-planet earth, we must overcome greed, and work together for a prosperous, stable and peaceful world. With this few words, I would like to give the floor to H. E. Gyan Chandra Acharya, Under Secretary General and High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS. You have the floor Sir.