

SPEECH: OPENING REMARKS BY H. E. Dr Mohamed Ibn CHAMBAS ACP SECRETARY-GENERAL DURING THE INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE OPEN ENDED AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON THE UN FOURTH LDC CONFERENCE ACP House - 10H00 – Friday, 11 February 2011

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I am happy to welcome you all to the inaugural Meeting of the open ended Ad Hoc Working Group that has been convened to prepare the participation of the ACP Group at the Fourth United Nations LDC Conference that is due to be held in Istanbul, Turkey.

You may be aware that the United Nations LDC Conferences are held every Ten years. The First and Second conferences were held in Paris in 1981 and 1990 respectively, while the Third meeting was held in Brussels in 2001. It is the latter Conference that came up with the Brussels Programme of Action. The preparations for the coming Conference provide an opportunity for an in-depth reflection on the continued vulnerabilities faced by the LDCs.

An assessment will be made of the progress made so far by the LDCs, the obstacles and constraints encountered and the actions and initiatives needed to overcome them. Major developments have taken place globally which present a different economic and political landscape from the one prevailing a decade ago during the Third Conference. There seems to be a shift of power and influence from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Emerging economies have increased their share in global trade and foreign direct investment flows. Migration patterns are changing. New economic relations are being forged with the emerging economies. Furthermore, significant structural changes have taken place on the global governance stage, with the emergence of the G-20 leaders' summits which formally comprise some countries of the South. For most of the LDCs, the challenges have not diminished.

Additional development support is needed in the wake of the multiple global crises, food, energy, financial and economic, as well as climate change, that have had a specific, negative impact on LDCs' economic and social development and threaten to roll back much of the hard-fought advances made. The continued rising of food and fuel prices continues to hit the most vulnerable people the hardest, particularly those living in LDCs.

Indeed LDCs have also particularly suffered from the impacts of the global financial crisis and the resulting global economic recession; and the drastic effects of climate change are already being experienced by many LDCs. These are serious challenges and therefore it is imperative that the LDC issues should remain high in the global agenda.

As you know, the ACP Group has 40 out of the 49 Least Developed Countries recognized by the United Nations. It is for this reason that the Committee of Ambassadors at its 836th Session established this Ad hoc Working Group, to work under its supervision. The Secretariat has moved with speed to organize today's meeting in view of the short time left before the Conference takes place on 9 – 13 May 2011.

In addition to convening this meeting today, the Secretariat suggested that although the Ad Hoc Working group is open ended, it was necessary to put in place a core group of two members per delegation which will be tasked with committed participation and follow-up of the mandate of the Working group.

In this regard, the Secretariat sent out a Note Verbale inviting ACP Regions to nominate their representatives. In accordance with available responses and information that has been received, the representation will be as follows: CARIBBEAN – Haiti and Dominica Republic CENTRAL AFRICA - EAST AFRICA - PACIFIC - SOUTH AFRICA - WEST AFRICA – I appeal to those regions that have not done so to nominate their representatives so that the Ad Hoc Working Group can be duly constituted. Now, with regard to today's meeting, we have proposed three main items on the agenda for your consideration. The first is to update you on the preparations conducted so far; the second is to propose a strategy that the ACP Group should adopt in preparing and participating at the Conference; and the third is to consider a guiding time table and work programme. In order to steer your work, some consultations have been held and His Excellency the Ambassador of Mali has been designated to Chair this Ad Hoc Working Group. If there is no objection, I propose that we approve his appointment with acclamation.

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