

Pre-conference Event: Reducing vulnerability due to Climate Change, Climate Variability and Extremes, Land Degradation and Biodiversity Loss: Challenges and Opportunities for Least Developed Countries
New York, 28th February 2011

Presentation by Ambassador Jarmo Viinanen, Permanent Representative of Finland to the UN, Chairman of the Preparatory Committee

Mr. Chairman,
Honorable Ministers,
Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to UNFCCC and the Office of the High Representative for organizing this very important pre-conference event. It is an honor and pleasure to say a few words about how climate change and other environment-related issues are being reflected in the intergovernmental preparations leading up to Istanbul.

Mr. Chairman,

During the preparatory process so far, and especially at today's event, it has become clear that reducing LDC's vulnerability and improving LDC's capacity to cope with emerging challenges such as climate change have to and will be a key priority for Istanbul. Climate change disproportionately affects the LDC's. It threatens to reverse development gains and multiply problems related to for example food security, water scarcity and energy security. It has also been noted that environmental sustainability presents opportunities for LDC's long-term growth and development.

Allow me to start with few words on the negotiation process. A new Chair's draft Programme of Action, which I have prepared together with the vice-chairs from Turkey and Ethiopia and with the support of the Office of the High Representative, has been circulated last Friday. The draft is based on the inputs by all Member States, with LDC group expectations at the core, as LDCs ownership and leadership is crucial. The vice-chairs from Turkey and Ethiopia and I hope that Member States will accept this draft as a basis for negotiations and agree to begin the first reading this Wednesday, 2nd of March. Our time is limited, and we hope to be able intensify the pace of negotiations as of this week until the second PrepCom in April, and aim at concluding at the end of the second PrepCom.

The new Chair's draft Programme of Action contains six sections:

1. An introduction section, including objectives and principles, outlining new global realities and the role of the development partners, and setting the stage for the renewed global partnership between LDC's and their development partners;
2. A review section, assessing the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action and lessons learned;
3. An action section, identifying priority areas for action as well as related LDC specific goals and targets, and actions and measures to be taken jointly and individually by LDC's and their development partners. The priority areas are: productive capacity, agriculture, food security and rural development, commodities and trade, human and social development, gender equality and the empowerment of women, multiple crises and other emerging challenges, financial resources for development and capacity building, and good governance at all levels.
4. A section on graduation and smooth transition;
5. And finally, a section on implementation, follow-up and monitoring.

Climate change and other environment-related issues are reflected both as specific priorities and linked to other key objectives in the draft Programme of Action.

Let me give a few examples. In the section on multiple crises and other emerging challenges, we address as specific priority areas both climate change mitigation and adaptation and environmental sustainability, as well disaster risk reduction. The draft takes up climate change as a threat to the livelihoods of millions of poor and vulnerable people in LDC's as well as the urgent need for technical and financial support for climate change mitigation and adaptation for LDC's. The draft also highlights the opportunities for LDC's to enhance climate and environment friendly economic growth and to leapfrog into sustainable development paths.

When it comes to actions, for LDC's this means developing and implementing national development strategies and policies and taking effective national measures. For development partners, this means making available funding, simplifying procedures, ensuring adequate representation, providing access to technology and implementing clean development mechanism projects in LDC's. One key aspect is addressing the special needs of climate vulnerable LDC's – small island LDC's are also the most vulnerable to natural disasters and need dedicated support in this regard.

In other sections in the draft, we address renewable energy as part of productive capacity development; the challenges posed by climate change and environmental degradation to agriculture and food security; and mainstreaming and mobilizing resources for the combat against desertification, land degradation and droughts in this regard. We also recognize the effects of climate change on human and social development.

As we are embarking upon negotiations for a renewed partnership between LDC's and their Development Partners, our task is to identify and reach agreement on new ways to further address the challenges faced by LDC's. These include the serious challenges posed by climate change, land degradation and biodiversity loss. Today's pre-conference event is very helpful in this regard. Today's presentations and discussions refine our understanding of these complex issues, specifically in relation to the LDC's, and give delegations concrete ideas and arguments to bring forward in the negotiations. It is particularly helpful since many of these issues have been and are being dealt with in other conferences and processes such as in Cancun and Nagoya, as well as in the preparations towards Rio+20. It has been especially interesting and encouraging to hear practical country examples from a number of LDC's. It is important to have a good sense of what has worked and why.

From now on until May, we have to work hard to achieve an ambitious, forward-looking outcome that can and will be implemented by both LDC's and their development partners and will make a difference for the peoples of the LDC's.