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Statement

by

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for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing
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**at the Pre-Conference event on Reducing vulnerability due
to Climate Change, Climate Variability and Extremes,
Land Degradation and Biodiversity Loss: Environment
and Development Challenges and Opportunities for LDCs**

**United Nations Conference Room 7
New York
28 February 2011**

- Honourable Minister of Forestry and the Environment of The Gambia and Chair of the Least Developed Countries under UNFCCC
- Honourable Deputy Minister of Natural Resources, Energy and Environment of the Republic of Malawi
- Distinguished Permanent Representative of Nepal to the United Nations and Chairperson of the Global Coordination Bureau of LDCs
- Distinguished Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations and the host of the Fourth United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries
- Distinguished Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations and Chair of the Preparatory Committee of the Fourth United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries
- Executive Coordinator of The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio2012)
- Manager, Technical Support to Developing Countries, Financial and Technical Support Programme of the UNFCCC
- Excellencies
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to extend a very warm welcome to you all to this Pre-conference event on “Reducing vulnerability due to Climate Change, Climate Variability and Extremes, Land Degradation and Biodiversity Loss: Environment and Development Challenges and Opportunities for LDCs”.

At the outset let me start by thanking the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change for taking the lead and collaborating with us and the other partner institutions in organizing this event. Today’s

meeting is one of the various thematic pre-conference events that are being held as part of the preparatory process for the Fourth United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries that is going to be held from 9 to 13 May, 2011. Its outcomes will feed into the Outcome Document of the Fourth United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries Conference.

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you all know the environment pillar of sustainable development is critical for the LDCs to realize their development objectives and achieve the Millennium Development Goals. In recognition of the importance of this pillar, one of the seven commitments of the Brussels Programme of Action was on reducing vulnerability and protecting the environment.

Over the decade that the Brussels Programme of Action has been implemented we have all noted that climate change is having an undeniable impact on sustainable development in the Least Developed Countries. According to the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, some of the current and projected impacts of climate change on Least Developed Countries include: increased water stress; exacerbation of desertification, and deforestation; rising food insecurity due to increased climate variability; reduced potential for energy availability; increased risk of disease such as malaria, rift valley, cholera and meningitis; and degradation of coastal areas. African and Asian LDCs are negatively affected by extreme climate variability that has resulted in a high frequency of floods and droughts.

We have noted that climate change is already eroding decades of hard-won

development gains that have been achieved in LDCs. LDCs that are Small Island Developing States are already experiencing direct effects from rises in their sea-levels and decreases in fish stock as a result of rising temperatures. By 2020, in some African LDCs, yields from rain-fed agriculture could be reduced by up to 50% thereby severely compromising food and nutrition security. LDCs in South Asia have experienced losses of 30 to 40 percent in agricultural productivity due to the adverse impact of climate change.

Land degradation remains a major challenge in African and Asian LDCs. In some countries the share of degraded land accounts for almost 50% of the total land. LDCs are also experiencing large land and marine biodiversity losses exacerbated by climate change. I am sure that presenters who have come from the capitals are going to share more information on their country experiences on Climate Change, Climate Variability and Extremes, Land Degradation and Biodiversity Loss.

Excellencies

Distinguished participants,

The LDCs lack the necessary institutional, economic and financial capacity to cope with the impacts of climate change and to rebuild the infrastructure damaged by the climate extremes and sea level rise due to global warming. They also already suffer from multiple stresses, even without climate change. Some of the constraints include disadvantageous geographical location, high population density, long coastal belts, arid and semi-arid conditions, poor primary health care systems, high levels of and widespread poverty, policy and institutional weaknesses, low human capability development, shortage of financial resources, and lack of technological advancement. As a result, they face severe constraints

to achieving their development and poverty reduction goals.

There is need for concerted and coherent efforts in urgently tackling these development challenges for the LDCs. The LDCs, do not only need increased resources for climate change mitigation, and adaptation and to adequately protect their environment, but they also need increased development assistance to structurally transform their economies so as to realize higher economic growth and substantially reduce poverty to help them pursue sustainable development pathways while protecting and conserving their environments at the same time. They also need better technologies and strengthening of their institutional and technical capacities to be able to respond to the challenges brought on by climate change and other environmental pressures and to protect and preserve their often unique bio-diversity.

Excellencies

Distinguished participants,

As I already indicated earlier, the fourth UN Conference on LDCs is scheduled to take place in Istanbul, Turkey from 9 to 13 May 2011 at the highest level. The discussions on Istanbul Programme of Action have already begun following the first session of the Preparatory Committee that was successfully held in January. Distinguished Permanent Representative of Finland, who is the Chairperson of the PrepCom bureau, is working on a Chair's text, which will be submitted to the Member States soon for negotiation.

The theme of this pre-conference is one of the key priority areas that has been identified in regional review meetings, other pre-conference events, and in the first session of the Preparatory Committee as an important area for developing

partnership in the next decade.

In our meeting today, I expect that our deliberations would generate concrete ideas and recommendations on deliverables in the area of Climate Change, Climate Variability and Extremes, Land Degradation and Biodiversity Loss. Let us critically review the progress made in addressing the BPoA commitment on reducing vulnerability and protecting the environment and the constraints experienced in responding to the threats posed by climate change. Let us identify the priority areas of effective international support that can successfully support LDCs to manage climate change, climate variability and extremes, land degradation and biodiversity loss and suggest concrete proposals that can be included in the new Programme of action.

In conclusion, I call upon all of you to engage actively and constructively in the debate today.

I thank you all for your kind attention.