

**Statement by His Honourable Jato
S. Sillah,
Minister for Forestry and the
Environment,
The Gambia,
at
the Pre-Conference event on
'Reducing vulnerability due to
Climate Change, Climate
Variability and Extremes, Land
Degradation and Biodiversity
Loss: Environmental and
Developmental Challenges and
Opportunities for LDCs'**

28 February 2011, New York

Your Excellency, Mr. Chieck Sidi Diara, Under Secretary- General and High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States,

Mr. William Kofo Agyemang Bonsu, Manager of Financial and Technical Support Programm of the UNFCCC,

Your Excellency Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya, The Chairman of LDC Group, Permanent Mission of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal to the United Nations

Your Excellency Mr. Ertugrul Apakan, Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations,

Honourable Ministers from Ethiopia, Bangladesh and Kiribati

Representatives of the World Bank,

Representative of UNEP

Representative of the WMO

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen

The LDC-IV Conference, which is the only major UN Conference solely dedicated to development issues of the 48 LDCs, is being held at a time when the international community continues to grapple with the impacts of multiple yet mutually reinforcing economic, financial, as well as food and fuel crises. Needless to say, in the wake of these crises and climate change, LDCs' vulnerabilities have been further accentuated.

It is universally known that LDCs continue to face structural constraints and extreme vulnerability. Despite their best efforts and support from the international community, LDCs continue to get caught in the vicious trap of poverty and hunger. They starkly lag behind in meeting the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration.

While some progress has been achieved in some areas over the years, the overall progress has been slow and uneven, and whatever has been achieved is now reversed as a result of the combined effects of the financial, economic, food, fuel and climate change crises.

Mr. Chairman,

Please allow me to put emphasis on climate change in my talk.

Climate change is one of the most complex and urgent challenges facing humanity today. It is a global crisis that has deep impact for the planet and its people. The

extreme weather events caused by climate change such as droughts, floods and storms are often traumatic experiences for those affected, causing untold destruction to lives, livelihoods, and natural resources. However, of the world's inhabitants, it is the citizens of the LDCs who are the most vulnerable, due to a combination of environmental vulnerability, inadequate resources and poverty.

Progress towards attaining the MDGs, such as reducing poverty and hunger, combating communicable diseases, and ensuring environmental sustainability, are all in jeopardy due to the unpredictable effects of climate change. Inundation or submersion of low-lying coastal areas due to sea level rise and displacement of huge populations, intrusion of saline water and thereby creating scarcity of drinking water, reduction in agricultural yields and increased health hazards are some of the examples that climate change can reverse whatever little progress that has been made regarding the MDGs in the LDCs.

Mr. Chairman,

Whereas mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions is one of the primary cures to limit the escalating change in climate, there is already unavoidable damage due to the adverse effects of the current change in climate that has taken place, still taking place, and will continue to do so even if emissions stopped today. For the Least Developed Countries, this is the greatest nightmare, if not a catastrophe. Therefore for LDCs, avoiding or minimizing the impacts of the adverse effects of climate change therefore means adapting and living with them for now and for the foreseeable future.

To the LDCs, adaptation to climate change means: addressing the urgent and immediate effects of climate change that they are entangled in today; it means building requisite capacity, measures and policies to deal with the new challenges posed by climate change that emerge every day; it means climate proofing our social and economic development for today and for the future, all in a sustainable manner.

Taking for example agriculture and food security in my own country, The Gambia, in order to adapt to climate change, we need crop diversification, integrated pest management, poultry and livestock production to minimize total crop production failures, Early maturing crop varieties, promotion of irrigation for horticultural crop production especially upland crop and other short cycles of crops as well as the introduction of aquaculture for the supply of required protein.

For LDCs to achieve all this would require: adequate and good quality planning and policy frameworks for adaptation; requisite institutions for research, planning, implementation and coordination; massively scaled up programmes to provide finance, technology and capacity building to support research, planning and implementation of adaptation.

Mr Chairman,

LDCs have over the years availed themselves, despite their capacity and structural constraints, in engaging on regional and global forums to communicate their acute problems with respect to climate change. They have committed to multilateral environment commitments to indicate their commitment to addressing climate change

problems. Most of them have participated and engaged in a number of initiatives including development of national plans to identify and alleviate impacts of climate change.

The recent Climate Change Conference that took place in Cancún in December 2011 indicated the continuing global commitment to support LDCs in addressing climate change. In addition to the progress by LDCs in preparing their national adaptation programmes of action (NAPAs) over the last 10 years, Parties continued to support the implementation of an LDC work programme that contains actions to support LDCs to deal with the adverse effects of climate change. This work programme is supported by, among others, an LDC Expert Group to provide technical guidance and advise, and an LDC Fund to provide financial resources for implementation. Parties also agreed to support LDCs in identification of medium- and long-term adaptation needs, their integration into development planning and the implementation of identified adaptation activities.

Mr. Chairman,

In order to move ahead and tackle the climate change problem, LDCs would need the support from development partners and the international community in strengthening their capacity and resources of LDCs to reduce vulnerability to climate change by

- Provision of adequate financial resources for meeting the impacts of climate change as determined by scientific analysis;
- Human and institutional capacity building support to undertake research, planning and implementation of adaptation measures and low carbon development strategies;
- Strengthening technological capacities of LDCs in order to adapt to climate change and to devise and implement low-carbon development strategies.

Mr. Chairman,

Istanbul should therefore produce a renewed partnership that is ambitious, comprehensive, forward-looking and result-oriented so that desired socio-economic transformation is achieved in LDCs in the next decade, enabling them to alleviate poverty, save lives and protect the environment. The progress that they will make has to be sustainable and comprehensive to have a desired impact on reducing poverty and accelerating economic growth.

Past experiences amply demonstrate that the ‘business-as-usual approach’ will not yield substantial result. What is required is an enhanced, effective and consolidated package of international support measures in line with GA resolution 63/227. We want an Action Agenda that is implemented in its entirety with stronger results on the ground. The Istanbul outcome should have a robust mechanism for monitoring and follow up of the implementation of the next Programme of Action with a clearly defined and shared accountability of LDCs and their development partners.

Finally, I hope that the Conference would further build on the special development needs of LDCs as expressed during the September High Level Review on the MDGs and will give direction on the needs for the LDCs to the 2012 UN Conference on sustainable development.

I thank you
