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BRUSSELS PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES FOR THE DECADE 2001–2010

An Update

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Note to the Executive Board



This document is submitted for approval to the Executive Board.

The Secretariat invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document to contact the WFP staff focal point indicated below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting.

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Chief, Inter-Agency Affairs (REC):

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Executive Summary

The Brussels Programme of Action (POA) for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) for the Decade 2001–2010 aims at achieving, with respect to LDCs, substantial progress in meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) of halving poverty by 2015 and promoting sustainable development. The Brussels POA prioritizes cross-cutting issues: poverty eradication, gender equality, employment, governance, capacity-building, special problems of landlocked and small island developing countries, and special problems faced by least developed countries affected by conflict. General Assembly resolution 56/227 of 24 December 2001 invited the United Nations system organizations to mainstream implementation of the Brussels Declaration and the POA for the LDCs for the Decade 2001–2010 within their programmes of work and in the intergovernmental processes. This resolution established the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS) in order to enhance the mobilization and galvanization of international support for—and ensure the effective coordination, monitoring and review of—the implementation of the Brussels POA. The OHRLLS has been setting its course and direction since it started functioning formally in April 2002. This paper urges the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action, and effective participation of the LDCs, donor countries, United Nations system organizations, multilateral organizations, civil society and the private sector.

Draft Decision*

The Executive Board:

- a) **welcomes** the endorsement of the Brussels Declaration (A/CONF.191/12) and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001–2010 (A/CONF.191/11) by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 55/279 of 12 July 2001;
- b) **notes** with appreciation the support given by WFP to the least developed countries (LDCs) in the areas of its mandate;
- c) **requests** WFP to continue to give special attention to LDCs in its programme activities and emphasizes the importance of the effective implementation of the Brussels Programme by WFP within its mandate;
- d) **invites** the Executive Director to mainstream the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action in WFP activities and in its intergovernmental processes, as called for in United Nations General Assembly resolutions 56/227, of 24 December 2001, and 57/L.60, of 17 December 2002.

* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the Decisions and Recommendations document issued at the end of the session.





PROGRAMME OF ACTION

FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES:

AN UPDATE

**Prepared by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries,
Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States**

Executive Board, World Food Programme
Rome, 5–7 February 2003



INTRODUCTION

1. The Brussels Programme of Action (POA) for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) for the Decade 2001–2010 is different from earlier programmes in terms of its objectives, orientation, scope and follow-up arrangements. The basic objective of the Brussels Programme of Action (BPOA) is to achieve, with respect to LDCs, substantial progress in meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) of halving poverty by 2015 and promoting sustainable development. Singled out in the Brussels POA as cross-cutting priority issues are: poverty eradication, gender equality, employment, governance, capacity-building, special problems of landlocked and small island developing countries, and special problems faced by least developed countries affected by conflict.
2. Soon after adoption of the Brussels POA in May 2001, the United Nations General Assembly, by its resolution 55/279 of 12 July 2001, endorsed the Brussels POA, and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), by its resolution 2001/320, decided to establish a follow-up mechanism for the review and coordination of the implementation of the Brussels Declaration and POA at its 2002 substantive session.
3. Since the Brussels Programme of Action was adopted, the international community took into account the concerns of the LDCs through major global conferences such as the Doha World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference (November 2001), the Monterrey International Conference on Financing for Development (March 2002), the mid-term review of the United Nations Conference on Trade (UNCTAD) X in Bangkok (April/May 2002), the G-8 Summit in Kananaskis (June 2002), and adoption of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) by the African Union in Durban (July 2002). The World Summit on Sustainable Development (September 2002) took into account the LDCs' concerns, particularly in the context of Commitment 6 of the BPOA. The Brussels POA's closer links with the outcome of these meetings would reinforce the opportunity for bringing tangible progress in the least developed countries. Overall, the new environment provides cause for positive expectation with regard to the development prospects in the least developed countries.
4. As a significant and critical departure from the first two Programmes of Action for LDCs, it was recommended that "an efficient and highly visible follow-up mechanism" be created to undertake the responsibilities related to the coordination, monitoring and review of the implementation of this POA. The Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS)—known by the acronym OHRLLS—was established on the recommendation of the Secretary-General of the United Nations by the General Assembly in its resolution 56/227 of 24 December 2001. The Office of the High Representative is located at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The office aims at enhancing the mobilization and galvanization of international support for—and ensuring the effective coordination, monitoring and review of—the implementation of the Brussels POA.



PROGRESS SINCE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE OFFICE OF THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE

5. The OHRLLS started functioning formally in April 2002. Since then, the office has been setting its course and direction and getting organized for its assigned tasks. In carrying out the mandate of the General Assembly and the Programme of Action, the Office has adopted a framework for action with four main elements:
 - a) It will focus on **country-level implementation**—both by the LDCs and by donor countries—to see to it that they are implementing their commitments made in the POA. The Office will work closely with the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) partners, including in particular the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), to ensure the full support of the Resident Coordinator system to the LDCs. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) processes in LDCs, as applicable, need to incorporate implementation of the POA.
 - b) It will work with all relevant **entities of the United Nations family**, in particular the Funds and Programmes, regional commissions, specialized agencies, and the Bretton Woods Institutions, to ensure that these entities mainstream the Brussels POA in their activities and in their intergovernmental processes, and to establish appropriate focal points for review and follow-up, as called for in the POA and General Assembly resolution 56/227.
 - c) It will work with **other multilateral organizations**, particularly regional organizations such as the African Union (AU) and sub-regional organizations such as the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the East African Community (EAC), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). Recent adoption of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) by the African Union provides an immense opportunity for reinforcing and complementing the development efforts in 34 African LDCs.
 - d) It will work closely with **civil society and the private sector**—both national and global—so that they are brought in as full development partners of the LDCs.
6. On 18 April 2002, soon after the establishment of the new office, the Permanent Representative of Benin to the United Nations, in his capacity as the global Chairperson of the LDC Coordinating Bureau, organized, the first meeting of the High Representative with the LDCs at the ambassadorial level. The issues discussed at the **LDC ambassadorial meeting** included the mandate of the Office of the High Representative given by the General Assembly, immediate tasks to be undertaken and the forthcoming activities of the office.
7. The Office of the High Representative was involved in three major intergovernmental processes for the first time. First, the Office prepared the first **Medium-Term Plan** on least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states as the new Programme 26 of the United Nations for the period 2002–2005 and presented it to the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly's **Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC)** on 12 June 2002. The Committee examined



Programme 26 and extended its full support. It recommended Programme 26 for adoption by the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

8. Second, as follow-up to its resolution 2001/320, the High Representative presented to the general segment of the **Economic and Social Council**, on 18 July 2002, an oral report on the work of the new office and follow-up responsibilities related to the Brussels Programme of Action to be undertaken by ECOSOC. Among other things, the Office recommended that ECOSOC set aside one day during the general segment at its annual substantive sessions for a specific review of the BPOA. It recommended that all efforts be made to adopt an implementation-focused outcome following such a review. It also urged the Council to reiterate the invitation of the General Assembly to organs of the United Nations system and other multilateral organizations to mainstream implementation of the BPOA within their respective frameworks. The Council was requested to devote the high-level segment of its 2004 substantive session for the review and coordination of the implementation of the Brussels Programme. Delegates expressed their full support for implementation of the BPOA.
9. Third, as a follow-up to General Assembly resolution 56/227, the High Representative presented, on 4 November 2002, the report of the Secretary-General: "Implementation of the Resolution 56/227 on the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries". The debate focused, *inter alia*, on the following issues: operationalization of the OHRLLS, implementation of the Brussels POA, annual review of ECOSOC, poverty eradication, countries emerging from conflicts, south-south cooperation, civil society and the private sector, and collaboration of OHRLLS and the United Nations system organizations. Following debate, the Second Committee approved resolution 57/L.60 on the Third Conference on the Least Developed Countries on 6 December 2002. The resolution, *inter alia*, reiterated its call to the governing bodies of the agencies and organizations of the United Nations system, international financial institutions and other multilateral organizations to mainstream implementation of the BPOA in their programmes of work and intergovernmental processes.
10. During the fifty-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly, the High Representative held discussions with a number of Heads of Delegations of the LDCs, donors, other developing countries and regional and sub-regional organizations, and requested them to enhance the implementation of the BPOA.
11. In its capacity as Chairperson of the LDC Group, the Government of Benin organized the Ministerial Conference of the Least Developed Countries in Benin (5–7 August 2002). The purpose of the meeting was to review the progress in implementation of the BPOA by the LDC themselves and by development partners. In the outcome document, "Cotonou Declaration", the Ministers called on LDCs and development partners to implement fully and effectively their commitments made in the Brussels Programme of Action, focusing on special support and initiatives for poverty eradication.
12. General Assembly resolution 56/227 of 24 December 2001 invited the United Nations system organizations to mainstream implementation of the Brussels Declaration and the POA for the LDCs for the Decade 2001–2010 within their programmes of work and in the intergovernmental processes. Responding to this call, the governing bodies of UNDP, UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), WTO, European Commission on Agriculture (ECA) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) have already adopted decisions to mainstream the Brussels POA within their



respective programmes of work. In the coming months, it is expected that other United Nations system entities will adopt similar decisions.

13. The High Representative held meetings in May 2002, with UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNCTAD, WTO, the International Trade Centre (ITC), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the ECA, the Organization of African Unity (OAU)/AU and the African Development Bank (AfDB), with regard to the involvement of these entities in the implementation of the Brussels POA. There were meetings also with representatives of civil-society organizations, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in New York and Geneva and of the private-sector organizations to discuss enhancing their participation in the implementation process.
14. In addition to meetings and contacts on a regular basis with the chairpersons of LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, the High Representative continues to hold regular discussions with the representatives of the donor community, including the European Union, Japan, Norway, the United States of America, and the World Bank.
15. In all these meetings with donor countries, United Nations system organizations, NGOs/civil society and the private sector, widespread support was extended by all for the effective implementation of the POA, including support to the Office of the High Representative in carrying out its tasks.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

16. The LDC 2002 report of UNCTAD released in June 2002 estimates that if the present trend continues, the number people living on less than US\$1 a day in the least developed countries will reach 420 million by 2015. The incidence of extreme poverty is highest in most LDCs.
17. The global campaign for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, which, *inter alia*, aim to address the needs of the LDCs, has put development of these countries high on the agenda of the United Nations. The success of the MDGs would depend in a very significant way on the success of the development efforts of the LDCs. There will be progress with regard to the development indicators contained in the MDGs if the LDCs do better when measured against such indicators. So, the MDGs and the Brussels POA are closely interlinked and mutually supportive.
18. It is important to draw lessons from the implementation experiences of the POAs of the United Nations Conference in 1981 (UNLDC I) and the United Nations Conference in 1990 (UNLDC II), when implementing the POA of the United Nations Conference in 2001 (UNLDC III). Some of the lessons are:
 - a) There must be a strong commitment and concerted efforts on the part of the LDCs themselves, and the international community should be forthcoming in supporting such efforts.
 - b) There is need for a clearly defined operational plan showing the actions and roles of stakeholders in implementing the various commitments contained in the POA, with properly sequenced priorities and coordinated actions at the national, regional/sub-regional, and global levels.



- c) Success in attaining the objectives of the POA will require effective functioning of the arrangements for continuous follow-up and coordination and for monitoring and review of the progress in implementation.
19. Challenges ahead in the coming months for the LDCs during implementation of the Brussels POA would require immediate engagement of the LDCs and their development partners in the following areas:
- a) The least developed countries should integrate the Brussels POA into their national development programmes. They should also appoint a high-level LDC focal point to monitor and follow-up on their national implementation and to work closely with the United Nations Resident Coordinator to facilitate reporting the progress to the United Nations.
 - b) The least developed countries should establish in their respective countries national arrangements that would be the platform for regular and systematic overseeing, through broad-based and inclusive dialogue, of progress in the implementation of the POA. The POA has recommended such arrangements, referring to them as a **national forum**. Such a forum might include policymakers, the private sector, NGOs/civil society, academics, foundations and the media.
 - c) Each LDC, with the support of its development partners, should promote, at the country level, implementation of the actions contained in the POA by translating them into specific measures within their national development frameworks and poverty eradication strategies, including their PRSPs, Common Country Assessments (CCAs), and the UNDAF, and should guide the effective implementation on the basis of broad-based inclusive dialogue.
 - d) The United Nations system organizations and other multilateral organizations that have not done so should mainstream implementation of the Brussels POA within their programmes of work.
 - e) The LDC representatives should effectively participate in the intergovernmental processes and coordination efforts. In this regard, the Office of the High Representative would continue to give full support to facilitate that participation. The decision of the UNICEF and UNDP Executive Boards should lead to similar actions in the upcoming meetings of the other relevant governing bodies.
 - f) The United Nations system organizations that have not yet established a focal point for LDCs will need to identify one soon.
 - g) The Office of the High Representative may consider establishing a trust fund for the LDCs at the United Nations to provide support for implementation of the Brussels POA and to support the Office of the Chairperson of the LDC Coordinating Bureau.
 - h) Official Development Assistance (ODA) remains a critical resource for achieving the objectives, goals and targets of the POA. It is essential to consider fully both the quantitative and the qualitative aspects of aid and its effective coordination. Enhancement of ODA to 0.20 percent, as agreed to in the United Nations conferences, will certainly have a significant impact on implementation of the POA.
 - i) The external debt overhang constitutes a serious obstacle to the development efforts and economic growth of LDCs. The serious debt problems of LDCs necessitate a comprehensive solution, including the full, speedy and effective implementation of the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) Debt Initiative and other debt-relief measures.



- j) A synoptic table/chart should be prepared by the Office of the High Representative for use and reference by ECOSOC for intergovernmental review and for monitoring of and follow-up on implementation of the POA by LDCs and their development partners.
- k) NGOs and civil society need to play an important role as development partners in the least developed countries. The private sector also needs to engage in providing effective support to LDCs' development objectives. Efforts should be made to enhance the involvement of these groups in implementation of the POA.

THE WAY FORWARD

- 20. With more than 600 million people, the LDCs face formidable developmental obstacles. The globalization process has further deepened their vulnerability. These challenges could be met resolutely through effective national and international policies that were anchored more firmly in long-term development strategies aimed at implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action during the first decade of the new millennium.
- 21. The well-articulated, focused and action-oriented POA provides a real opportunity for the LDCs to promote economic growth and sustainable development and their beneficial integration into the world economy. It is time now for the LDCs and their development partners, including the United Nations system organizations, to gear up for full and effective participation.
- 22. United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, in his address to the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, reminded the international community that, "Only by multilateral action can we give people in the least developed countries the chance to escape the ugly misery of poverty, ignorance and disease".



ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

AFDB	African Development Bank
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
AU	African Union
BPOA	Brussels Programme of Action
BPOA	Brussels Programme of Action
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CCAs	Common Country Assessments
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CPC	Committee for Programme and Coordination
EAC	East African Community
ECA	European Commission on Agriculture
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Country
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
ITC	International Trade Centre
LDC	Least Developed Countries
LLDCs	Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OAU/AU	Organization of African Unity
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OHRLLS	Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States
POA	Programme of Action
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SADC	Southern African Development Community



SIDS	Small Island Developing States
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNLDC I	United Nations Conference in 1981
UNLDC II	United Nations Conference in 1990
UNLDC III	United Nations Conference in 2001
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

