

Address by

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at the

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In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Your Excellency President Abdullah Gül, President of the Republic of Turkey,
Your Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Excellencies,

Peace be with you and the mercy and blessings of God

I have the honour to begin my address by conveying to you the greetings of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz, together with his best wishes for a successful outcome to this important Conference. I also have pleasure in expressing our deep gratitude to the President, Government and people of the Republic of Turkey for the warm welcome and generous hospitality that we have received and for the highly proficient manner in which this Conference has manifestly been organized.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Least Developed Countries (LDCs) are facing numerous challenges in their endeavours to ensure a decent life for their peoples in a manner befitting the exalted status that the Creator has bestowed on mankind. Hence, it is not surprising that, since the adoption of United Nations General Assembly resolution 2768 (XXVI) on 18 November 1971, the international community has diligently shown ongoing concern for development-related issues in the LDCs, for which it has sought to mobilize all means of support and assistance to enable them to achieve their developmental aspirations. To that end, three previous United Nations Conferences on the Least Developed Countries were held, at Paris in 1981 and 1990 and at Brussels in 2001, and the Millennium Summit set as its primary goals the elimination of poverty and hunger, reduction of the infant mortality rate and measures to combat diseases and build a global partnership for development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I had hoped that, at this Conference, we would all be expressing our satisfaction at the achievement of tangible results by virtue of the commendable efforts that the international community is making to assist the LDCs. Most unfortunately, however, such results have not yet been achieved. In fact, the number of LDCs has increased from 24 on the first list issued in 1971 to 48 according to the January 2011 index. During all these years only four countries have been able to advance from the list of LDCs to that of developed countries.

It is disturbing to note that the LDCs are currently experiencing rapid population growth compounded with problems of backwardness, poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, proliferation of epidemics and diseases, indebtedness and developmental challenges. Human suffering in those countries is not only ongoing but has actually become more severe, especially in the wake of the global financial crisis the consequences of which are still being felt throughout the world and which has led to persistent reluctance by the developed countries to honour the development pledges that they made years ago to allocate 0.7% of their GNP to development assistance.

In recent years we have even begun to observe increasing protectionist tendencies in some countries through the adoption of tariff and non-tariff barriers and a high level of subsidization of their local products, thereby considerably reducing the ability of LDCs to secure global market access for their exports.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In view of the magnitude and extent of the issues and challenges currently facing the LDCs, we need to consider and analyse their causes in an objective and thorough manner without confining ourselves to recrimination and holding others responsible therefor. On the contrary, in keeping with the principle of promoting international partnership and opportunities to strengthen global peace and stability, we should all intensify our endeavours and show even greater generosity. The international community has a moral obligation, and it is in their joint interests, to assist those who are unable to take advantage of the opportunities offered by globalization and an economic open-door policy; otherwise, their problems will be shared by all.

Remissness in honouring pledges and providing the requisite support and assistance, and continued wastage of human resources and depletion of natural resources in the LDCs, has led to instability, wars and conflicts in their regions, thereby aggravating the manifestations of socio-economic backwardness and impeding the progress of those countries towards modernization and growth. The international community must therefore fully honour the pledges that it made to those countries by providing direct or indirect assistance or waiving and rescheduling their debts. The developed countries also have an obligation to dispel those countries' doubts and fears concerning the fairness of the world trading system by adopting equitable international trade rules to ensure market access for their exports and by refraining from the adoption of unfair measures and restrictions that would impede the flow of those exports.

At the same time, the governments of the LDCs have an obligation to diligently develop their institutional and organizational frameworks and create a favourable environment by putting market economy mechanisms into effect. All countries and international financial institutions should continue their endeavours to help those countries to adopt appropriate economic policies and carry out the structural reforms needed to support development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in keeping with the magnanimous teachings of its religion, and being aware of its international and moral responsibilities towards the LDCs, has shown great concern to further the development process in those countries. During the last three decades, the Kingdom has provided a total of about US\$ 100 billion in non-recoverable aid and soft loans from which 95 developing countries in various parts of the world have benefited and this assistance has covered basic development sectors such as health, education and infrastructure.

Pursuant to its policy of supporting developmental endeavours, and with a view to alleviating poverty and eradicating diseases and epidemics, the Kingdom announced its contribution of an amount of US\$ 1 billion to the Fund to Combat Poverty in the Islamic World and has not hesitated to respond to the international community's appeal for the funding of education projects in developing countries in order to help to provide compulsory primary education opportunities for all children by the year 2015. At the Extraordinary Summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference held in Makkah in 2005, the Kingdom announced its allocation of US\$ 1 billion, through the Saudi Fund for Development and the Islamic Development Bank, to combat illiteracy in OIC member countries. The Kingdom also announced its contribution of US\$ 500 million in development loans on easy terms, through the Saudi Fund for Development, for education projects in developing and least developed countries in parallel with the Education for All Fast Track Initiative. In addition, free scholarships have been provided for citizens of developing and least developed countries to help them to further their education so that they can contribute to the development process in their countries.

Since the issues of food security and rising prices of basic commodities are sources of concern to many countries and peoples, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with a view to supporting international endeavours to address the global food crisis and alleviate its effects, donated US\$ 500 million in 2008 to support the World Food Programme's endeavours to assist needy countries to meet the rising costs of basic food commodities, from which 62 countries benefited.

The Kingdom feels a sense of responsibility to promote international cooperation in the energy sector, which is a matter of concern to all the peoples of the world, and is well aware of the need to assist the peoples of the LDCs. Accordingly, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques launched his initiative known as "Energy for the Poor" for the purpose of enabling needy countries to meet the rising costs of energy. To this end, it was announced that US\$ 500 million had been allocated, in the form of soft loans from the Saudi Fund for Development, for the funding of projects to help developing and least developed countries to obtain energy.

With regard to debt relief, the Kingdom has waived more than US\$ 6 billion in debts due to it from LDCs and has contributed its full quota to the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative of the International Monetary Fund. Even before the launching of that international initiative, the Kingdom had waived debts due to it from a number of those countries.

In its capacity as a member of the G20, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has consistently emphasized its total rejection of the adoption of protectionist policies and disruption of international trade flows as solutions to overcome the impact of the global financial crisis. The Kingdom has also stressed the need to address the implications of that crisis for the LDCs, whose sufferings are increasing day by day, and has appealed to the developed countries and international financial institutions to play their role in this regard by providing the requisite support.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The peoples of the LDCs are looking to this important Conference in the hope that its decisions will be conducive to the achievement of their aspirations to live free from fear and hunger and will ensure that coming generations enjoy a better life and a brighter and more secure future. I can assure you that any endeavours made to assist the LDCs will be highly instrumental in eliminating the evil trio, namely poverty, illiteracy and disease, which is responsible for so much suffering.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my gratitude to all those, particularly in the Republic of Turkey and the United Nations, who worked so hard to prepare and organize this Conference. I also wish to thank all the participants and sincerely hope that the outcome of this Conference will contribute to the preparation of a new development framework for the LDCs in such a way as to fulfil the aspirations of their peoples.

Peace be with you and the mercy and blessings of God.