African regional preparatory meeting for the IV UN Conference on the LDCs was convened in Addis Ababa on 8 and 9 March 2010 by my Office in close cooperation with the UNECA and UNDP. It was attended by more than 160 participants, including ministers, parliamentarians and senior officials from 33 African LDCs, other ECA member states, their development partners, including, the UN system, relevant international and regional organizations, and the representatives of the civil society. Also, members of the Global Coordination Bureau of LDCs Group from New York (Nepal, Benin, Solomon Island and Sudan) participated in the meeting. I made a statement at the opening as well as at the high-level session of ministers and parliamentarians as did the Executive-Secretary of ECA. The African regional preparatory meeting was preceded by the Civil Society Forum on 3 and 4 March 2010.

The exchange of views and extensive deliberations at the two-day preparatory meeting produced the Addis Ababa Outcome Document. Also, the meeting benefited from broad-based national consultations involving a wide spectrum of stakeholders including governments, parliamentarians, civil society and private sector, bilateral and multilateral development partners, UN agencies. The Outcome Document will be submitted to the Third Joint Annual meeting of the African Union Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance and ECA Conference of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development in Lilongwe, Malawi later this month.

The outcome document observed that African LDCs have made considerable efforts in implementing their commitments contained in the Brussels Programme. Wide-ranging economic reforms have been undertaken, including macroeconomic, public sector reform, privatization and trade and financial liberalization. Indeed economic growth was above the targeted 7 per cent for several African LDCs for the period 2004-2008 prior to the negative effects of the global financial and economic crisis. The economic growth was driven by high primary commodity prices and better macroeconomic management. However, it was noted that economic growth has not contributed to commensurate gains in poverty reduction. African LDCs have in general lagged behind others in achieving the MDGs and other internationally agreed development goals. The outcome document identified a number of priority areas for international cooperation in support of the African LDCs. These included: strengthening African LDCs resilience through the development of a critical mass of productive capacities in agriculture, manufacturing, infrastructure and services; financing for development through increased domestic resources to finance self-sustaining development, enhancing the development impact of increased ODA, attracting increased FDI, leveraging the impact of remittances on development, additional resources through innovative sources of funding; unleashing the benefits of trade for LDCs through diversification and production of high value added goods and services, full implementation of duty-free and quota-free market access, and more flexibility in rules of origin, reduction of non-tariff barriers, enhanced aid-for-trade; orienting macro-economic policies towards growth, development and poverty reduction; ensuring agricultural development and achieving food security; addressing the challenges posed by climate change; improving governance of promoting peace and security.

Thus, the African regional preparatory meeting concluded the regional preparatory meetings for the Fourth UN Conference on LDCs. The two outcome documents (Addis Ababa and Dhaka outcomes) will constitute important substantive inputs into the development of a new blueprint of international cooperation in the support of the LDCs in the next decade which will be adopted at the IV UN Conference on the LDCs in Istanbul, Turkey next year.

cc: The Deputy Secretary-General