

Helping Nations to Graduate: Potential Efforts from Turkey at the LDC-IV Conference, 2011

Least Developed Countries (LDCs) provide a benchmark for our world because they are particularly instructive when we think about civilization and our ability to help our fellow man. As the acronym refers to, there are countries that are in very precarious conditions when it comes to certain UN identified income criterion, human capital criterion and economic vulnerability criterion. While the number of LDCs has been reduced to just 49, that still comprises 25% of the nations on the Earth, in my opinion an unacceptable number. But what is more worrying is that there are only 2 global regions in which all but one of these countries is located, Africa and Asia. What this means is that two major regions of the world have been overlooked or not supported enough in order to ride themselves of the LDC status. The LDC-IV conference to be held in Istanbul provides a great opportunity to assess the events in the field over the last ten years. Furthermore it is an opportunity to regroup and analyze the situation in a new way so as to provide for the LDC's in the future. Technology and the needs of LDC's have greatly changed over the past ten years, if we take the topic of climate change we can see how this idea is supported.

Setting this conference in Istanbul is a symbol of how much a country can change in ten years. If look back one decade ago to Turkey we can see that it was struggling with one of the worse economic crises to have hit the country. Topics such as unemployment, female illiteracy, human rights abuses, and

terrorism were all at dangerously high levels. It was completely possible for Turkey to slip into the LDC category and join the other countries in not meeting certain UN criterion.

Yet this is where the country turned itself around and began working to solve both domestic and foreign problems that were keeping it from maximizing its and its people's potential. Having seen Turkey rise in prominence in the region over the past ten years, it is not unreasonable to think that it will become a leader or at the very least a role model for LDC nations in the Asian region. I can say that Turks are very conscious of our still at times precarious situation and potential for crisis; this which is why efforts to join the EU as well as collaborate and contribute to major organizations such as the UN, WTO and the IMF have helped us to retain the positive position we have.

As a member of civil society, I am founder of the non-profit Kids Parliament, an organization designed to promote children's participation in their own political processes via a parliament of children. I am also a member of the private sector, as CEO of User Corporation and I can see how the contributions of these two segments of society, as well as the government are essential to LDC's. I feel that I can contribute to the LDC-IV Conference in 2011 in two major ways. As chairman of the philanthropic Kids Parliament, our organization is always looking for ways to get children involved in the political process. As the mission of our organization states, we have representatives from each country come together to discuss major issues facing children around the world. By writing resolutions and having children come to decisions about the major issues

facing them, we are helping to stimulate the minds of tomorrow's leaders. We have been unable to get representative from certain LDCs because of the difficulty of networking in some countries. This conference will offer us the opportunity to make LDCs aware of the Kids Parliament goals, programs and activities. By adding LDC child representatives to our roster, we can help create dialogue between individuals. It is clear that major issues such as energy security and climate change will play a major role in the future of the world's children. By enabling them to discuss them in an open and educational forum, we can better prepare tomorrow's leaders today.

The second way in which I can assist the LDC-IV conference is with the lessons that my corporation have experienced. I am suggesting a larger version of the buddy system in which developed countries are connected with a country in the developing world and charged with helping to put in place structures, at all levels, governmental, civil society and the private sector that will help individual nations graduate from the LDC list. In the sector in which I work, banking and financial markets, my company, User corporation, has personal experience in developing products that assist individuals as well as companies meet economic criterion. The banking and financial sectors are the leaders in the corporate culture of a society and because of this have the opportunity to greatly influence how systems are run in a society. Working as an intermediary, my company with its highly trained staff as well as its connections to the Turkish corporate structure, can act as an intermediary to the parallel structures in the "adopted" country. The opportunity to work one on one with a corporation and sector that

has experienced growth in meeting UN goals such as Millennium Development goals is invaluable and can create a window into understanding and insight.

It is obvious that we can not let 25% of the world's nations remain on the LDC list. There needs to be clear and constructive action taken at the major levels of society to solve these major issues. Collaboration, especially with an experienced staff and on a personal level will allow the corporations and future leaders of LDCs understand these topics on a deeper level. I am both personally and professionally committed to this project and see it as a responsibility to assist my neighbors because it will only help strengthen the ties between nations.