



**STATEMENT BY PRERNA BOMZAN, ADVOCACY CO-ORDINATOR, AT THE
HIGH-LEVEL SUBREGIONAL FORUM ON ACCELERATING THE ACHIEVEMENT
OF THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN SOUTH ASIA AND LAUNCH
OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGIONAL MDG REPORT 2011/12: CLOSING GAPS
IN HEALTH AND NUTRITION**

17-18 February 2012, NEW DELHI

Mr Chair, colleagues and friends,

Thank you for allowing me to speak on behalf of LDC Watch. We are a global civil society alliance largely comprising of social movements and people's organisations based in the 48 UN defined least developed countries (LDCs) spanning across Africa, Latin America and the Asia-Pacific. We're specifically engaged in policy advocacy and political lobbying with all relevant development stakeholders in defending the interests of the LDCs and its peoples. We're therefore a voice of the most marginalised and vulnerable of the global population in the development radar keeping in mind that LDCs are characterised by the twin evils of poverty as well as vulnerability.

In the context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), we see it as the minimal development goals for key reasons that have already been deliberated upon since we met yesterday. Especially with regard to LDCs, the key limitation of the MDGs is that they do not address or even recognise the complex and dynamic issue of conflict, violence and political instability vis-à-vis development which is endemic in LDCs. And in this regard, we further believe that the very absence of inclusive and equitable development create such situations. In totality, we've been advocating that there can be NO MDGs without LDCs!

Now in the context of LDCs, LDC Watch primarily engages in MDG 8 with its overarching vision of "global partnership for development" and furthermore,

with Target 8b which is to “address the special needs of the LDCs” that includes “tariff and quota free access for the LDCs’ exports; enhanced programme of debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) and cancellation of bilateral debt; and more generous official development assistance (ODA) for countries committed to poverty reduction”. In this particular target, LDC Watch has been advocating for fair trade and NOT free trade; for total and unconditional cancellation of LDC debt and for better aid which translates as more aid not only in quantity but also in quality of aid which clearly means aid without policy conditionalities that is the prevailing norm of the entire aid architecture.

However, considering this forum’s focal themes, I’d like to speak a few minutes on the issue of hunger as part of MDG1. Since yesterday, our deliberations have dwelled on extensive facts and figures relating to hunger and malnutrition. I’d like to express that unfortunately, we’ve just discussed about technocratic problems and solutions devoid of the human rights-based approach seeing freedom from hunger as a basic human right; and such cosmetic solutions are not sustainable, most importantly they do not address the root cause of hunger and poverty for that matter. Let us be clear that hunger is a political issue! And therefore, let us honestly and boldly deliberate upon the politics of creation of hunger as well as perpetuation of hunger!!

We cannot be more blind to today’s ruling system of market-oriented or market-led food production and food consumption, the key actor being the corporate sector or the corporate giants that have created today’s food regime controlling our food systems with an iron fist. In my personal experience, for instance, I’ve closely witnessed the powerful corporate lobby at the European Union (EU) institutions on key sectors of international co-operation such as agriculture and trade during my advocacy work in Brussels and the consequent recarpussions in the developing countries with ofcourse the brunt on the LDCs. So, in the context of the issue of hunger, to start with, let us accept the politics of profits above people! The current dominant issues of concern in the sector of agriculture; of food speculation, price volatility, land-grabs, monocultures, intensive inputs, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), loss of control over seeds and indigenous varieties, damage to biodiversity and the environment, farmers’ debts and suicides, all

point towards our overall loss of sovereignty over our food system and food culture.

Hence, against this background, LDC Watch believes in and advocates the Right to Food Sovereignty as the people's alternative to the eradication of hunger which goes beyond food security into addressing the more critical issues of realising a shift in the current paradigm and policy practice. Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It focuses on food for people, values food providers, localises food systems, puts control locally, builds local knowledge and skills and works with nature. Thus, it clearly answers to the current problems and failures towards the eradication of hunger and malnutrition.

The food sovereignty policy framework is absolutely human rights-based and has been voiced and advocated by small farmers and peasant movements, fisherfolks, indigenous peoples, forest dwellers and all in all, the most marginalised and vulnerable communities both in the global South as well as in the North, since the last decade and a half but unfortunately have been fallen on deaf ears. I would like to conclude by leaving a question to all stakeholders here and especially to the policy makers – are we willing to listen to our people, to their persistent call for system change, are we willing to place peoples before profits?

Thank you for your attention.

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