



Bangladesh

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Least developed countries develop plans to cope with climate change

DHAKA: Delegates from 46 of the world's 49 least developed countries arrived in Bangladesh this week to elaborate adaptation plans aimed at identifying national priorities and telling the international community what support they need to handle shocks resulting from climate change.

By 2100, climate models predict that the global temperature will rise between 1.4 and 5.8°C and this would be greater than any climate change experienced by our world over the last 10,000 years. As a result scientists predict that sea levels will rise between 9 and 88 centimeters and the frequency plus severity of natural disasters like drought and storms are expected to increase.

"The choice of Bangladesh as the venue was not accidental, as it is one of the most vulnerable countries along with some of the coastal and island states," UNDP Representative Jorgen Lissner said while addressing the delegates during the opening session of the three-day workshop. It is estimated that 17 percent of Bangladesh -- one of the world's most heavily populated countries -- would be submerged if the sea were to rise 1 meter. Today more than 35 million people live around the country's coastal areas.

With UNDP support, the Government of Bangladesh has drafted its National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) aimed at assisting the country to identify the most vulnerable groups within the population and develop strategies for supporting them to cope. In addition, UNDP and the Government, with funding from the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), are preparing to carry out research to investigate the impacts climate change will have on various sectors of the economy.

"While for some countries, the impact might be life-style threatening, for others it is life threatening", the Prime Minister of the Government of Bangladesh, Begum Khaleda Zia, said before officially opening the workshop. She also said that the least developed countries are most vulnerable to climate change because their economies depend on agriculture and natural resources, while small island states are even at risk of being wiped from the world map.

While the international community has adopted the Climate Change Convention in 1992 and tabled the Kyoto Protocol to reduce the level of green house gases causing the change, the earth is already committed to some degree of climate change. To cope with these people and eco-systems will need to adapt.

Adaptation is much more crucial than mitigation, said Mamadou Honadia from Burkina Faso where he works for the Ministry of Environment, and one of the 124 participants in the workshop. Desertification is the biggest threat facing his land locked country, as a result of climate change. "We need to figure out how to adapt our major industries like sorghum, cotton and livestock to the changing conditions, otherwise our whole economy will be at risk," he said. "Through the adaptation plans we are identifying what needs to be done and how the international community can support us," he said.

Organized by the Government of Bangladesh, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change LDC Expert Group (LEG ) and UNDP, with support from Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Government of France and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), the meeting in Dhaka is a 'hands-on' opportunity for the preparation teams from least developed countries -- who have been tasked with drafting National Adoption Programmes of Action-- to share experiences and further develop their Programmes.

"I want to leave here with a more detailed programme of action and a clear idea about the next steps to be taken," Mr. Honadia said.

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*Word Count (approx): 585*

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Background notes to climate change and least developed countries:

Based on income, human resources and economic diversification, the UN designates 49 countries as least developed. Thirty-two of these are in Africa, 13 in Asia and the Pacific, and one in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The average person living in one of the world's least developed countries can expect to live to the age of 51, has a 52 percent chance of being literate, and will probably earn around US\$1,216 per year (Source: UNDP Human Development Report). According to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), primary products made up 70 percent of the export earning for least developed countries in 1997.

The International Community is tackling the challenge of climate change through the Climate Change Convention, which was adopted in 1992 and now has more than 182 members. The Convention seeks to stabilize atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases at safe levels. It commits all countries to limit their emissions, gather relevant information, develop strategies for adapting to climate change and cooperate on research and technology. It also requires developed countries to take measures aimed at returning their emissions to 1990 levels.

The Kyoto Protocol would require governments to take even stronger action. In 1997, the parties to the Convention agreed by consensus that developed countries should accept a legally binding commitment to reduce their collective emissions of six greenhouse gases by at least 5 percent compared to 1990 levels by the period 2008-2012. The Protocol also establishes emissions trading regime and a "clean development mechanism". However, the Protocol has not yet received enough ratification to enter into force.