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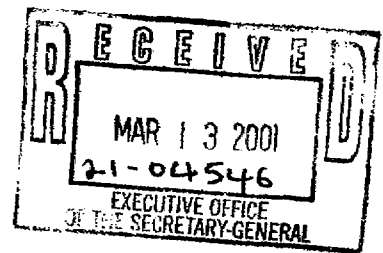
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DESA
Spokesman
NOTE TO IQBAL RIZA



Letters signed by the SG were sent to Heads of State/Government of non-EU industrialized nations (copy attached). The letters refer to the LDC Conference in Brussels and call on the addressees to emulate "the courageous decision taken on 26 February by the EU to extend duty- and quota-free treatment to all LDC exports - agricultural as well as industrial - other than weapons."

Edward has suggested that we allow journalists to have access to copies of the letters. Do you agree and authorize us to do so?

Manoel de Almeida e Silva
13 March 2001

M-A-S

Fire. Auth.
14/3





THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

COPY

8 March 2001

Excellency,

As you know, the United Nations is organizing in Brussels, from 14 to 20 May this year, the Third UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

This is a major event, at which the international community must find clear solutions for the daunting problems faced by the world's poorest countries. These are countries where the average life expectancy is less than fifty years and the average literacy rate is below fifty percent; where less than half the population has access to safe water; where there are only three telephones per thousand inhabitants; and where installed electrical capacity per capita is less than one hundredth that of the industrialized economies. Some of them, moreover, are countries whose external debt has leapt to over 100% of their gross national product. Yet official development assistance to them has declined by almost 30% in the last decade.

The international community must respond positively to these stark indicators of the conditions in which more than 700 million people are currently obliged to live. In particular, it must ensure that the people of these countries have the opportunity to improve their lot by taking part in international trade. At present, they produce less than one half of one per cent of world exports, with a total value of only \$25 billion. Various initiatives since the Uruguay Round have been aimed at opening markets specifically to LDC products, but have had only limited results.

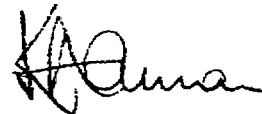
Clearly, more needs to be done. As you will remember, in the United Nations Millennium Declaration of 8 September 2000 you and your fellow Heads of State and Government called on the industrialized countries to adopt, preferably by the time of the Brussels Conference, a policy of duty- and quota-free access for essentially all LDC exports.

His Excellency
The Rt. Hon. Jean Chrétien
Prime Minister of Canada
Ottawa

Your government's decision last year to add a further 570 tariff lines to the list of goods from LDCs which are eligible for duty-free treatment was a commendable step in the right in the direction. However, LDC exports to Canada account for only 0.25% of total imports, and LDCs continue to face barriers to trade in products where they have a comparative advantage. I therefore urge you to ensure that Canada emulates the courageous decision taken last week by the European Union, and extends duty- and quota-free treatment to *all* LDC exports - agricultural as well as industrial - in time for the Brussels Conference.

Such a decision would be the best possible way for Canada to demonstrate its genuine commitment to assisting the LDCs in their struggle to create viable economies.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'K. Annan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kofi A. Annan