Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank Under-Secretary General Acharya and the two co-Chairs, for the invitation to this Roundtable. Enhanced productive capacity, starting from sustainable agricultural development and guaranteed food security, should remain at the very top of our efforts to accelerate the economic growth and social development of Least Developed Countries.

With the new 2030 Agenda for sustainable development – and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda as its integral part – we have a blueprint for global development that is broader, more detailed and more comprehensive than ever before.
The Sustainable Development Goals should now guide policies and actions in countries at all stages of development. They represent a challenge and an opportunity for all of us. But nowhere are potential gains as high – and the risks of non-implementation as grave – as for the Least Developed Countries.

So today, I want to recall some of our achievements so far, but also highlight some future challenges, and invite you to reflect on how we can best deal with them - together.

The European Union has a long-standing record of partnering with LDCs to help **enhance their productive capacities** and promote economic transformation. We aim to create competitive advantages in key productive sectors, diversify the economy and enable people to lead decent and productive lives. This requires of course major investments in infrastructure, human resources and an effective dialogue with the private sector.

**Getting the private sector fully on board is one of the "big bets" I have set myself** upon taking office. Mobilising private investments and creating and enabling environment for the private sector through structural and regulatory transformation is
the only way to guarantee long-term inclusive growth, generate quality employment and achieve higher productivity.

The European Union already works closely with our partner countries to improve framework conditions so that companies, both local and international, can do business in key sectors such as farming, agriculture and energy.

We want to use our large scale EU grants more strategically through our blending mechanisms. We expect to have EUR 4.8 billion of EU grants available for the period up to 2020. These grants could provide investments to leverage at least EUR 66 billion in investments from financial institutions and private investors in partner countries.

And we will not stop at that. At the European Commission we are currently assessing the possibilities for using the successful model of the European Fund for Strategic Investments also for facilitating investments in our partner countries. Such a scheme would allow International Financial Institutions to address specific bottlenecks to investment, like risk-sharing and guarantees schemes – including in LDCs – and in that way crowd in private actors.
In the critical sector of Energy, our support to electrification projects is intended to scale up proven successful actions with high impact on poverty reduction and a high level of involvement of local actors. I am deeply invested in the Electrification Financing mechanism - 'ElectriFI' - which is proving a very effective tool for reinforcing the sustainability and boosting private sector involvement in small-scale rural electrification projects.

And this is an approach we aspire to expand to other key sectors. AgriFI, the Agriculture Financing Initiative, which we have recently launched, is designed to provide enhanced financial and technical support for the development of the agricultural sector. It aims at increasing investment in smallholder agriculture and agribusiness enterprises. We all know that investing in agriculture gives the highest return on poverty reduction. However, a high risk often prevents investments in agriculture from taking place. We therefore need to reduce this risk and increase available finance.

I need not emphasise how fundamental sustainable agriculture, nutrition and food security are for Least Developed Countries in particular. The agricultural sector still accounts for well of half of
the employment in LDCs. **Investing in sustainable agriculture** is not just the way to **stronger, self-reliant economies**, but also to **solving the problem of chronic malnutrition** and to promoting – in practice, not just words – **gender equality and women's empowerment**.

This is why the European Union attaches such high importance to supporting LDC's efforts to strengthen access to agricultural finance, insurance and other risk-mitigation tools.

Together with other development partners, we are supporting the **Global Index Insurance Facility**. Under this facility we have seen a remarkable increase in uptake of insurance by smallholder farmers and livestock owners. By the end of this year we estimate that close to one million of them will have been covered by insurance under this programme.

The EU is also a strong supporter of the **Voluntary Guidelines on the Governance of Land Tenure** providing support for the practical application of the guidelines at country level in 18 countries. We help address in particular legal aspects of land governance, with the aim to make access and use of land more secure for rural smallholders.
Another key aim under the Istanbul Programme of Action was to **reduce price volatility**. This requires a mix of policy measures including risk reduction, market information, promoting trade and food reserves.

The role of trade in EU relations with Least Developed Countries is very important. We want **free and open trade**. Trade has a stabilising effect, but we have to remain mindful of the vulnerable position of smallholders, who often cannot compete with agricultural imports. The EU is carefully looking at this under our Economic Partnership Agreements, where most agricultural products are excluded, and with gradual opening-up of markets with long transition periods.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to conclude with a few worlds on the third crucial question that this panel is called to address – that of **food security**. We have come a long way since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration, but still today millions are suffering from lack of access to enough, safe and nutritious food.
In 2011 in Istanbul we agreed to provide adequate and predictable resources, including the commitments set out in the L'Aquila initiative on global food security. The European Union we has fulfilled our EUR 3.8 billion pledge towards the L'Aquila Initiative for the period 2010-2012. **Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture remains priority number one** for development actions in the current financial period 2014-2020 and we have allocated EUR 8.8 billion for this purpose.

These examples illustrate the European Union's tangible commitment to strengthening the productive capacity of Least Developed countries, and our determination to keep food and nutrition security at the forefront of the global agenda and of our own development policy agenda. We will continue to work closely with partner countries, civil society, the private sector and other partners to **achieve sustained investments and lasting results**.

Thank you.