Advancing Science, Technology and Innovation in Vulnerable Countries
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Building a Bright Future for Vulnerable Countries in 2015 and Beyond

by UN-OHRLLS
High Representative
Gyan Chandra Acharya

2014 yielded a tapestry of highs and lows for the world’s most vulnerable nations. While incremental gains continue to be made in health, education, gender, economic growth and infrastructural development, across all sectors in the 48 least developed countries (LDCs), 32 landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and 57 small island developing states (SIDS), conflicts and other setbacks affected these development prospects. In particular, the very worrying resurgence of the Ebola virus, which took a deadly toll on the local population in three LDCs – Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone had a negative impact in these countries. The crisis demonstrated most vividly the need for a consistent and coherent approach to bolstering support to the neediest countries in a comprehensive manner.

Last year proved to be busy and critical in pushing forward the development agenda. In close cooperation with Member States and the UN system, we organised the Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries in Vienna, a two-day Private Sector Forum at the Third United Nations Conference on Small Island Developing States and two ministerial meetings in capitals of least developed countries in addition to many other important events and activities.

We are all aware, however, that our work in 2014 laid the foundation for 2015, a crucial year for vulnerable countries to firmly place their agenda on the global platform. Last year OHRLLS was dedicated to supporting vulnerable countries though analysis, advocacy and the coordinated mobilization of the UN system and beyond. We also contributed by articulating the needs, concerns and expectations of the vulnerable country groups in a variety of arena including major conferences and meetings, which provided an opportunity to consolidate coherent positions and develop common approaches on various issues of importance to them.

The coming year will be particularly demanding and many international events will shape the future work of the global community for decades. It is imperative that the post 2015 global framework and other global processes are made fully responsive to the needs and expectations of the vulnerable countries. This is both a challenge and an opportunity for us all collectively.

As we move ahead, OHRLLS will continue to implement its mandated activities, preparing reports and following up on the implementation of the outcome of major conferences of LLDCs, SIDS and LDCs. We will offer support, coherence and advocacy work for the post-2015 development framework and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in December in Paris. OHRLLS will raise the profile of vulnerable country issues at important events including the conference on disasters in Sendai, Japan, the financing for development meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the WTO Ministerial meeting in Nairobi, Kenya and of course within the high-level UN debates.

We will also continue to effectively and consistently pursue our agenda with other stakeholders such as the World Bank, Regional Development Banks, OECD and Emerging Countries forums. Similarly we will intensify our interactions and collaborations with philanthropic organizations, business organizations, NGOs, academics, the scientific community and the media.

This coming year will be particularly demanding and many international events will shape the future work of the global community for decades.”

– Gyan Chandra Acharya
Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States

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Collectively, we must be able to ensure that we cover some distance this year as we set our sights on creating a firm foundation for an accelerated change and transformation in the lives of the people in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS. As the UN celebrates its 70th anniversary, it is rededicating itself to the timeless vision, commitment and actions that promote global peace and security, sustainable development, social progress and human rights in a coherent and inclusive manner. Indeed, the Sustainable Development Goals will be a singular and far reaching contribution to mark its 70th anniversary. In today’s volatile and globalized world, such an overarching global development framework is more urgent than ever before. Vulnerable countries expect a lot from the United Nations and rightfully so, as they face unprecedented and multiple challenges with only a limited capacity and means to deal with them whilst depending so much on inclusive, equitable and responsive global frameworks and international solidarity and support.

In today’s world there is no dearth of work for OHRLLS and the UN as a whole. But we must keep our minds fixed on a forward looking vision, a real and meaningful change in policies and global sustainable development frameworks that will sustainably and inclusively transform the lives of the 1.1 billion individuals who live in the world’s most vulnerable countries. It is my hope that throughout 2015 we hold this vision at the forefront in order to ensure a life of dignity and prosperity for all, especially those that are at the bottom of the development ladder.

by Ricardo Z. Dunn

The United Nations General Assembly in November adopted a 10 year action-plan aimed at accelerating sustainable development in the world’s 32 landlocked developing countries (LLDCs). The Vienna Programme of Action with six clearly defined priorities encapsulates a unified stance by the international community on a broad array of crucial issues, from concrete steps toward the structural transformation of LLDCs’ economies and infrastructure development to improving international trade and bolstering regional integration and cooperation.

“We are strongly committed to the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action to address, in a holistic manner, the special development needs and challenges of landlocked developing countries arising from their landlockedness, remoteness and geographical constraints,” proclaimed the Vienna Declaration at the conclusion of the Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries attended by more than 1,000 participants in the Austrian capital.

The 23-page outcome document was described by the Secretary-General of the Conference Gyan Chandra Acharya as an important milestone in promoting the development agenda of LLDCs.

The document, for instance, expresses an unambiguous commitment by all governments to ensure greater emphasis on reducing transit time, promoting infrastructure development and maintenance, ensuring trade facilitation measures in an accelerated manner, besides linking them with the promotion of economic diversification, structural transformation, connectivity to global value chains and regional integration. This holistic approach together with a clear call to ensure coherence with the global processes is expected to enable the LLDCs to achieve sustained and sustainable economic growth and ensure their meaningful integration into the global economy.

“The Vienna conference has come out with a holistic, forward looking and action oriented program and I clearly see that in the document that has been adopted,” said Acharya in his closing remarks.

Acharya added that the text was holistic in taking up transit, trade, infrastructure issues together with the regional cooperation, structural transformation and coherence with the global processes in a pronounced manner as priorities. He further stressed that while recognizing the special challenges and vulnerabilities of LLDCs, Member States have stressed that the landlocked countries have to transform themselves into land linked SPRING 2015 Building a Bright Future for Vulnerable Countries... continued from page 3 Ambitious 10 Year Action-Plan for LLDCs
countries in order to reap full benefits from regional cooperation and globalization. He explained, that the outcome document was action-oriented as governments had clearly spelt out tangible actions to be taken by LLDCs, transit countries and development partners in each of the six priority areas identified together with clear national, regional and global level implementation, monitoring and review.

Mr. Acharya highlighted that the outcome document stresses renewed and strengthened partnerships between the LLDCs, transit countries and development partners within the context of north-south as well as south-south and triangular cooperation. He, however, added that while the action-plan “recognizes that LLDCs have the primary responsibility for their own development” the group of countries require support “to effectively mobilize adequate domestic and external resources for effective implementation of the Programme of Action.” A recurring theme throughout the three day meeting has been that while the LLDCs have seen incremental economic gains over the past decade, this progress has not made a meaningful dent in the rate of poverty among this group of countries and that the progress remained fragile in many of the LLDCs. Nine of the 15 countries at the bottom rung of the development ladder are landlocked and the vast majority continue to lag behind their maritime neighbours in socio-economic development. To remedy this, the Vienna text calls for support “in a more coherent manner” which would “contribute to an enhanced rate of sustainable and inclusive growth, which can contribute to the eradication of poverty”. In his closing statement to the conference, the Foreign Minister of Austria Sebastian Kurz, who was also the President of the Conference, said, “Our overarching goal is clear: generating sustainable and inclusive growth to invest in infrastructure, to facilitate trade and to reduce poverty.” Kurz added that the conference had been “instrumental in exploring new ways of engaging private sector activity and of promoting public-private partnerships and private investments.”

The meeting saw a flurry of activity with four high-level interactive thematic round-tables and 18 side events organized by various stakeholders in the margins of the meeting on a wide-range of issues relevant to the LLDCs, transit transport development, trade capacity enhancement and further integration into the regional and global markets. The events gathered Heads of State, Deputy Prime Ministers, Ministers, United Nations Secretary General, President of the General Assembly and Heads and senior representatives from international organizations who shared their views and experiences on how to enhance LLDCs' economic diversification and competitiveness through strengthened investments and policy measures in the areas of transport, infrastructure development and trade facilitation, sustainable energy and sustainable transport, through partnerships on vocational training, through increased regionalization of aid for trade, and particularly for landlocked least developed countries, through effective implementation of the Enhanced Integrated Framework. Other topics covered by side events were climate-smart agriculture, connectivity challenges, the role of migration and the special challenges of mountainous LLDCs.

A day-long Business and Investment Forum brought together business leaders, government officials from landlocked countries and transit countries, as well as development partners. Delegates attending the Forum agreed on the importance of stressed private sector investments as key in enabling LLDCs to diversify and grow their economies, while calling for government to ensure better enabling environment and for the private sector to pursue responsible business practices. Particular emphasis was placed on promotion of Small and Medium Enterprises, linkages between private sectors and public private partnerships.

“We have come a long way but the real work begins now,” Acharya said. “We must now move ahead to deliver with determination the Vienna Program of action that we have agreed here with understanding, solidarity and support of all. The international community has to deliver on these commitments to the 440 million people living in the landlocked developing countries.”

“Our overarching goal is clear: generating sustainable and inclusive growth to invest in infrastructure, to facilitate trade and to reduce poverty.”

- Sebastian Kurz
Foreign Minister of Austria
INTERVIEW

Accelerating the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action

Nosh Nalavala in conversation with Ambassador Jean-Francis Zinsou, Permanent Representative of Benin to the UN and Chair of the LDC Group

Nosh Nalavala  Ambassador, as head of the LDC Group, could you tell us the achievements of the Group in tangible terms?

Ambassador Jean-Francis Zinsou  The LDC Group has been steadfast in its commitment towards implementing the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) and focusing on LDC priorities.

NN  And what are these priorities?

JFZ  In 2011 a programme of action was negotiated with the clear determination and vision of halving the number of LDCs by 2020. And we set eight priorities, with a focus on productive capacity. What we are trying is a shift towards higher productivity. This will create more wealth locally and increase the overall revenue of LDCs.

NN  As a follow-up, are there any new measures you are initiating towards strengthening the implementation process for LDCs?

JFZ  Yes, we are. As Chair of the LDCs my job is to help LDCs understand the vision of the IPoA. That is precisely the reason why in July last year, Benin organized a ministerial conference dedicated to the issue of productive capacity under the banner, New Partnerships for Productive Capacity Building in the LDCs.

NN  As we transition from the MDGs to the SDGs, do you see a major shift in the fortunes of the LDCs?

JFZ  Earlier it was very difficult to talk about the eradication of poverty. We always talked about reduction of poverty by half under the MDGs. The LDCs were not able to accomplish the goals. Under the SDGs, eradication of poverty has been set as a goal for sustainability, we have set goals to eradicate poverty in the next 15 years and the LDCs stand to gain from these goals. With the SDGs we are changing the scope of mobilization to tackle the major problem for LDCs, which is poverty.

NN  There is certainly an overlap of issues affecting least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small islands. How can these agendas coalesce more broadly?

JFZ  Countries in special situations have special needs and those situations have to be addressed in a specific setting. The IPoA is designed to address the constraints of LDCs. LLDCs have problems with remoteness and being landlocked and SIDS with climate change. I believe that all three programmes of action should be implemented in synergy.

NN  What is being done for women in LDCs to combat the impact of climate change?

JFZ  We are working with UN agencies like United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) to initiate programmes among marginalized communities. This is a programme that is driven by communities through local funding facilities put into place by respective LDC governments.

JFZ  Bangladesh has successfully implemented the programme in two ways: they have brought together communities and also the entire region has benefitted from these programmes. This helps local communities to get financial assistance directly from the funds toward mitigation and adaptation. This empowers communities. But in general LDCs do not benefit from these funds, because they do not have the capacity. That is why under the SDGs we feel that communities will be empowered by building resilience against the impact of climate change.

NN  You have talked about ODA. Should LDCs move away from ODA and focus on sustainable development?

JFZ  This is an important issue, because ODA needs to be adjusted in the framework of sustainability. Funding for the SDGs remains a major issue, but also the means of implementation. We think that ODA will be better used to catalyze activities that can be game changers for LDCs. We need to focus on activities that are value-added at the local level, activities that have a multiplier effect. ODA should be used to accelerate growth in the LDCs. LDCs are opening up to new partnerships for social and economic transformation by productive job creation.
greater effort is needed for
the world’s 48 most vulnerable
countries to eradicate extreme
poverty by 2020, according to a
report launched by UN-OHRLLS in
October 2014.

The study demonstrates how since
the 2011 Istanbul action-plan, the
least developed countries (LDCs) have
seen incremental economic and social
gains, mainly because of an increase
in public spending and stronger
investment and activity in mining,
construction, manufacturing and
service sectors. The report however
cautions that despite the uptick, the
LDCs continue to be among the most
vulnerable to external shocks, such
as economic crises, climate-related
events, natural disasters and health-
related threats. The recent outbreak
of Ebola, which is concentrated in
3 LDCs, highlights the importance
of comprehensively addressing the
LDCs’ structural vulnerability,
requiring joint efforts by countries
and their development partners. It
also underscores that deepening
inequality threatens to exacerbate
existing poverty with implications
for political and social stability in
these countries.

The study identifies four main
determinants of the reduction of
extreme poverty in the LDCs: gender
inequality, institutional frameworks,
infrastructure development and
service delivery, and external factors.

The authors encourage leadership
at the national level to implement
policies that improve service delivery,
address gender inequality and enable
the poor to acquire investment assets
that can improve their future income.
Women and girls are especially in
need of better access to economic
opportunities through vocational and
managerial skills training. Further,
the report argues, greater access to
land, technology and finance are
integral to boost growth in the
LDCs and reduce inequality. “The
effectiveness of all policies, in their
formulation and implementation,
critically depends on sound national
institutions,” the report notes.

The study recommends that
governments ensure their efforts to
increase domestic revenue are
designed in ways that curb
inequality. It also stresses that in
order to increase public resource
mobilization, fiscal policies need to
promote public investment that is
sustainable.

While governments are encouraged
to take the lead on national
development, the report highlights
the importance of development
partners in supporting the LDCs.
“Actions by LDC development
partners on trade, official
development assistance (ODA), and
other forms of external finance,
including foreign direct investment,
and technology transfer and
acquisition will determine progress
in ending poverty to a large degree,”
the report says. It adds that the
United Nations Secretary-General’s
proposal for a technology bank and
an international investment support
centre for the LDCs could play an
important role in upgrading
productive capacity, and leveraging
the growth and poverty eradication
effects of technology transfer and
FDI inflows.

The reports concludes by calling
for greater attention to be paid to
eradicating extreme poverty in the
LDCs within the on-going post-2015
development agenda, especially since
most of these countries will miss
most of the Millennium Development
Goals.
least Developed Countries (LDCs) in Asia and the Pacific voiced a strong determination to graduate from their LDC status at the conclusion of a Ministerial Meeting in Kathmandu, Nepal in December 2014.

Hosted by the Government of Nepal, with support from OHRLLS, the meeting enabled Ministers and high-level officials to discuss ways in which LDCs in Asia and the Pacific, can aspire to graduate from the LDC category and consider the lessons learnt by former LDCs. During three days of discussion and presentations from LDCs in Asia and the Pacific, participants focused on how the graduation process can be supported by strong national strategies and mainstreamed into development cooperation strategies. Discussions also centred around how graduation can link effectively with the Istanbul Programme of Action’s midterm review in 2016 and the post-2015 development agenda.

A Kathmandu Declaration for Sustainable Graduation of Asia-Pacific LDCs was adopted at the close of the meeting which emphasized that graduation from the LDC category should not be seen as an end goal, rather as a means to realize fundamental structural transformation, and build resilient economies which will help achieve the sustainable development goals.

“Graduation from the LDC category is a major milestone but it is only part of the journey,” said Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. “At this dawn of a new era for development, we must be steadfast in our commitments to ensure that the graduation and sustainable development of LDCs are cornerstones of the emerging sustainable development goals”.

He further added that while strong...
national leadership and ownership is key to graduation, “It is equally critical that there is an enhanced level of support from the development partners through delivery on aid commitments, investment promotion and trade related support measures”.

Participants at the event stressed the importance of improved productive capacity in order to foster structural transformation for accelerated and inclusive growth, employment generation and poverty eradication. They emphasized the need to mobilize enhanced levels of domestic and external resources for infrastructure development, access to energy and structural transformation, secure substantial social progress, including gender equality and youth employment, and improve resilience against economic and climate related shocks to ensure sustainable development and the realization of the post-2015 development agenda. Mr. Mahendra Bahadur Pandey, Minister for Foreign Affairs for Nepal also echoed this sentiment. “The timeliness of this meeting can not be over-emphasized as it would provide useful inputs to the upcoming major events – FFD, SDGs and Post-2015 Development agenda and climate deal.”

The adopted Declaration calls for support and cooperation on trade integration, investment promotion, infrastructure, connectivity, energy, water, climate change and disaster risk reduction and other relevant areas.

At this dawn of a new era for development, we must be steadfast in our commitments to ensure that the graduation and sustainable development of LDCs are cornerstones of the emerging sustainable development goals.”

– Gyan Chandra Acharya
Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States
2014 HIGHLIGHTS FOR OHRLLS

Mr. Sushil Koirala, Prime Minister of Nepal officially opens the LDC Ministerial Meeting for Asia and the Pacific, Kathmandu, December 2014.

Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox, Director of UN-OHRLLS, takes part in a discussion on the challenges of small states organised by IPI and the NZ Mission, May 2015.


Mr. Thomas Boni Yayi, President of Benin, addresses participants at the opening of the LDC Ministerial meeting in Cotonou, Benin, July 2014.

Mr. Sushil Koirala, Prime Minister of Nepal officially opens the LDC Ministerial Meeting for Asia and the Pacific, Kathmandu, December 2014.

2014 HIGHLIGHTS FOR OHRLLS

Standing room only at the launch of the State of the Least Developed Countries Report 2014, October 2014.

UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon joins participants at OHRLLS’ Private Sector Partnerships Forum in Suva, August 2014.

Standing room only at the launch of the State of the Least Developed Countries Report 2014, October 2014.

OHRLLS and the UN Secretary General join crew on board the Hōkūle'a, a Polynesian vessel navigating the world and stopping off at the SIDS Conference in Samoa, August 2014.

OHRLLS and the UN Secretary General joins on board the Hōkūle‘a, a Polynesian vessel navigating the world and stopping off at the SIDS Conference in Samoa, August 2014.

UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon addresses a private sector luncheon at LLDC2, Vienna, November 2014.

Standing room only at the launch of the State of the Least Developed Countries Report 2014, October 2014.
Developed Countries outlines how the scientific research and innovation base needs to be nurtured in LDCs to promote networking among researchers and research institutions, help them access and utilize critical technologies, and draw together bilateral initiatives and support by multilateral institutions and the private sector, building on existing international initiatives. If you’re a scientist in an LDC, but you lack computers and broadband, then even if you can gather data, how do you analyse it? How do you store it? How do you share it with colleagues? The risk is that, while other countries advance, the LDCs fall further behind.

**INTERVIEW**

**Move Toward Greater Access to Science, Technology and Innovation for LDCs**

School girls use a computer in Haiti.

**Professor Romain Murenzi**, Chair of the Technology Bank High-Level Panel and Executive Director of the World Academy of Sciences for the Advancement of Science (TWAS) in developing countries talks to *The Commitment* about how the proposed new Technology Bank could improve access to science, technology and innovation for LDCs.

**Louise Stoddard** Could you please give an overall assessment of the challenges and opportunities facing LDCs in regards to technology?

**Professor Romain Murenzi** The 2013 report of the Secretary General of the UN to the General Assembly on the Technology Bank found that the current global initiatives on science and technology were not sufficiently servicing the needs of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) – the countries that are most in need of assistance in this area. The Broadband Commission’s report, *The State of Broadband 2014*, detailed how over two thirds of people in developing countries are not connected to the internet. The situation is even more concerning in the 48 least developed countries, home to around 900 million people, where over 90% of the population are not online.

There are many programmes which include some of the regions that LDCs are located but the Secretary General’s report found that few of these were solidly building capacity in science and technology from the bottom up. The Istanbul Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries outlines how the scientific research and innovation base needs to be nurtured in LDCs to promote networking among researchers and research institutions, help them access and utilize critical technologies, and draw together bilateral initiatives and support by multilateral institutions and the private sector, building on existing international initiatives. If you’re a scientist in an LDC, but you lack computers and broadband, then even if you can gather data, how do you analyse it? How do you store it? How do you share it with colleagues? The risk is that, while other countries advance, the LDCs fall further behind.

**LS** Can you explain why a Technology Bank for LDCs is needed?

**RM** All of the LDCs aspire to move forward in the areas of science, technology and innovation. Despite this they have not been able to move beyond outdated technologies that characterize their production processes and outputs. The acquisition of new technologies and...
the building of domestic capacity and a knowledge base, to be able to fully utilize acquired technologies, are needed for socio-economic transformation of the LDCs, as well as to help them effectively confront the emerging challenges, such as climate change, public health emergencies, natural disasters etc. The ITU has found that in 19 of the world’s LDCs, most of which are in Africa, the monthly cost of broadband exceeds average monthly earnings. Support and development of these sectors should help to bridge the digital divide in LDCs. A Technology Bank would reduce the technology gap in support of rapid poverty eradication and sustainable development. An initiative that is specifically dedicated to LDCs would comprehensively assist these most vulnerable countries. While the Technology Bank will have its own distinct work programmes aimed at bridging the LDCs’ technology gap, it will also build on the work done in other relevant organizations by establishing close links with them.

LS Where did the idea for a Technology Bank originate?

RM The fourth decennial UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC-IV), which met in Istanbul, Turkey in May 2011, strongly voiced the need for a multilateral effort to advance and accelerate science and technology among LDCs. The Conference called for further analysis of the needs of LDCs in this area with the aim of establishing a Technology Bank and Science, Technology and Information Supporting Mechanism, dedicated to LDCs. This would help improve their scientific research and innovation base, promote networking among researchers and research institutions and help these countries access and utilize critical technologies.

This analysis was presented in the report of the Secretary-General to the UN General Assembly that I just referenced. Upon consideration of this report, the Assembly requested that the Secretary-General establish a High-level Panel to further elaborate, via a feasibility study, on the functions, organizational and funding aspects of the Technology Bank and its institutional linkages with the United Nations.

LS What is the current state of play in regards to establishing the Technology Bank and what is your involvement in this process?

RM Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced the formation of a High-Level Panel in November 2014 at the request of the UN General Assembly. I have the pleasure of chairing this panel of experts from the field, which will study the scope and functions of the proposed Technology Bank. We held the first meeting of the High Level Panel in Turkey from 16-17 February 2015, where we discussed in-depth the various aspects of the feasibility study. It was a very successful meeting. All members of the Panel agreed on the need and importance of the Technology Bank for LDCs and the value it will add to the socio-economic advancement of these countries. We have provided guidance to the Secretariat of the High Level Panel on the preparation of the feasibility study in time for our next meeting in July 2015.

LS Can you tell me more about the High-Level Panel and what its main task will be?

RM I think it’s very positive to see that as a panel we are an incredibly representative, including five women and five men from LDCs and development partners from the global North and South.

The Secretary-General indicated that he wants us to prepare practical recommendations which can provide a strong impetus to accelerating structural transformation and sustainable development of the LDCs through the establishment of the Technology Bank. So in essence we will assess the feasibility of the Technology Bank in terms of its ability to have a positive impact on LDCs. Collectively we will address questions relating to technology transfer, including intellectual property rights issues and how to leverage existing international initiatives and strengthen LDCs’ own domestic capacities in the areas of Science, Technology and Innovation. As I have already mentioned, our first meeting has asked the Secretariat to prepare the feasibility study, which will cover all these areas. It will also propose institutional linkages of the Technology Bank with the United Nations.

LS What is the timeline for the process?

RM The High Level Panel is expected to complete its work in summer 2015. The panel is mandated to undertake the feasibility study with its recommendation on the operationalization of the Technology Bank. The UN General Assembly decided that the Bank will be operational during its 70th session, which will begin in September 2015, if so recommended by the Panel.

LS How will the three elements of the Technology Bank [Science, Technology and Innovation] be highlighted in the SDGs?

RM I am very encouraged that the outcome of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals agreed upon last year by the UN Member States, as well as the synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 development agenda, both contained provisions as regards operationalization of the Technology Bank. Given the broad scope of SDGs, the three arms of the Bank, namely science, technology and innovation capacity building, the Patents Bank and repository facility, will have important roles in scaling up the implementation of the these goals.

It should be recalled that LDCs missed out on realization of most of the MDGs, and such scaling up will contribute critically to timely realization of the SDGs. Therefore, effectiveness of the Technology Bank in delivering on its mandate is of utmost importance in the context of advancing the post-2015 development agenda and SDGs in these countries.

LS Will the Bank serve the needs of women in LDCs and do any of the three elements help towards climate change adaptation?

RM You must have noticed that the Secretary-General of the United Nations has ensured 50-50 representation of women and men on his High-level Panel, which I particularly welcome as a sign of his commitment to ensuring that the Technology Bank pays particular attention to the needs of the women.

We will do our utmost to respond to his intent while establishing the functions of the Bank. As regards climate change adaptation, for LDCs it is an existential issue. Many LDCs are small islands and are exposed to the impact of sea level rise and natural calamities. Other LDCs also suffer from a variety of environmental and climate change risks inherent in their fragile eco-systems. We will pay particular attention to technological solutions which would help LDCs adapt effectively and in a timely manner to climate change challenges.
INTERVIEW

SIDS on Track with Renewables Technologies

Ambassador Ahmed Sareer, Permanent Representative of Maldives to the UN on the vision of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)

Nosh Nalavala  SIDS are low-lying coastal countries that are facing insurmountable challenges, including small but growing populations, limited resources, remoteness, susceptibility to natural disasters and fragile environments. Since Maldives is at the helm of AOSIS, what is your vision for the upcoming years?

Ambassador Ahmed Sareer  I would not characterize our situation as “insurmountable”. I agree, we do face a unique set of challenges, recognized by our special status. But our vision for the next few years and decades is to focus on the many solutions that exist to tackle climate change that are just awaiting implementation.

NN  The International Year of SIDS comes to an end this year. How do you see the SAMOA Pathway in terms of the implementation of its programme of action?

AS  The SAMOA Pathway is the product of close cooperation between SIDS, our partners, and reflects some of the latest insights on how sustainable development works best on the ground. We now want to see a focus on mobilizing the means of implementation needed to put these good ideas to work.

NN  The theme of the Samoa conference was: “the sustainable development of SIDS through genuine and durable partnerships.” What types of partnerships do you visualize going forward, especially as we transition from the MDGs to the SDGs?

AS  Part of what we have learned over the past few decades with sustainable development is that programmes work best when they are designed in light of the distinct national circumstances in the places where they are implemented. We see partnerships that recognize this reality as being key to success moving forward.

NN  How vital is the outcome of the upcoming Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction for SIDS in light of the post-2015 framework on DRR?

AS  It’s critical, especially with the intensifying extreme weather impacts of climate change, it is crucial that we focus on DRR. But my word of caution is that reducing risk is not and should not be used as a substitute for taking the action needed to lower the greenhouse gas emissions responsible for the crisis immediately.

NN  The Green Climate Fund (GCF) achieving an initial threshold of $10 billion at COP20 in Lima, what are your hopes for the fund to contribute to SIDS adaptation strategies? (The aim of the fund is to raise $100 billion by 2020).

AS  We certainly saw positive movement in regards to the GCF ahead of Lima, and it is encouraging that the mechanism is starting to capitalize. But we must remember, that the $10 billion figure was supposed to be available for 2015. The current commitments are spread over several years and are thus well short of that goal. Moving forward, it will be essential that adequate funds are made available and that there are systems in place that recognize that unique challenges SIDS have in accessing the funds.

NN  What outcome do you foresee at COP21 in Paris in relation to SIDS?

AS  I am optimistic that we will make important progress in Paris, but it’s too early to predict the outcome. We have a lot of work to do in the coming weeks and months to ensure that we are on track for an ambitious treaty. I hope to speak with as many parties as possible across the development spectrum to reach a satisfactory agreement.

NN  Many SIDS now recognize the need to move towards low-carbon, climate resilient economies. Does AOSIS advise its Member States that instead of relying on fossil fuel imports, renewable technologies will make them more sustainable?

AS  I think it is well known that renewables are the way to go for a number of reasons that are widely recognized across SIDS and around the world. Renewables and energy efficiency technologies have important co-benefits, such as public health, energy security, and huge cost savings, to name only a few. SIDS have known this for a long time now. We are really waiting for everyone else to get onboard!
Representatives from small islands, the private sector, civil society and the United Nations gathered in Singapore in November for a capacity-building seminar aimed at enhancing disaster preparedness. The meeting, organized by The UN Division for Sustainable Development in cooperation with UN-OHRLLS and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Singapore, is considered part of the follow-up to the Third International Conference on SIDS held in Samoa in 2014 as well as a stepping-stone for the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), which will be held in Sendai, Japan in March 2015.

Participants attending the meeting focused on ways to improve collaboration among countries in dealing with disasters by building and expanding the capacity of participants in their respective fields of operation and home countries. The importance of a holistic and coordinated approach to DRR in the context of SIDS was stressed by Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya, High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States who noted during his opening remarks that, ‘enhancing disaster risk reduction will require endeavours ranging from improving access to technology, access to financing for early warning systems, building adaptive and institutional capacities, sharing best practices, utilizing traditional knowledge and mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction into all sectors of society’.

The three-day event included nine sessions on disasters management which covered environmental protection, public awareness, financing and resource mobilization, recovery and rebuilding, and infrastructure protection, among others.

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by Lisa Neuner

Building Seawalls. Tarawa, Kiribati

Lauren Day, World Bank

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Seasonal Worker Joint Venture Comes Full Circle in Vanuatu

What began as a joint venture between a Kiwi employer and his Pacific Island seasonal workers has entered a new phase with the Vanuatu based JV company exporting merchandise to New Zealand.

Tanna Famas' directors Jono Bushell and Jason Kennard established the JV with Vanuatu seasonal worker and farmer Seth Kaurua a couple of years ago. Now the company has begun exporting virgin coconut oil and soap from the country's pristine Tanna Island to some of New Zealand's upmarket stores. Deli café Zarbo in Auckland's upscale Newmarket and retail stores such as NeatMeat and other retail stores in Blenheim (Burleigh Deli Café and Health Foods) and Christchurch are already selling the company's merchandise. Mr. Kennard says they have also exported a commonly served food item in Vanuatu called Simburo. Tanna Famas has in addition supplied cassava and kumara to a food manufacturer, bought the finished product and sold it in New Zealand.

They want to start by selling Simburo initially to the ni-Vanuatu Recognised Seasonal Employment (RSE) scheme workers who are working on farms in different parts of New Zealand and eventually introduce it to the local restaurants. Simburo was also introduced during the Fine Food 2014 Show in Melbourne last September. Mr. Bushell says the company has a stock of virgin coconut oil in Auckland's warehouse ready for packaging and distribution to different buyers in New Zealand.

Tanna Famas has 25 employees and most of these employees are either former RSE workers or under apprenticeship as potential RSE workers to New Zealand's horticulture and viticulture industries. The potential RSE workers undergo training for 6 weeks and the supervisor in the farm, who is formerly a RSE worker, is teaching them the basic farming techniques. Their 7-hectare lease land grows coffee and fruits and vegetables such as watermelon, cassava, kumara, kava, lemon grass, among others.

Mr. Bushell, Mr. Kennard and Mr. Kaurua presented their successful and noteworthy JV initiative at the pre-SIDS (Small Islands Developing States) Private Sector Partnerships Forum in Apia on August 30 last year. The initiative was also showcased at the third Seasonal Workers Programme Conference hosted by the Australian Government on the Gold Coast last year. Pacific Islands Trade & Invest (PT&I) New Zealand offices, which has been associated with the RSE scheme since inception, and Vanuatu's Commissioner of Labour have together assisted in the formation of the JV.
A Look Back at Big Year for Small Islands

The 2014 International Year of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) celebrated the contribution that these nations have made to the world and highlighted the challenges they face such as climate change and rising sea levels.

The global launch of the year took place at UN Headquarters in New York on 24 February 2014 and was attended by SIDS representatives and senior UN Officials. In his statement at the event UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon said, “The International Year will offer us the opportunity to highlight the particularly severe and complex challenges faced by Small Island Developing States due to their special vulnerabilities and characteristics”.

Events around the International Year peaked in September when representatives from 115 countries, over 3,500 policymakers, business leaders and stakeholders from civil society and the private sector gathered in Apia, Samoa for the Third International Conference on SIDS.

Under the slogan “Island Voices, Global Choices” participants in Samoa discussed a myriad of issues including climate change, environmental protection and access to energy. In the spirit of promoting partnerships UN-OHRLLS co-organised a two day Private Sector Partnerships Forum preceding the event. This contributed to the successful conclusion of 20 partnerships, initiatives and recommendations and acknowledged the importance of entrepreneurship and private business initiatives for SIDS’ sustainable development.

OHRLLs brokered a partnership with iTunes over this period, to feature a special category for island music on their iTunes store. Artists from every Island were represented, creating a musical backdrop of Island voices for the world to listen to during the Samoa meeting.

Samoa also saw the arrival of a Polynesian Voyaging Crew, as they sailed around the world on canoes, using only traditional methods of navigation. OHRLLS arranged for the group to stop in Samoa to highlight the contribution that small

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by Lisa Neuner

Timor-Leste. Children play in the waters off Atauro Island. Louise Stoddard
islands make to the health of the world’s oceans. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and other participants in Samoa joined the voyagers for a short trip around the Samoan coastline.

Throughout 2014 numerous UN International Days and UN entities also tailored their activities to reflect the International Year’s attention on SIDS. A conference on “Equality for Women is Progress for All – Views from the Small Island Developing States” was held on International Women’s Day in March in Paris, France. The International Day for Biological Diversity on 22 May 2014 focused on Island Diversity. Furthermore, World Environment Day on 5 June 2014 celebrated SIDS’ resilience under the slogan of “Raise Your Voice, Not the Sea Level” and culminated in numerous events worldwide, including a ‘Tweetathon’ using the popular hashtag #islands2014.

On a regional level, countries across the world organized a multitude of national and local events and workshops to celebrate the year.

On 24 April 2014, the International A Look Back at Big Year for Small Islands... continued from page 17

The 2014 International Year of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) celebrated the contribution that these nations have made to the world and highlighted the challenges they face such as climate change and rising sea levels.
INTERVIEW

A Blueprint for the Sustainable Development Goals

Amina J. Mohammed, the Secretary-General’s Special Adviser on Post-2015 Development Planning, answers questions on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

Nosh Nalavala Ms. Mohammed, as Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), what is your role?

Amina Mohammed Amongst other things, my job is to advise the Secretary-General and assist him in coordinating the planning of the UN system and mobilizing all constituencies in support of a new, effective, transformative sustainable development agenda.

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A Blueprint for the Sustainable Development Goals...

**NN** Could you please explain why there was a need to replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), considered a success, with the SDGs?

**AM** The MDGs were a huge success which mobilized the international community as never before. Progress has been remarkable but there is still considerable work to do. The MDGs have helped to end poverty for some, but not for all. The SDGs must finish the job and leave no one behind. The SDGs must help us build the future we want, a future free from poverty and one that is built on human rights, equality and sustainability.

**NN** What is the distinction then between the MDGs and SDGs?

**AM** They are similar yet different. The MDGs focused on key concerns such as poverty reduction, access to education and combating diseases like HIV/AIDS, and in all areas, significant progress has been made, although much remains to be done. The new post-2015 development agenda will seek to reinforce commitment to achieve all MDGs as well as break new ground with goals on inequality, economic growth, decent jobs, energy, climate change, sustainable consumption and production, peace and justice, among others, with environmental protection cross-cutting across the whole agenda.

**NN** The MDGs had 8 Goals. The SDGs have 17 Goals with a number of targets. What is the likelihood of the vulnerable countries achieving these rather ambitious goals by 2030?

**AM** Special attention is required for the most vulnerable, in particular African countries, the least developed countries, the landlocked developing countries and the small island developing States. They will require additional international cooperation to complement their efforts to work toward the achievement of the SDGs by 2030.

**NN** That said, what role has the most vulnerable nations played in the formulation of the SDGs?

**AM** The SDGs are for all countries. They are universal and should be achieved by all countries, for the benefit of all people. They must also promote international cooperation to assist people in the most vulnerable countries.

**NN** There is a common thread running between Goals 13, 14 and 15 — Climate Change and its impact on the planet. Could we conclude that the SDGs have a strong climate agenda?

**AM** The environment has always been a major dimension of sustainable development and we are seeing that environmental degradation around the world is exacerbating poverty and increasing misery and hardship for millions of people. These goals address a range of environmental challenges, from supporting sustainable ecosystems, conserving ocean resources, and tackling climate change. Unless we address issues environmental protection issues as well as climate change, through reducing emissions and building climate resilience, we stand little chance of making further progress towards the elimination of poverty. That is why the Secretary-General identified the planet as one of his proposed essential elements to help frame the sustainable development agenda.

**NN** Goal 5 clearly indicates that there is an ever-widening gender gap and a real need to empower women and girls in vulnerable countries. Do you believe that climate change impacts women more than men?

**AM** The SDGs must be people-centered and planet sensitive and address many of the very real gender dimensions to climate change. Many are due to women’s status in society, education, and the range of services available. Due to a range of factors, women are more often victims of disasters that are often climate change-related; as farmers, they are at the front lines of changing weather patterns that increasingly consist of extreme drought or flooding. There are many actions that can address these challenges in building climate resilience.

**NN** To follow up, are the SDGs shaped and implemented with the constraints of women in mind?

**AM** Absolutely, the theme running through all of these goals is to remove those constraints and allow and empower women, and all people, achieve their full potential. Of note is the Secretary-General’s proposal to consider Dignity and People as key elements to help frame and understand the sustainable development agenda.

**NN** Lastly, what is the initial budget for the SDGs and how are the SDGs being financed?

**AM** There are many issues that must be resolved this year and financing is critical. We hope that the Financing for Development Conference in Addis Ababa this July will provide a framework for ensuring that the new sustainable development agenda and the efforts on climate action are properly supported.