Statement

by

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at the High-Level Seminar: Accelerating Sustainable Energy for All in Landlocked Developing Countries through Innovative Partnerships

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Conference Room C3, VIC, Vienna, Austria
Mr. Martin Ledolter, Managing Director, Austrian Development Agency (ADA), Government of Austria
H.E. Ms. Mwaba Patricia Kasese-Bota, Permanent Representative of Zambia to the United Nations in New York and Global Chair of the Group of LLDCs
Mr. Taizo Nishikawa, Deputy Director General, UNIDO
Ms. Monika Weber-Fahr, Chief Operating Officer, Sustainable Energy for All (SE4All)

Excellencies, Distinguished participants from LLDCs and partners,
Ladies and Gentlemen

I am delighted to address this opening session of the high-level seminar on Sustainable Energy for all in Landlocked Developing Countries. I would like to begin by commending the Government of the Austria for their support towards the organisation of this event.

Two years ago Austria graciously hosted the Second UN Conference on the LLDCs that resulted in the adoption of the Vienna Programme of Action for the LLDCs for the Decade 2014 to 2024. Today we are here as part of its implementation. I commend you for this strong commitment to the LLDCs and to the Vienna Programme of Action.

I am also appreciative of the excellent partnership and support of UNIDO and SE4ALL in organizing this seminar.

I wish to express my sincere thanks and deep appreciation to the Global Chair of the LLDCs, the Government of Zambia, for their able leadership of the Group in cooperation with the Bureau in New York and the Government of
Paraguay for coordinating the trade and development matters of the Group in Geneva.

You are all fully aware that LLDCs are in a special situation, which puts them at a disadvantage in terms of competitiveness and diversification of their economy. LLDCs pay almost double in trade costs, compared to their neighbouring coastal countries because of their geography. These high transport and trade costs, diminish export profits, inflate the prices of imported inputs for manufacturing and discourage investment thereby negatively affecting overall sustainable development and poverty eradication efforts in LLDCs. The Vienna Programme of Action reflects the commitment of all stakeholders to address the special needs and challenges of the LLDCs. The VPoA stresses that energy infrastructure and access to affordable, reliable and renewable energy and related technologies are critically important in addressing the challenges of landlockedness.

Today we have a global development framework that is supportive to the LLDCs and aims to promote sustainable energy. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development acknowledges that the LLDCs deserve special attention and stresses that the VPoA is integral to the new Agenda. Sustainable Development Goal 7 (SDG 7) calls for ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all by 2030. The Sustainable Energy for All initiative has similar objectives as SDG 7. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda highlights the means to generate financing to support the sustainable development agenda. The Paris Agreement on climate change underscores the importance of sustainable energy for combating climate change. Therefore this is a propitious time to take into account this global convergence and enhance partnerships in particular with those who need it most, and who are farthest
from reaching many of the goals. LLDCs are among the frontline countries facing these challenges.

It is an undeniable truth that Sustainable energy is an enabler for all the three dimensions of sustainable development for the LLDCs. It is important for alleviating poverty, improving human health and education, empowering women, and raising living standards and transforming economy. UN Secretary General has said that SE is a golden thread that connects all SDGs. Energy is crucial to support faster customs clearance, border crossing, and tracking of shipment that is in transit and other trade facilitation processes important for lowering trade costs. LLDCs have limited productive capacities, are experiencing declining value addition in manufacturing and agriculture, and have heavy reliance on undiversified primary commodities. Energy is critical to turn around this situation, and support industrialization needed to enable the LLDCs to achieve economic diversification, improve value addition and become more competitive in international markets. Renewable energy will promote growth and sustainable development and help countries transition towards a low carbon economy. Furthermore, well developed RE can also help reduce the overdependence on transportation and logistical challenges linked to delivering fossil fuels to some LLDCs with unreliable and expensive overland trade corridors resulting in high cost of energy at the receiving end.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

All together the 32 LLDCs have about 470 million people, and at least 56% of the people in LLDCs live without electricity. There is also a big difference between individual countries as well as wide disparities between urban and rural areas, with urban areas having access rates that are multiple times higher than the rural areas. There are also huge challenges associated with unreliable
services black outs and brown outs affected by frequent disruptive services even in urban areas. Almost 300 million people in LLDCs are still dependent on use of biomass for cooking which has tragic effects on human health, is time consuming and disproportionately affects the women and children. This underscores the need for access to clean and modern cooking energy. We should not waste time to reduce and eliminate this dependence on biomass at the earliest.

In terms of renewable energy use, the average proportion of renewable energy in the total final energy consumption was 29% in 2012 for the LLDCs. In 8 LLDCs the proportion of renewable energy in final consumption is very small accounting to less than 10% showing that there is still a great potential to promote greater use of renewable energy sources.

There is also potential for the LLDCs to reduce energy costs, improve industrial productivity and energy security through improving energy efficiency by enhancing efficiency in the generation, transmission, distribution and use of energy, as well as making a shift towards energy efficient products and processes. The fall in prices for renewable energy, especially solar energy, and the emergence of new business models, coupled with new technology and storage provide great opportunity to scale up renewable energy in LLDCs.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Today’s meeting is an opportunity to highlight the importance of moving sustainable energy to the top of the list of investment priorities for LLDCs. There are many ways to do that. It all begins with a strong and multistakeholder national leadership and ownership. We need to accord a high level priority, establish a coherent policy and ensure effective implementation mechanism and
monitoring with a multistakeholder approach that takes forward the sustainable energy agenda in an integrated manner. It is critical from every perspective.

There is need for supportive policies and regulatory reforms that can nurture a strong enabling environment that can encourage greater investment to support multi-pronged initiatives, from on-grid, mini-grid to off grid solutions.

Massive investments are required to support energy transition and for the achievement of SDG7, especially when you see the low base and capital intensive nature of the programs and projects. Therefore the private sector and the civil society have an important role to play. Public resources, including ODA, need to be used in a catalytic way to attract and leverage sufficient investment. A regional integration approach should be encouraged because regional projects can create bigger opportunities and the necessary scale to attract larger investment and trade energy to fill the resource gap.

Capacity building support in developing bankable projects and closing deals and implementing them and in developing the relevant policies; and increased access to renewable and energy efficiency technologies are critical in supporting our efforts to achieve SDG 7 in the LLDCs. Continued and scaled up support, with simplified access to resources, from the international community is crucial.

The importance for greater partnerships cannot be overemphasized - Governments, the private sector, regional, international organizations, civil society, North-South and South-South cooperation are all important. Strong national ownership and drive for sustainable energy in LLDCs needs to be complemented by an equally strong global support, solidarity and partnership. They have to work in unison and mutually ratchet up their side of commitment and delivery.
As I conclude, I hope that this high level meeting will result in the identification of concrete initiatives, innovative approaches and partnerships to promote energy access, efficiency, and renewable energy in the LLDCs. Leaving no one behind and transformative change are fundamental principles of SDGs, and we must deliver them in LLDCs.

Thank you for your kind attention.