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Remarks

for

Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox, Director, UN-OHRLLS

At the side event on Aviation partnerships for sustainable development

9:40am Sunday 27 November 2016
Ashgabat, Turkmenistan
Honorable Ministers,
Dr. Fang Liu, the Secretary General of the International Civil Aviation Organization
Excellencies and distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to address this side event on Aviation partnerships for sustainable development.

Improving air transport connectivity and competitiveness is a key to unlocking the development potential of the LLDCs and SIDS. It is particularly important for the travel and tourism industries. Air transport is very important for the tourism sector which plays an important role in building the economic sector, providing employment and generating foreign exchange. Air transport can also be used to transport goods that are of high value per unit or that are time-sensitive, such as perishable agricultural products such as flowers, documents, pharmaceuticals, fashion garments, production samples, electronics consumer goods, and emergency shipments of spare parts.

Air transport is particularly important for the LLDCs because it is a mode of transport that provides them with direct access to international markets without having to pass through the transit countries thereby providing an important link that helps them to overcome their geographical disadvantage. Furthermore air transport is very important as it has great potential to stimulate structural transformation. Greater use of air transport can stimulate the LLDCs to diversify their export products and add value to their exports. As you know the LLDCs are highly dependent on unprocessed commodity exports, development of the aviation sector can stimulate their economies to move away from being low value-added
and low-productivity economies to add value and increase productivity. Some
developed landlocked countries were able to focus on manufacture of high value
products like watches and utilize air transport to export their products and this this
contributed to the structural transformation of their economies.

The importance of air transport to the development of the LLDCs is recognized in
the Vienna Programme of Action in priority area 1 on fundamental transit policy
issues, priority area 2 on infrastructure development and maintenance and priority
5 on structural transformation.

The issue of connectivity and transportation is one of great concern to many SIDS
given their geographical location and isolation from the other countries. Investing
in air connectivity of SIDS is critical to help them in fostering tourism growth and
overall sustainable development. The SAMOA Pathway for SIDS, under its
section on Sustainable Transportation, call for enhancing support for the efforts of
SIDS to advance the safety of air transportation, to develop viable national,
regional and international transportation arrangements, including improved air
transport policies and to increase energy efficiency in the transport sector.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda,
the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster
Risk Reduction recognize the important role of sustainable transport in achieving
sustainable development. As we move on with the implementation of the new
agenda, the SDGs can only be successful if we pay special attention to the
vulnerable countries - LLDCs and SIDS in the aviation sector.

The LLDCs and SIDS do not utilize air transport to their full potential because of
constraints some of which include: higher costs of utilizing air freight compared to
that of road transport and sea transport; the huge resources that are required for
infrastructure investment, maintenance, rehabilitation and replacement of aged fleet; higher fuel costs; lack of skills; and lack of state of the art terminals. Addressing these challenges demand that we work more closely together and build stronger partnerships.

I commend the efforts of ICAO to support the vulnerable countries to improve air transport services including the No Country Left Behind campaign to assist States in implementing ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices; your support to Member States on Air Services Negotiations; the initiative on the Sustainable Development of Air Transport in Africa; and initiative on the Development of Air Cargo in Africa - to name just a few.

OHRLLS stands ready to cooperate on partnerships to support the LLDCs and SIDS and to undertake joint advocacy efforts particularly towards raising international support for investment into air transport infrastructure and increased use of air transport by the LLDCs and SIDS in particular.

I thank you for your kind attention.