Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu, USG and High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I take this opportunity to thank UN-OHRLLS for organizing this consultative meeting on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in LDCs.

The participation of the friends of LDCs along with the members of LDCs assume special significance as the global partnerships constitute the cornerstone of the 2030 Agenda and the IPoA for LDCs. The Group of LDCs receives continued support from the friends of LDCs not only at the country level but also in the intergovernmental negotiations in New York and beyond. This meeting provides an important platform in jointly identifying the challenges and opportunities.

Nearly two years have passed since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement. These historic agreements are now influencing the process of global policy making. Our discussions assume special importance as they are taking place in the backdrop of the HLPF.

The latest version of the World Economic Situation and Prospects warns that the business as usual approach with current growth projections would leave nearly 35 per cent of the population in LDCs in extreme poverty by 2030.

Providing education, health care services, full employment and decent works to the growing number of population in LDCs is major task ahead of us. The recent UN report on the World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision, suggests that the world population is expected to reach 8.6 billion in 2030, 9.8 billion in 2050. A major part of this growth is expected to come from the 47 LDCs with the fertility rate of around 4.3 births per woman. The population of LDCs is expected to reach 1.9 billion people in 2050 from the current estimate of one billion. It will be much harder for Governments of LDCs to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality, combat hunger and malnutrition and to improve the provision of basic services.

LDCs are highly vulnerable to various shocks and crises. Our countries are still suffering from the impacts of the world economic and financial crises of 2008. They are yet to reach the pre-crisis level of economic growth rate. The projected growth rate of 4.5 per cent in 2016 puts these countries well below the 7 per cent growth target of the IPoA.

Most of the recent natural calamities, climate change induced havocs, health pandemics, commodity price volatility and other macroeconomic shocks, conflict and post conflict disasters are happening in LDCs with impacts at disproportionate magnitude. A recent report by the Chatham House think-tank warns that the climate change is causing serious food supply interruptions and huge spikes in prices which can spark major conflicts. Attenuating the devastating impacts and building resilience against shocks and crises is, therefore, an imminent development priority for LDCs. We are looking forward to Secretary-General’s in-depth study on crises mitigation and resilience building for LDCs to be considered in the upcoming 73rd session of the GA. We also look forward to the Climate Summit that will take place in New York in 2019 and hope that all parties would fulfil their obligations outlined in the Paris Agreement.

We are concerned that while LDCs are in need of increased global support, ODA, FDI and exports are declining considerably in 2016 compared to 2015.
Total ODA from OECD-DAC countries to LDCs fell from $41 billion in 2014 to $37 billion in nominal terms in 2015. Furthermore, preliminary data for 2016 show that bilateral net ODA to LDCs decreased by further 3.9 per cent in real terms compared to 2015.

The share of exports from LDCs in world trade further declined to 0.97 per cent in 2015 from 1.09 per cent in 2014, for the first time below 1 per cent since 2007 and further below the target of 2 per cent set by the Istanbul Programme of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals. The FDI flows to the least developed countries retreated by 13 per cent to $38 billion.

Technology and investment are key drivers of structural transformation in LDCs. Operationalization of the Teck Bank and investment promotion regimes for LDCs are yet to be realized.

Our development partners must undertake concrete actions to reverse the declining trend in ODA, FDI and exports and to fulfil the commitment of 0.15-0.20 per cent of the GNI of the OECD countries to LDCs. We are encouraged by the record IDA replenishment of $75 billion over the next three years by the World Bank and hope that a major share would go to LDCs.

The private sector and business community also needs to play an important role in this regard. A pioneering report issued this week – Better Business, Better World – by the Business & Sustainable Development Commission (BSDC), points out that business leaders and entrepreneurs can unlock market opportunities worth trillions of dollars and generate millions of jobs by 2030 by following sustainable business models.

The last QCPR is reassuring for us that LDCs, as the most vulnerable countries, would continue to receive priorities and tailor made support from the United Nations to realize the IPOA and the 2030 Agenda. This should be the cornerstone and guiding principle of the United Nations reform exercise.

The UN-OHRLLS, while dealing with the three most vulnerable groups of countries, holds a big responsibility. Mobilizing international support and resources for LDCs in the face of contractionary policies and competing priorities of many partner countries, remains a key challenge for the Office. We are fully confident that our new USG, with her vast knowledge and experience and with the support of her able team will further intensify international support in favour of LDCs.

I look forward to substantive discussions during the retreat.