Remarks

by

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for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries

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at a side event organized by UNIDO and Norway

"Implementing SDG 14 in data poor LDCs with low institutional capacities"

11:00 - 12:30 PM, Conference Room 12
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Excellencies,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank UNIDO and the co-organising partners of this event: the Government of the Red Sea State, Republic of Sudan; Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and, the Institute for Marine Research of Norway, for convening this side-event.

It gives me great pleasure to be part of this discussion on **Implementation of SDG 14 in data poor LDCs with weak institutional capacities.** As recognised by Member States in the Istanbul Programme of Action for LDCs, this group of countries represent the poorest and weakest segment of the international community.

LDCs are characterised by low levels of human development and face structural impediments that hinder their efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development. For the nine LDCs that are also in the category of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), they face additional challenges including: greater vulnerability, remoteness, small size and capacity gaps.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

The fisheries sector is an important source of livelihoods and a source of food for many LDCs. UNCTAD data shows that six of the top sixteen producers of fish from inland waters are LDCs. In addition, fish is one of the top five export products for about fourteen of the LDCs.

For coastal LDCs, oceans and marine resources is the base of their economy and crucial for their sustainable development. However, similar to SIDS, coastal LDCs often lack the technical, technological, institutional, and financial support to enable them to fully benefit from their marine resources.

Furthermore, fish can play an extremely important role in improving the nutritional status of individuals, in particular those at risk of malnutrition such as children and pregnant women. Aside from having higher protein contents, fish is an important source of micro nutrients such as iron and vitamin A, which are critical for growth and cognitive development. Some estimates show that fish accounts for about 50 per cent of the animal protein consumed in many LDCs. For the SIDS, fish provides 50-90 per cent of animal protein in the diet of coastal communities.

However, ocean resources are limited and we have heard often during this conference, the health of the ocean has drastically declined due to human activities. It is imperative that the oceans are healthy and resilient. This is crucial for ensuring that the long-term capacity of ocean ecosystems can support economic activity while remaining resilient and healthy. Our well-being is dependent on this principal.

As called for in SDG target 14.7, there is need to increase the economic benefits to SIDS and LDCs from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Capacity building is essential to ensuring that SIDS and coastal LDCs are able to fully benefit from their marine resources without degrading fish stocks and marine ecosystems. This requires conducting high quality stock assessments.

As recognised in the recent World Bank and UN report on the 'Potential of the Blue Economy', the growing science of data-limited stock assessments can provide critical information needed for improved fisheries management.

In order for countries to increasingly make decisions based on evidence, they need information on among others, the ocean's carrying capacity, fish landings and fish stock. Good data is also important for monitoring the degree to which all stakeholders live up to their respective commitments, therefore promoting mutual accountability.

However, for resource-poor LDCs, conducting such surveys is a major challenge. As with the other SDGs, there is a need to strengthen statistical capacities in vulnerable countries such as LDCs and SIDS to collect the needed information. In recognition of this, Member States agreed in SDG target 17.18 to enhance capacity building support to LDCs and SIDS, to increase significantly the availability of high quality, timely and reliable data with appropriate levels of disaggregation.

I am very pleased to note that this panel will focus the discussion on how various actors have contributed towards inter alia: making fisheries sustainable; increasing scientific knowledge; developing research capacity; and, transferring appropriate marine technology, in one of the LDCs. This is in the spirit of what was agreed in the Istanbul Programme of Action for LDCs, that, development partners should *provide financial and technical assistance and facilitate technology transfer to LDCs efforts to develop among other things, the sustainable management of marine biodiversity and ecosystems.*

I look forward to learning more about how the institutional capacity in one of the LDCs was built, for the sustainable management of the marine fishery. Specifically, I am interested in learning about what made this initiative work, what some of the challenges were and how the lessons learned can be replicated in other LDCs.

I thank you.