



**Statement
by**

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**Astana Economic Forum:
*Flagship Session on Transforming Capitalism to Inclusive and
Sustainable Future***

Venue: Palace of Independence

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11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

- Madam Chair,
- Honorable Ministers, Excellencies,
- Distinguished Delegates,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by congratulating Kazakhstan for hosting the Astana Economic Forum. The Forum provides a unique platform to seek impetus to reenergize the global economy and promote shared prosperity for the international community. This is most relevant, especially at a time, when the global economy is anticipated to pick up pace again, and there is an urgent need to do things differently this time around. We all know that a shift towards more resilient, equitable and sustainable growth has become indispensable.

I will focus today in my remarks on the role that technology and infrastructure can play in accelerating the development of the vulnerable countries and building a more resilient future for all countries. But let me first say a few words on the countries that I represent.

My Office advocates for the 91 vulnerable countries around the world, stretching across islands in the Pacific to landlocked countries in Central Asia, and to least developed countries in Africa, with a total of about 1.1 billion population. These 91 countries are categorized into three main groups; least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states. They all face unique development challenges due to structural handicaps and geographical disadvantages. Their economies suffer of structural weaknesses. For example, the 47 least developed countries represent approximately 12 per cent of world

population, but account for less than 2 percent of world GDP and about 1 percent of global trade in goods. The average GDP per capita in LDCs is only 960 US dollars, less than a tenth of the global average. In addition, the share of manufacturing in GDP is very low, with around 12 per cent, with minimal growth over the last decades, indicating very limited structural transformation

Furthermore, the challenges these countries face are magnified by the growing impacts of climate change. We are currently witnessing the acute impacts of climate change: severe droughts, melting glaciers, crop failure, land degradation, tropical cyclones, ocean acidification, and rising sea levels. For those that are small islands, the negative impacts represent an existential threat.

I come from a Pacific island of Tonga. It is with a heavy heart that I tell you that these adverse impacts of climate change have become everyday reality in Tonga as well as in many other small island developing states. These countries are at the forefront of climate change. Their situation must be taken as a wake-up call for the rest of the world. A call that cannot be ignored when we discuss global growth and the new economic order.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we move forward in building a more resilient, equitable and sustainable economic order, I would like to underline that we already have the policies and the tools at hand. In recent years, the global community has adopted three major blueprints to tackle global challenges. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change all pave the way for more sustainable and equitable growth.

One of the combining elements between the three frameworks is their focus on technology and how new technologies can propel economic growth to more sustainable and inclusive direction.

In line with this, my Office has been supporting the establishment of a Technology Bank for Least Developed Countries. The technology Bank will help them to gain access to scientific research and innovation base, promote networking among research institutions and help the least developed countries to access and utilize critical and appropriate technologies. It will also help least developed countries to foster the development of national and regional innovation ecosystems that can attract outside technology, generate home grown research and innovation and take them to market.

The Technology Bank will be operationalized this year. My Office is keen to partner with public and private entities to accelerate the launch of the activities of the Technology Bank and create interlinkages with already existing initiatives.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you are all aware, technological advancements can revolutionize many industries, including energy, infrastructure and ICT sector. These are all crucial factors for reducing the high trade cost and improving connectivity to the global markets by the landlocked developing countries, as these countries lack territorial

access to the sea and many of them are commodities-dependent economies located long distances from major markets of the world.

The special challenges of landlocked developing countries have not gone unnoticed. Almost 15 years ago, the Kazakhstan government set a historic legacy by hosting the first ever UN conference on Land Locked developing countries in Almaty, about 975 km from here.

Outside of Africa, the Asian Continent has the largest concentration of landlocked countries, most of which are located here in Central Asia and the surrounding region: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Since the Almaty Conference my Office has continued its advocacy efforts for increased infrastructure development, enhanced connectivity, trade facilitation, deepening of regional integration and market access for the landlocked developed countries. In the same spirit, the Belt and Road Initiative of China aims to build a trans Euro-Asia economic belt stretching from China to the Horn of Africa. This will not only boost trade, but bring much-needed ICT and sustainable technologies, which could contribute to capacity building in the most vulnerable countries. Key to improved trade facilitation is the rapid and effective implementation of the World Trade Organization's Trade Facilitation Agreement that went into force in February this year. I am very encouraged that soon after its accession to the WTO in 2015, Kazakhstan was able to ratify the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. Technologies such as customs automation, electronic customs seal, non-intrusive customs inspection, electronic documents and electronic single windows, are helping improve trade facilitation.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

With these ongoing global efforts, my Office is contributing to efforts to connect the vulnerable countries to the global economy. And as we witness rapid advances in science, technology and innovation, these countries should not remain entrapped in a vicious cycle of poverty and vulnerability. The international community must increase its efforts to help bring about structural transformation and dynamic development in these countries and enable them to build stronger and more resilient communities.

We at the United Nations are working to implement a global development agenda that leaves no one behind, promotes transformative change in an integrated manner and ensures a life of dignity and justice for all. Only by ensuring that we together push all countries to the path of sustainable development, can we ensure a more resilient, equitable and sustainable economic order for all countries and tackle the global challenge of climate change.

Thank you.