



**UN-OHRLS**

UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE  
LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING  
COUNTRIES AND SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

**Remarks**

**by**

**Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu**

**High Representative**

**and**

**Under-Secretary-General**

**for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries  
and Small Island Developing States**

**at the**

**Regional Meeting for the Asia-Pacific LDCs “Towards Graduation: A focus on  
Broadband Connectivity”**

**27 October 2017**

**16:30**

**Warwick Le Lagon, Port Vila**

Your Excellency Mr. Odo Tevi, Ambassador (Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary) and Permanent Representative to the United Nations,

Mr Kieran Mulvey,

Senior Government Officials & Representatives of the regional and international organisations,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Friends

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to all of you for your active participation in, and contribution to this very important meeting.

We can all agree that it has been a lively and productive meeting. We came together in five sessions to discuss amongst other things, how to unlock the development potentials associated with investment in broadband.

The meeting has seen good participation of LDCs, Pacific SIDS, Development partners, national, regional and global private sector actors and, ICT experts. This enabled us to have a fruitful multi-stakeholder dialogue.

I hope that the meeting has provided you with a unique opportunity to network with each other. I also hope you have gained some knowledge on how to leverage broadband connectivity for national development.

Distinguished Delegates,

Allow me to share with you some of the key messages that arose from the two-day meeting.

- Once leveraged, investing in broadband can have both direct and indirect positive impacts on the economy. It was highlighted by various participants that successful applications are still largely narrowband. Examples include, mobile alerts in the health sector and mobile money.
- Another issue that was highlighted in various sessions was that there is no *'one size fits all'* strategy for fostering broadband connectivity. This is because there are significant differences within and across countries. There was a clear recognition that what is relevant in more populated countries is not so relevant in less populated countries where markets are small.
  - However, we also heard different models at the national level that are applicable for different categories of countries, whether LDCs, LLDCs or SIDS.
- It was also stressed that supply and demand need to be developed in tandem. While much progress has been achieved on the supply side, the latter is lagging.

It is true that infrastructure is lagging in some rural and remote areas. But in most instances, even what exists in urban areas is not being leveraged sufficiently for social and economic development.

- On the demand side, there were some examples of beneficial applications. These included:
  - The use of drones for disaster assessment in Vanuatu;
  - The use of mobile phones for disaster warning in Samoa and,
  - The development of digital businesses for small and medium scale businesses in Bangladesh.
- Many countries mentioned plans for e-government but, there is a need to implement many of these plans or accelerate them.

In this respect, one key take away is that infrastructure exists but applications that would utilize this enhanced connectivity are limited.

- One issue that is relevant for the Pacific SIDS is that of resilience. While there are submarine cables, most nations have only one. This makes them vulnerable to lack of resilience in case of a cable cut.

As such, efforts need to be explored between public, private and international partners, for developing redundancy through additional cables and satellite back-up.

- Finally, for improved connectivity to have maximum impact for national development requires a high level of commitment from top leadership. There is a need for a national champion.

National leadership and ownership combined with strengthened global partnerships are needed to improve connectivity in vulnerable countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we conclude the deliberations, a new and all the more challenging phase is starting, which requires ensuring that we translate some of the key messages of the meeting into concrete actions. My Office looks forward to working with all stakeholders to make this happen.

As a member of the Sustainable Development Broadband Commission, which is a high-level global and multi-stakeholder platform dedicated to the promotion of broadband, I will make sure I take these messages to the broadband commissioners.

I would also like to inform you that within the auspices of the Broadband Commission, I chair a working group on vulnerable countries.

The purpose of the working group is amongst others, to promote the deployment and use of broadband in LDCs. The deliberations of this meeting as well as the findings of the studies commissioned by my office will assist to sharpen my messages about the needs of the vulnerable countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to also seize this opportunity to extend my deep appreciation to the Government and the people of Vanuatu for their excellent hosting of this very important meeting, and for extending to us this wonderful generosity and hospitality.

Indeed, hosting this event attests to Vanuatu's firm commitment and growing contribution to the expansion of ICT in the region. I commend the Government of Vanuatu for this, and count on its continued engagement and leadership in supporting the development efforts of LDCs and SIDS.

I hope that the broad messages agreed upon here will translate into tangible actions and contribute to the march towards graduation from the least developed category.

I am also grateful to the generous contribution of Switzerland, China and **Denmark** to the LDC Trust Fund. The resources from this Fund have enabled us to secure the participation of Asia-Pacific LDCs, Pacific-SIDS and the Experts.

Finally, allow me also to convey my appreciation to the dedicated staff from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vanuatu and conference services staff, who greatly contributed to the success of the event.

My thanks also go to my colleagues from OHRLLS for its dedication and diligent efforts, which have contributed in no small measure to the success of this meeting.

I thank you for your kind attention and wish all of you a safe trip back home.

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