



UN-OHRLS

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

Remarks

by

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and

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for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries

and Small Island Developing States

at the United Nations Expert Group Meeting on

“Resilient urban development in SIDS: harnessing opportunities for enhanced connectivity”

26 October 2017

13:00 to 15:00

Warwick Le Lagon, Port Vila

Distinguished Experts,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very happy to be with you today.

It seems that many of you endured long flights and unexpected travel delays to be here.

Wouldn't it be wonderful to have a broadband connection getting us into our beautiful host country through virtual space in no time ?

But, humour aside, thank you all for your efforts to be here today.

We have important discussions ahead.

We hold your meeting in conjunction with our OHRLLS and Government of Vanuatu joint Regional Meeting for Asia-Pacific LDCs looking at broadband connectivity and its strategic role in graduation .

Some of you have already presented in the session earlier this morning.

This meeting is also a follow up to the Expert Group Meeting on "Sustainable Urban Development in SIDS" which OHRLLS organised in New York, in June last year.

At the risk of repeating myself to those who listened to me earlier today, still let me reiterate a couple key points.

The connectivity challenges SIDS face are well known to you ranging from remoteness to high internal geographic fragmentation due to the very nature of island states, small populations and little room for economies of scale in the traditional sense.

Yet, connectivity is key to the sustainable futures of all of the SIDS.

As I said this morning, last not least Agenda 2030 of the world community demands we leave no one and no place behind.

So the issues of

how to ensure access to affordable hardware infrastructure,

how to ensure capacity for regulatory and judicial frameworks to be set and constantly updated ,

how to make access affordable to people,

how to provide for literacy so that access is user friendly and of value-add to the development process

really are issues we must find operational solutions for that can work for the SIDS.

In this Meeting, we also want to follow-up on progress already made in the New York meeting and explore opportunities not in theory but practice for enhanced connectivity in the urbanisation processes that are currently underway in many SIDS.

Allow me to say that we have a buzzword these days of “ smart cities “ and so what would this take for the SIDS ?

More than half the population in SIDS now live in urban areas.

The rapid urbanisation in general is recognised in the context of SDG Goal 11 on “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. “

The relatively high levels of urbanisation in SIDS allow to a degree for economies of scale, how do we work with this , how do we ensure that in the SIDS also “ we make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable “ ?

How do we leverage connectivity for faster, more cost-effective, inclusive, higher quality public services ?

Good examples exist and I mentioned a few this morning . So, it is possible, how do we make it broadly possible for the SIDS?

What kind of investments, partnerships , capacities will this take ?

What key policy and regulatory needs have to be in place ?

I am certain that today’s discussion and your recommendations for work will cover many of these issues and provide very valuable inputs to further strengthen the knowledge base on how SDG Goal 11 on “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable “ can become a reality for all SIDS.

I know these are complex issues; issues where likely there is no one size fits all.

I also believe that challenges are given our way to meet them and as they say “ where there is a will, there is a way “.

So, I look forward to listening to you and even more look forward to your recommendations and practical solution proposals so that I and my team can take them back and do what we at OHRLLS have to do:

advocate and rally the combined UN system capacities in support of member states efforts to advance the implementation of the SDGs.

Again, I thank you for being here today and wish you the very best in your work and look forward to your deliberations.