



UN-OHRLLS

Remarks

by

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**for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries
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at the**

**Press Briefing at the Regional Meeting for the Asia-Pacific LDCs “To-
wards Graduation: A focus on Broadband Connectivity”**

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Port Vila**

Members of the press,

First , I THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST AND FOR BEING HERE !

I would like to commence my brief remarks by expressing once more sincere gratitude on behalf of the United Nations to the Government of the Republic of Vanuatu for its generosity in convening this Asia-Pacific Least Developed Countries meeting on broadband connectivity and information and communication technologies.

Over the next two days, the Asia-Pacific LDCs, private sector representatives, development partners, multi-lateral institutions and academics will join in a group sharing experiences, best practices, lessons learned, solutions found and generally focus on what we can do to accelerate broadband connectivity.

Broadband connectivity is of vital importance to the sustainable development of the LDC. This is also recognised in various international agreements and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The meeting is timely as we are already two years into the SDGs. And this meeting is the second regional meeting convened by OHRLLS on the topic of broadband connectivity. The first meeting was held in Senegal in March this year for the African LDCs.

Why are broadband and ICT generally such crucial development issue for the LDCs?

Studies show clearly that this group of countries continues to lag far behind in internet access compared to the rest of the world.

Over 80 per cent of the population in the developed world will have internet access by the end of this year!

At the same time it is estimated that **only 17.5 per cent will be using the internet in LDCs.**

This lack of access, the high cost of infrastructure, issues of affordability, literacy in ICT use, questions of regulatory frameworks are all serious impediments to achieving national development priorities.

Currently available data suggest that it may take more than fifteen years for the LDCs to get more than 50 per cent of their citizens online.

This implies that the SDG target on ICTs, which is also reflected in the Istanbul Programme of Action, is unlikely to be met. You can do the maths- we are in 2017 so we talk 2033 while the goals are to be met in 2020!

But we see the glass half full rather than half empty or as they say “every cloud has a silver lining “and I add where there is a strong WILL there will be ways.

Right across the group of countries we see steady progress in some instances and signs that governments, development partners, international financial institutions, the private sector, civil society and others are making a concerted effort to tackle the broadband challenges faced by LDCs.

Allow me to highlight a couple innovative applications we have seen implemented. For example, just right here in Vanuatu it is the use of drone technology in the aftermath of cyclone Pam. I could also mention the use of biosensors to monitor water quality in Bangladesh and there are many more such concrete, very operational examples.

We also see various pilot projects rolled out. These are all efforts we now must scale up. We must look into economic viability but also how best to leverage these pilots to improve public service delivery to citizens.

Our meeting should also further the dialogue on how we can accelerate implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the LDCs and the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Ultimately, all these efforts are linked and our key concern is how we can best support countries to achieve these goals in a way that leaves no one and no place behind.

We also take the opportunity of being here in the Pacific to bring together Pacific Small Island Developing States for an Expert Group Meeting fully dedicated to broadband connectivity in the region. I hope for this expert meeting that it will come up with operational, concrete recommendations and the experts will be sharing their findings with the rest of the Asia-Pacific LDCs during the main meeting.

Allow me to say a few words about OHRLLS and the role of the High Representative of the Secretary-General.

We have an advocacy role, if you so wish we are the voice for the 91 countries being part of the OHRLLS Parrish.

We are there to mobilise the entire UN system capacity in support of the countries national development efforts and efforts to reach by 2030 the SDGS and the goals expressed in other agreements.

I really see us as bridge-builder.

Technology is clearly a must given the complex challenges be it from addressing climate change to realising the SDGs and integrating into the global economy all countries face.

So, it is a MUST to assist LDCs in the technology sector.

On that count and based on the request of our member states, OHRLLS has worked to establish a great tool, the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries.

The Technology Bank was officially signed into being last month with the signing during the General Assembly of the United Nations of the Host Country Agreement with the Government of Turkey.

The purpose of the Technology Bank is to serve the LDCs to enhance their Science, Technology and Innovation capacity. One of the areas I expect the Technology Bank to focus very quickly is digital access to research.

I will close my remarks now but I have to stress again how important the issue of connectivity is for the LDCs.

If we as a global community do not wish to leave anyone behind and no place behind, if we wish to end extreme poverty, tackle hunger, improve health and education, build resilient infrastructure, create livelihoods and address major challenges like climate change, we **MUST** ensure that the LDCs hit hardest, too often left behind get all our support for connectivity!

It is critically important to achieve the sustainable development aspirations of LDCs and their over one billion peoples.

OHRLLS and myself as the High Representative of the Secretary-General will do our utmost to bring together stakeholders to provide that critical support to the LDCs.

We will continue to strongly advocate for this strategic issue and ensure it remains high on the international agenda.

We are not talking about some abstract issue here- we talk about connectivity for education, for health, for employment creation - we talk **CONNECTING TO INCLUSIVE AND DIG-NIFIED LIVES FOR PEOPLE** men and women, boys and girls.

Again - Thank you for your time and being here.