



**UN-OHRLLS**

**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**

**Council of Ministers of Tourism Meeting**

**South Pacific Tourism Organisation**

**8:45 – 10:00  
27 October 2017**

**Port Vila, Vanuatu**

Hon Joe Natuman, Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Tourism, Chair of the Council of Ministers,  
Hon Ministers,  
Sonja Hunt, Chair of the SPTO Board  
Chris Cocker, CEO  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Friends

Gudmoning

It has such special meaning to be with you this morning. It feels good to be back in our region!

And not so long ago I myself was tasked as the CEO of Tourism in my country to develop a tourism strategy!

Thank you for the honour to be a part of your important meeting.

Allow me to share a couple thoughts and cast them into what we at the United Nations do and specifically what my Office stands for in supporting you, our shareholders, the member states.

Some studies project that by 2040, tourism will be one of the most important sectors in the Pacific Islands. It is also projected that the sector would generate as much as USD 1.8 billion in annual income and create 128,000 new jobs.

The World Bank's 2016 Pacific Possible report on tourism uses two very telling words when it defines the comparative advantage of the region for tourism and I quote :

pristine natural environments and cultural diversity

We sure are reminded of this beauty and deep culture being here in Vanuatu, our warm and gracious host for this week's tourism week!

I want to add here that the islands' natural environment must be seen as both land AND oceans. I can only repeat what many have said before me: " we may be small island states but we are big ocean states "

So, if we agree that tourism is and even more so will be a key driver for growth and people's livelihoods, we must address its complex challenges as part of the SAMOA pathway, the Paris climate agreement and the sustainable development goals we pledged to implement.

We must address how we manage a complex growth that is sustainable. A growth where way into future generations we shall still marvel at the natural beauty, diverse cultures and yet great openness to the world of our region.

That is a complex challenge as it cuts across all sectors from education to health to agriculture to infrastructure - it true cuts across all of the Sustainable Development Goals.

It embodies the challenge of integrative management of linked issues we have to bring together from changing oceans, biodiversity protection, impact of climate change, training needs, infrastructure from shipping roads, airways, roads, buildings to ICT, private sector investment, access to concessional finance and the list can go on come together.

A true task for integrated planning and management from national to regional to global levels.

So, where does - and let me spell it out as it is quite the mouthful- :

the Office of the High Representative for least developed, landlocked and island states - in short OHRLLS fit into your concerns?

The Secretary-General's High Representative and the office are there to support the concerns of 91 of our shared planet's most vulnerable countries, with a combined population in excess of 1 billion people.

While facing distinct and highly varied challenges, all of the countries experience challenges of structural and geographic nature.

The functions of the Office are:

advocacy,

leveraging the combined capacities of the United Nations system in support of your national development paths. So we work very closely with the whole of the United Nations system to bring your concerns forward

monitoring the implementation of, and coordinating the UN system's response to Programmes of Action such as the SAMOA pathway, the 2030 Agenda or the Paris Climate Agreement

Let me share an example, at COP23 starting in just a few days, I will be engaging in events on loss and damage, National Adaptation Plans, food security, agriculture, sustainable energy, and scaling up climate action overall.

The impacts of climate change and natural disasters - and for that I was happy to hear on my arrival that people can resettle to Ambae - are most notable for the 38 island states of OHRLLS' member parish.

Take also the recent devastating hurricanes that struck the Caribbean and above all its people. There are tremendous needs for more resilient rebuilding of infrastructures including tourism infrastructure and the global community has been called to attention in the most vivid way.

At COP23, we certainly will seek major advances on both the adaptation and mitigation agendas.

The Hon. Tony De Brum did such stellar work to bring the plight of the Pacific nations on climate change to the forefront and we owe him to continue his pathbreaking work with the vision, dedication and passion he showed.

As I mentioned, 91 countries are serviced by OHRLLS. Allow me just to make a few points on some of our work for the least developed and the landlocked countries' communities.

With regard to the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), we are there to support the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action. We focus on how to support member states in capacity building including investment promotion, infrastructure development, access to finance, sustainable energy, access to broadband, and ensuring a smooth transition from the LDCs category. For example, with the support of the Office, just a few weeks ago, the Technology Bank for LDCs came into being. This also meant attaining the first SDG target, SDG17.8.

On Landlocked Developing countries LLDCs, key support is given to the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action that includes structural transformation through industrialization and infrastructure development, trade promotion and facilitation, transportation and transit cooperation.

For the 38 island states out of the 91 OHRLLS member states, OHRLLS has a longstanding engagement with the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, the Mauritius Strategy and the SAMOA Pathway.

This engagement takes many forms but advocacy, building partnerships and leveraging the combined UN system capacities are key.

We are there to get your priorities heard and to get what you agreed on firmly placed into the work of the UN system, we are there to enhance coherence of SIDS issues in the UN processes at all levels, including at the national, regional and global levels.

Through a resolution in 2015, the UN General Assembly called upon my Office, together with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, to support the work of a Steering Committee which has been set up to monitor and review the SIDS partnerships announced during the SIDS Conference in Samoa.

As I said before, oceans are part and parcel of your complex agendas and management concerns.

Here again, the Oceans Conference in June this year was a unique opportunity to bring a diverse array of actors and stakeholders around the table to discuss how to advance the implementation of SDG14 on Oceans.

We placed high importance to bringing your concerns forward including for the Partnership Dialogue 5 on "Increasing economic benefits to SIDS and LDCs and providing access for small scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets",

the High Level Dialogue on Oceans and Small Island States; the side-event on "Our Oceans, Our Islands, Our Future: Partnering for implementation of SDG14"; and

the side-event on "Global Multi-stakeholder SIDS Partnership Dialogue".

I came away with a strong sense that we must collaborate more and focus more on promoting linkages between national, regional and global levels.

This is why I have proposed to establish a network of SIDS national focal points to get more to the local realities and to support to coordinate the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway with relevant stakeholders, and accelerate work toward achieving the SDGs.

We not only are entrusted with leveraging UN system capacities but we also partner with a host of multi-lateral actors.

For example, with the World Bank and others we work to support efforts to identify and operationalize metrics of vulnerability.

We lend support to the Small Island Developing States Global Business Network, an online platform and resource hub that aim to better connect the national and regional SIDS private sectors, global businesses and other relevant stakeholders. This online platform has been instrumental in encouraging exchange of best practices and lessons learned and peer-learning among SIDS-SIDS, on the one hand, and SIDS and the global community, on the other hand.

The network has also enhanced collaboration among regional private sector organizations, namely the Pacific Islands Private Sector Organisation and the Caribbean Export Development Agency.

We partner with AOSIS and look forward to increased support to the AOSIS group in the context of inter-governmental negotiations. For example, I am working in close cooperation with the climate change COP23 President (Fiji), and the AOSIS Chair on the upcoming climate change negotiations.

I could go on but this was meant to provide a bit of an overview on what OHRLLS can do in partnering with you.

As I said, my being here at your very important conference is about listening to YOU.

Your work truly is at the cutting edge of global agreements, Yours is the challenge to bring together in practical terms through advancing the development of tourism as a key sector of the economies all of the global hopes and concerns for our shared sustainable futures.

We live in a world where nobody can go it alone and I dare say the Pacific has know that for a long, long time.

You cannot go it alone, we can not go it alone- so let us work in partnership and OHRLLS stands ready to be your trusted partner.

Thank you- Malo Aupito

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