



Opening 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

Fifteenth session of the Inter-Agency Consultative Group of the Istanbul
Programme of Action for the LDCs

Tuesday, 3 October 2017 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Conference Room 11
UNHQ, New York

Distinguished Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you to the fifteenth Session of the Inter-Agency Consultative Group on the Istanbul Programme of Action for the LDCs.

This is the first such meeting that I have the honour to chair since taking over from my predecessor, Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya. I am pleased to see so many of you here today.

I would like to start by stressing the importance of your strong commitment and continuous support to accelerate the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action and to promote the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals in the least developed countries.

Addressing the challenges of the LDCs and enabling them to foster sustainable development, stability and prosperity requires our joint and coordinated efforts. The LDCs is the group of countries most reliant on the support of the UN system to move forward in the global commitments towards eradicating poverty and building resilience.

We have in front of us a full day focusing on issues of critical importance for the least developed countries and their development partners.

Our first item will be an update on the implementation of the IPoA and also on the synergies between the IPoA and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

After this session we will continue with an update on the Technology Bank for the LDCs and hear how your organizations can contribute in this important next phase.

In the afternoon, we will look at an item that is central to the overarching goal of the Istanbul Programme of Action, namely graduation from the LDC category. It is my hope that we can have a productive and focused discussion on this matter, particularly as more countries approach the criteria for graduation and will surely require our support to prevent them from sliding back into the category. In the last session, I will invite you to raise any issue that you consider relevant. Without further ado, I would like to proceed immediately with introducing the first item in our agenda today on the update of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action and outcome of the Mid-term review and on efforts to build synergies and coherence with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Update on the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) and outcome of the Mid-term Review and on efforts to build synergies and coherence with the 2030 Agenda

We are at a critical juncture in the Istanbul Programme of Action for the LDCs, with only three years left in its implementation period.

The recent performance for the LDCs on average has not been very positive. On many key indicators of the IPoA, we have seen stagnation or even declines – for example, on GDP growth rates, FDI flows, poverty eradication, building productive capacity, the share of LDCs exports in global trade, or amount of ODA provided to LDCs.

There has been some progress in a few notable areas, such as mobile phone coverage and internet access. There has also been some progress in the achievement of the SDGs, but this has been uneven across countries.

A detailed account of the status on implementation is contained in the Secretary-General's report on implementation of the IPoA as well as our flagship report on LDCs.

I would like to thank all of your organizations for your contributions to these documents.

I will not repeat these findings here, but instead I would like to highlight several key areas where we expect there to be some developments in the discussions with Member States.

First, on resilience. General Assembly resolution 71/238 requested the Secretary-General to undertake an in-depth analysis on crisis mitigation and resilience building for LDCs at the national and international levels. In order to prepare this report, my Office organized a workshop last May in which many of you or your colleagues participated, and which provided useful inputs to the report. The document is now available as *A/72/270*.

From among several recommendations in that report, I would like to draw to your attention the invitation to the General Assembly to decide on the establishment of a “comprehensive multi-stakeholder resilience-building mechanism for LDCs”, leveraging the existing measures and initiatives. The mechanism would entail a number of measures to be established or revitalized at the national, regional and global levels to respond to various types of disasters and shocks as elaborated in the report of the Secretary-General.

This proposal was supported in the recently-adopted LDCs Ministerial Declaration.

This mechanism could provide for the means of consolidating and increasing support to LDCs to address vulnerabilities. We will keep you informed of the outcome of the discussions on this issue, and hope we can count on your continued engagement in any follow-up work.

Secondly, on smooth transitions. This topic will be discussed in detail this afternoon, but I would like to highlight that this issue has been consistently raised by the LDCs as a priority – for example at the recent meeting of the Permanent Representatives of the LDCs, and at our annual informal consultation with Ambassadors of LDCs and Friends of LDCs in Glen Cove. It has also been given prominence in the LDCs Ministerial Declaration.

The Declaration calls upon Member States to agree on a package of benefits from development partners that the graduated countries will continue to enjoy in some critical areas of their economy, following graduation. In addition, the Declaration makes a specific request to the Secretary-General “to make concrete recommendations in this regard in his report to the General Assembly on the implementation, effectiveness and added value of smooth transition measures, as mandated in the UNGA resolution *A/70/216*”.

And finally, on investment.

Foreign direct investment is an important form of development finance for the LDCs. At present, FDI inflows to the LDCs are small and concentrated in few countries and sectors.

As you are aware, OHRLLS has been working with other UN entities in the Chief Executives Board to better coordinate and step up support. In March, the CEB adopted programmatic recommendations prepared by UN-OHRLLS and UNCTAD to help increase the coverage, scope and effectiveness of the UN system's support for investment promotion to the LDCs.

In addition, in collaboration with the International Development Law Organization, my Office has designed a comprehensive programme to provide technical advice and support to requesting LDCs on investment-related negotiations and dispute settlement, as well as related capacity building in these areas.

During the General Debate, we presented this programme to ministers, heads of Investment Promotion Agencies of the LDCs, and representatives of donor countries and institutions. We have also received an important financial pledge from the EU to support this work.

In their Ministerial Declaration, the LDCs have also singled out this topic. They reaffirmed their invitation to the Secretary-General, in his capacity as the Chair of the CEB, to include the issue of investment promotion regimes for the LDCs in the agenda of the Board, with a view to enhancing the overall effectiveness of UN system support that can contribute to enhancing the flow of FDI to the LDCs and the ability of those countries to attract such investment.

They also called upon Member States to take a decision at the 72nd session of the General Assembly to establish an international investment support centre for the least developed countries under the auspices of the United Nations to provide a one-stop arrangement to help stimulate foreign direct investment in the least developed countries.

Colleagues,

With these introductory remarks, I would like to open the floor for statements by organizations. I ask if you could kindly limit your presentations to 5 minutes so that we can hear from everyone.