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Special address

by

Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu

High Representative

And

Under-Secretary-General

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

High-Level Briefings and Interactive Dialogues on SDG7

Venue: ECOSOC Chamber

UNHQ, New York

18 April 2018

14:45 – 17:00

(15:25 – 15:35 Special address, 7-10 minutes)

Co-Chairs of the Group of Friends of Sustainable Energy,
Excellencies,
Friends and Colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Thank you for having me with you.

This is an important meeting.

SDG7 is a lifeline - SDG7 is at the heart of moving so many of our other inter-connected SDGs of Agenda 2030.

The SDG7 Policy Briefs provide an excellent snapshot on where we stand in ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all. We need to achieve this by 2030. The policy briefs are extremely helpful in identifying the key challenges ahead of us. They also help us to see how to expedite progress on meeting the SDG7 targets.

Again, without energy access for all how do we ensure quality, modern education for all, how do we ensure hospitals have lighting everywhere when women give birth, how do we ensure women do not die premature deaths because of dangerous fumes from cooking stoves, how do we make sure young people in the least advantaged regions of our world can enjoy access to opportunity others take for granted?

This is what SDG7 is all about.

I truly welcome the good working relationship, the partnership between the various UN and other international actors and member states which drove this work and it shows what partnership and inclusive ways of working can achieve!

OHRLLS is a voice for the LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS- all countries, over one billion people most in need that we achieve SDG7. So, OHRLLS naturally was pleased to partner in preparing the policy brief on LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

SDG7 is a key example how no agency or actor, no matter how well-equipped, can alone address the issue at hand.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I say this over and over and I will say it again: it is our collective challenge to turn the promise of SDG 7 now into reality. People no longer trust words, people want to see ACTION.

It is not to an audience like you that I need to stress that sustainable energy is a powerful development multiplier. Energy access, like all infrastructure investments, has direct impact on poverty eradication, climate change, health, water and economic transformation.

What good is to have the very best educational material if your child has no light in the evening to do homework?

Access to reliable and sustainable energy remains a major challenge for the people living in the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

The latest data show us that only 44.8 per cent of people in LDCs have access to electricity - that is one in two!

The percentage is 52 for the LLDCs and reaches 76 per cent in the SIDS. These are averages and they mask a key challenge: considerable inter-and intra-country disparities and the rural-urban divide in electricity access rates remain high.

During the past years, a strong global momentum has developed around sustainable energy. This momentum has so far not fully translated into tangible progress and action on the ground in vulnerable countries.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

My Office places very high priority on promoting sustainable energy in vulnerable countries.

We must ensure to leave no one behind - we must ensure that the most vulnerable are also on the path to achieving the global goals on energy as they are a pre-condition for development across all sectors.

As always, it all does come down to the HOW TO DO THIS !

We are already three years into implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

My perspective on how to expedite progress is what I wish to share with you.

I propose two key action elements for your consideration:

First, Capacity building. We must increase capacity building support to countries for policy design and implementation of SDG 7, including supporting project preparation and design. This must include investing in the exchange of best practices including what works and has not worked in South-South cooperation. This is critical.

Second, facilitating the access to finance.

Achieving SDG7 will require significant investments. We all have seen the various projections in this regard.

SDG 7 requires implementing transformative solutions. Business as usual will not suffice.

We need action on two fronts. We need to simplify access to available finance and not overburden limited capacity with a myriad of procedures and we need additional public investments.

It is all about scaling up finance in the energy sector and bridging the access gap.

We need strong national leadership. Decision-makers in LDCs will need to define national energy and investment strategies, and continue improving predictable and stable policy and regulatory frameworks to promote investments.

At the same time, development finance institutions and partners need to play a strong role in financing sustainable energy projects. This not only needs to continue but must be scaled-up. The scale of the challenge before us demands that we make every effort to engage systematically and in partnership with the private sector.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS have both the most to gain from better access to energy and a lot to lose if this does not happen.

With increased access to finance and capacity building, we can bring life changing transformation to people's lives and end energy poverty as expressed in SDG 7.

Meeting the universal goal by 2030 will not be easy.

In a past life, I dealt with the full cycle of programme preparation to actual delivery and I must share with you that a mere twelve years to go is actually not a lot of time!

The good news is that clean, green energy is becoming more affordable and competitive today than ever. These are encouraging advancements we must combine with increased investments and capacity building.

We must also work as partners and then vulnerable countries can have a real opportunity to achieve SDG 7 by 2030 and contribute to climate change action.

I pledge my personal commitment and that of OHRLLS to be the voice and helping hand so that the vulnerable countries will be given the opportunity to achieve SDG 7.

The unique and specific challenges of the vulnerable countries will be brought forward during the upcoming High-level Political Forum.

But nowhere are these challenges more visible than in the eyes of a little girl or boy studying still by candlelight and yet hoping one day to have the same opportunity as the little girl or boy going to school here in New York.

Thank you.