



**United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least De-
veloped Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Is-
land Developing States
(UN-OHRLLS)**

**Statement by
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**High Representative
and
Under-Secretary-General
Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and
Small Island Developing States**

**Astana Economic Forum – High-Level Sessions
Open Leaders Discussion - Rebuilding multilateralism in a multipo-
lar world: economic and geopolitical confrontation**

17 May, 2:00PM-3:15PM

EXPO Congress Center

Excellencies,

Distinguished participants,

It is my honor to address this high-level session.

I thank the Government of Kazakhstan for convening and hosting the Astana Economic Forum.

I am here with you in my capacity as voice and mediator for some 91 countries with over one billion people currently most at risk of being left behind.

The risk of too many being left behind is real.

The United Nations was created on the premise that only dialogue and cooperation could lead to peace and development for all.

It is now over 70 years fast forward.

Since, the global population grew from 3 billion around 1960 to now more than 8 billion, decades where the membership of the United Nations grew from an original 51 members to now 193.

Great strides have been made in these decades.

History though never stands still. What worked yesterday may not work today and certainly not tomorrow.

We now live once more a moment of uncertainties.

We witness wide-spread rejection of globalization because it has left too many out.

We see ever more frequent cycles of deep economic shocks beyond the control of national governments.

We see the ever increasing and more deadly climate related environmental disasters.

The philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche once said and I quote: “There will always be rocks in the road ahead of us. They will be stumbling blocks or stepping stones; it all depends on how you use them“.

We have the tools, we have technology never dreamt of before.

We now must have the will and leadership to build a mutually respectful dialogue for an inclusive multilateralism leaving no one behind.

The will is already expressed in AGENDA 2030 and subsequently the Paris21 agreement.

The action now has to follow and fast.

People want action, not words.

The 91 countries OHRLLS is a voice for are among the most vulnerable of these countries.

Their growth remains constrained by institutional capacity challenges, inadequate infrastructure, high vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters, and in several cases high vulnerability to political instability coupled with security concerns.

Action has to be both global and local.

As you all are aware, our Secretary-General, H.E. Antonio Guterres, has made it a key priority to make the United Nations “fit for purpose “.

Today and tomorrow cannot be managed with approaches of the past.

As was just recently stated by the Deputy Secretary-General at the meeting of the Regional Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean: there is inefficiency in inequality and inefficiency in insecurity!

The Secretary-General’s reform initiatives recognize national ownership and responsibility for equitable and sustainable development.

Just last week, the UN General Assembly agreed on a resolution on the repositioning of the United Nations development system.

We now have to ACT.

Neither change nor people will wait for us. These strategic reforms will ensure that the United Nations is able to deliver more effectively and efficiently especially for the most vulnerable countries and above all their peoples.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Leaving no one behind and inclusiveness is at the core of what member states ask UN-OHRLLS to stand for.

What is now of grave concern is the increase in protectionism, growing inward-looking approaches and high volatility. This risks to further leave behind the over one billion people of already vulnerable countries.

The public sector cannot go it alone, the IFIs cannot go it alone, domestic sources cannot go it alone- now is the time for greater and wider partnerships. Partnerships built on dialogue in the spirit of fair, transparent and accountable multilateralism.

The LLDCs are countries facing the geographic challenge of being landlocked. Being landlocked per se does not necessarily imply poverty and slow growth and Kazakhstan is a great example of that. Of course natural resource endowment helps!

Kazakhstan can give us many lessons. Kazakhstan turned itself from landlocked to land-linked.

Kazakhstan has shown great commitment to the cause and concerns of the LLDCs, be it through implementing the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement which is of critical importance to the LLDCs, or through implementation of both the Almaty Programme of Action and the Vienna Programme of Action.

Let us be inspired by this spirit of “JUST DO IT “.

I close by sharing my hope for a mutually respectful and enriching dialogue on how to build a next chapter for an inclusive multilateralism putting ALL people first.

I thank you.