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**United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least
Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small
Island Developing States
(UN-OHRLLS)**

**Statement by
Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu**

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

**During the briefing on Climate Change and Migration for the
LLDCs**

**30 May 2018
New York**

Director General, International Organization for Migration, Mr William Lacy Swing,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to this briefing on climate Change and Migration for the LLDCs. I am heartened to see the good turn-out for this important briefing jointly organized by UN-OHRLLS and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Now, our meeting has a formal title but I am almost tempted to say we are here to discuss a situation of “the perfect storm “ and what we must now do. I come back to this.

The briefing’s purpose is straightforward: stimulate an exchange of views on the following key issues:

- The climate - migration nexus in LLDCs: what are the knowledge gaps?
- Current policy developments: what are the opportunities under both global climate and migration negotiations and at the regional level?
- Programmatic responses in the LLDCs context: sharing examples of innovative programmes and policies to address climate migration and reflecting on necessary future programming.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

Yes, we are in front of a “perfect storm” - a disadvantageous geography, climate change, limited economic diversification, high vulnerability to economic and financial shocks and young populations all coming together!

The 32 landlocked developing countries have population of over 480 million.

The revenge of geography so well described in Robert Kaplan's seminal book is what the LLDCs and their peoples have to live by every day.

They all share geographical settings deeply impacting on their potential to engage with the rest of the world.

A key feature concerns geographic isolation, isolation from maritime access thus implying heavy - and I add very very costly - dependence on trade and transport systems of neighboring countries.

Many LLDCs - notably those without natural resources experiencing high global demand - find themselves marginalized from the world economy.

Along with that goes cut-off from global flows of knowledge, technology, capital and innovations. A consequence is the inability to derive sustainable development through trade.

This all results in narrow production and export bases, leading to limited economic growth and persistent poverty and unmet expectations of young people in the LLDCs.

These severe structural vulnerabilities and limited productive capacities are now further compounded by the disproportionate exposure of the LLDCS to climate change.

Most LLDCs depend on a few primary agricultural and/or mineral commodities for trade. Almost two thirds of the population is still dependent on agriculture.

Many LLDCs are located in dryland regions where the impacts of climate change, desertification and land degradation are ever more pronounced.

Some 54 per cent of total land in LLDCs is classified as dryland. Drylands experience high population density about 60 per cent of the population located in dryland areas.

So, in the drylands settings where droughts and increasing desertification are now common we have pressure on the livelihoods of the majority of people and ever higher internal competition for resource access with all that this can mean for internal stability.

Then, we have the situation of the mountainous countries among the LLDCs.

Here, climate change equates with melting of glaciers not just leading to deadly floods and landslides but also important effects on water resources, destruction of key infrastructure, reduced biodiversity and I could add more.

There is a very simple bottom-line and this is why I use the expression of “the perfect storm”:

every day and increasingly so, peoples’ lives, their livelihoods are affected and people are forced to move on. It too often is now a matter of life or death.

Climate change will not stop and land degradation, desertification and deforestation by all predictions are here to stay if we do not act.

According to UNCCD, it is estimated that desertification and drought causes 12 million hectares of productive land to become barren every year. What the implications of this are for people’s livelihoods when we talk about societies functioning primarily around agriculture, I do not need to tell you!

We have 29 countries in the world that have people living on degraded land of 20 percent or greater,

Almost 50 per cent of these countries - that is 13 countries are LLDCs.

As productive lands turn increasingly marginal, or become deserts, there is no more choice - there just is forced migration.

According to FAO, between 2005 to 2015 - or over a span of just ten years - LLDCs across the world suffered a 11.6 billion USD loss in crop and livestock production due to natural-hazard induced disasters.

There is great regional variation in this.

For LLDCs in **Africa** this loss amounted to 8.8 billion USD, for LLDCs in Latin America it was 2 billion USD and for Asia it was over 0.8 billion USD.

Let me go further in facts:

Paraguay lost 28% of their potential production, Mali lost 21%, while Mongolia and Uganda lost 16% and 11% respectively.

Such production disruption not only has a significant impact on national food security but it is a sure path to poverty and a sure path to NOT including the peoples of the LLDCs in the achievement of Agenda 2030. .

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Many studies indicate that global environmental change could cause a ten-fold increase by 2050 over today's entire documented refugee and internally displaced populations.

It would be a gross under-statement to say that these numbers present a great challenge for vulnerable countries like the LLDCs.

The time is NOW to act.

In this perfect storm of the many developmental challenges LLDCS face people do not have safety nets. The safety net is migration. In turn, this migration will have a major influence in the ability of the LLDCs to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

This must be given special attention not only by the LLDCs but by the international community.

LLDCs have severely constrained potential to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

The capacity to deal with the influx of migrants to urban centers is already utterly stretched.

LLDCS typically lack both : financial and technical capacities.

We have two choices - let the perfect storm happen and we all loose or ACT and act with URGENCY.

It is now that we must invest in mitigating and eventually reversing the effects of climate change. By improving holistic sustainability can we reduce poverty and ensure that the peoples of the LLDCS are INCLUDED into the achievement of Agenda 2030.

Efforts have to be driven nationally but it is incumbent on us to now partner and support the LLDCs to be in a position to accelerate their efforts to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change.

Support measures should look more closely at accelerating, simplifying and enhancing access to already existing financing mechanisms such as: the adaptation fund, the global environmental facility, Green Climate Fund, the Least Developed Countries Fund and others.

It is encouraging to hear that the Green Climate Fund is taking steps to simplify access - I will repeat this here again - accelerated and simplified access without sacrificing on accountability and transparency is a MUST.

At regional and international levels we also must act more forcefully and speedily.

Regional and international frameworks should take into account the challenges of the LLDCs in dealing with climate change induced migration and should be supportive of the LLDCs' endeavors.

Building 'resilience for all' is akin to leaving no one behind.

Investment in building resilience and adaptive capacity will help reduce displacement and forced migration.

Displacement and forced migration are an expression of despair - of little hope left.

We must give the energy of hope.

It is therefore also very important to share best practices and lessons learned from the policies, practices and knowledge with the LLDCs.

Yes, a perfect storm is brewing but we also have successful examples . Let us look at these examples and how we can scale these up and support such actions.

I look forward to our open dialogue and forward-looking, action-oriented deliberations.

Thank you.