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

at the reception to mark LDC graduation

Thursday 15 March 2018, 6:00-8:00pm

1B, visitors' lobby, UN Headquarters

Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed

Permanent Representatives of Bangladesh, Canada and Turkey

Under Secretary General Liu Zhenmin

Chair of the CDP José Antonio Ocampo

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Thank you all for being here !

This is a happy moment -

we mark a major milestone - the fulfilment of graduation thresholds by countries from the category of LDCs!

Thank you to the Governments of Canada, Turkey and the Committee for Development Policy of DESA for co-organizing this event.

Thank you to you - our Deputy Secretary-General, for being here with us during a week of an extremely busy agenda.

Thank you distinguished Permanent Representatives and delegates from the LDCs, development partners and UN agencies,

thank you to the distinguished members of the CDP for honouring this major milestone celebration with your presence.

Indeed, it is a happy, a hope bearing message we can share.

Bangladesh, Lao PDR and Myanmar have fulfilled the criteria for graduation for the first time in the reviews that took place this week.

But the encouraging news do not stop here.

Four more countries Bhutan, Sao Tome and Principe, Solomon Islands and Kiribati have met the graduation criteria for the second time and are recommended for graduation.

Five other LDCs are at different stages of graduation.

This is a momentous and very encouraging move forward.

12 of the least developed countries and their peoples are on the path toward sustained - and we hope sustainable - economic growth.

In the not too distant future and beyond, the number of LDCs will narrow to 35. Additional countries are also expected to reach the graduation threshold in forthcoming reviews of the CDP.

But this good news did not just happen.

A few key lessons should be looked at.

It took national vision, leadership, participation by all and forward looking development strategies and programmes. It took sustained and coherent international support measures to reach this major milestone.

We are still far short of the Istanbul Programme of Action objective of enabling half of the LDCs to reach the graduation stage by 2020.

But we can see how we now incrementally move forward and we must ensure we do not lose momentum and do more to accelerate this movement.

We also must do more to ensure the full inclusion of LDCs in achieving Agenda 2030 goals.

LDCs graduation is indeed achieved by design and not by accident.

LDCs have pursued strategic, coherent and consistent approaches over many years towards graduation by adopting inclusive and transparent national graduation strategies.

Yes today, we celebrate this landmark achievement.

Yet, I also must once more underline that graduation is not the end of the road - it is a stepping stone towards structural transformation to the benefit of people, men and women, girls and boys.

We need “smooth transitions “to make transitions truly sustainable.

Graduating and graduated countries need to continue their efforts and these ought to be backed by adequate support from the international community.

It truly is about leaving no one behind and all of us rallying toward achieving the 2030 Agenda.

I thank you all.