

Please check against delivery



UN-OHRLLS

Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu

High Representative

and

Under-Secretary-General

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

On the occasion of the celebration of Astana Day

Permanent Mission of Kazakhstan

5 July 2018, 6:00pm to 8:00pm,

Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

What a pleasure to be with you!

Your Excellency, Ambassador Umarov, I want to thank you for inviting me to share some remarks.

First though, my congratulations to your country and its people on Astana Day which celebrates such important milestone in the history of your country.

A long road has been travelled by your country and its people since independence and those early years of the 1990's. Years and decades where you managed through enormous transformational challenges for your country but also the region.

Astana is truly the lived symbol of the vision, hope and forward-looking transformation of your nation.

President Nazarbayev aptly described Astana and I quote: "the symbol of Kazakhstan's renewal, it is a symbol of the inexhaustible sources of creative energy of our people, the symbol of their faith in their powers, the symbol of hope & confidence of the nation in its prosperous future and the future of their descendants: (end of quote)

I appreciate your kind gesture for having OHRLLS in my person with you today, and it is for me the symbol of our strong partnership.

We share a vision of attaining inclusive sustainable development for ALL of the LLDCs. We share the desire to move Agenda 2030 from words to reality.

You have a special role to play. Your country is the world's largest landlocked country and the ninth largest in the world in territory spanned.

Thank you for you and your people's solidarity in taking up the LLDCs cause since many, many years.

Thank you for dedicating your country's special day to the theme of the LLDCs and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Yours is indeed a sustained and longstanding commitment in advancing the agenda of the LLDCs and support to the LLDCs' development agenda.

Your country hosted the first International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Development Partners!

A landmark conference indeed with the adoption of the Almaty Programme of Action (APoA) in 2003.

With foresight and vision you addressed the special needs and challenges of the landlocked developing countries.

The Conference was the first of its kind and provided the international community with the unique opportunity to galvanize international solidarity and partnership.

It was clear then that, among other features, it would be the opening of capacities for trading that would be a key driver for development.

The international community hoped for effective participation of the LLDCs in the international trading system, through, inter alia, establishing transit systems.

You also hosted the Fourth Meeting of Ministers of Trade for the LLDCs, the High-Level Global Thematic Meeting on International Trade, and Trade Facilitation and Aid for Trade in 2012.

In 2014, your Government generously supported the retreat of LLDCs ambassadors in preparation for the Second United Nations Conference on LLDCs.

Again, thank you and your people for such steadfast support and advocacy!

Since I took up office about a year ago, I had the opportunity to already be visit Astana twice.

First during EXPO 2017, with the theme “The Future of Energy”. An event attended by no less than 115 countries and 22 international organizations. I was happy to see the high level of participation by the LLDCs, LDCs and SIDS . They all benefitted from your support for their full participation in the EXPO.

Just recently, I was in Astana for the LLDCs Ministerial Meeting on Trade and Transport you hosted and which was held back to back with the Astana Economic Forum.

Now, do not worry - I am not here to read you a historical chronology or inventory of all you have done for the LLDCs.

I mention these key events to highlight the contribution your sustained and committed support makes , how vital that is and also to draw all of our attention to the fact that energy,

commitment and vision drive transformation. Transformation is a fact of history - but it is incumbent on us to be either by-standers or active participants.

You have shown great pro-activeness for the LLDCs and now we must not only follow the energy you have shown but I venture to say double it. There is no time to waste.

The recent Ministerial meeting you hosted was the kick-off to the preparations for the midterm review of the Vienna Programme of Action for the LLDCs.

The Astana Ministerial Declaration that resulted from the meeting is a key substantive input to the Midterm Review of the Vienna Programme of Action.

The Government of Kazakhstan and OHRLs indeed share a common goal of achieving the objectives of the VPoA - BUT we have not much time left though!

We also share a common strive and concern that we must move faster if indeed the 2030 Agenda turns from words to reality with and for the LLDCs.

Reaching the goals of the VPoA is a pre-condition, is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda. This is key to achieving inclusive and sustainable economic transformation in the LLDCs.

And allow me to add, it also is key to the credibility of all of us in the international community- trust and credibility can not be squandered and people expect deeds, not words.

From there flows that achieving the objectives of the VPoA is a key priority OHRLs must and will support.

This requires true partnerships and joint and sustained efforts from all the stakeholders. It calls on the efforts domestically by the LLDCs, the transit countries, development partners, the private sector and the combined and responsive capacities of the entire UN-system and regional organizations.

We are now moving rapidly into the midterm review of the VPoA which the General Assembly requested to be held by December 2019.

Not much time is left!

We urgently must strengthen our collaboration, strengthen partnerships and look at more innovative ways of how we can accelerate the implementation of the VPoA and the 2030 Agenda.

As I say this, I am reminded of a quote I saw in your local newspaper during my latest visit to Astana and it said “Ask yourself every so often: have I done anything to improve my life or the world around me ? “

So, together let us redouble efforts to show that landlockedness is not inevitably a curse .

Let us show that TOGETHER challenges can be overcome and let us strive for the integration of the LLDCs into the global economy.

OHRLLS will continue to be your partner on this road - a road we just must now travel a little faster. We will be your steadfast voice.

Excellencies,

I conclude in wishing the Government and the people of Kazakhstan a happy Astana day!

May peace, prosperity and health be yours in the years ahead.

CONGRATULATIONS! I thank you.