



UN-OHRLLS

Remarks

by

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

at the session

Keynote Addresses by NAP Champions

“A vision for future support to the most vulnerable”

16:30-17:30

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Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt**

Excellencies,

Fellow NAP Champions,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Colleagues,

Friends

As one of your NAP Champions, I really wanted to be with you at this important get-together.

First, I must thank our hosts for their most gracious welcome to all of us.

I thank the UNFCCC secretariat for organizing this important event.

The key theme we address is how to support the most vulnerable - it is how to ensure that we leave no one behind.

OHRLLS is an advocate for 91 countries and thus more than one billion people finding themselves among the most vulnerable.

They already have been left behind for quite the while, they are among the most vulnerable to climate change, they are the most vulnerable to often exogenously driven shocks.

I am not sure how many of you saw the pictures over the last several days of the stupendous flooding in Fiji - I myself come from an island nation who had also recently experienced a cyclone, and weeks later also flooding. What climate change does to the already fragile island settings is something I hope you will never experience.

Imagine, in just a few hours you have lost everything you ever worked or hoped for in life ! Some will be too old to ever see their lives rebuilt!

The challenges - the daily challenges - faced by the more than one billion people of the 91 countries OHRLLS is a voice for are enormous.

These countries already had the greatest amount of “unfinished business” from the MDGs. So, the urgency of catching up, of acting now in our ever more speedily evolving global setting is something I cannot stress enough.

Coming myself from a majority of lifetime spent in fragile settings, there is much I could say about vulnerability as such. But that is not the point. Time has come to move from analysing to presenting SOLUTIONS for ACTION.

So, I wish to focus my brief intervention on three key messages I propose to you for thought and guiding our future actions.

First, the planet with its finite resources given to all of us human beings as our habitat will not neatly look at issues sector by sector. The interaction between nature and the human is a holistic one.

Of course, to act we must break things down into sectors but today I call for an integrating approach to implementing the key international sustainable development frameworks that Member States have agreed to in recent years.

The 2030 Agenda together with the Paris climate agreement are probably the broadest and most ambitious visions the international community has ever adopted.

Ambition though is only as good as the action that follows. The goalpost is that one day - and hopefully by 2030! - ambition becomes a reality for people! People, and I say this very often, no longer have much patience and will judge us by action and not by words!

By some estimates, billions of dollars of investments are required. Yet only limited finance is available, access is highly competitive and we see a rather slow pace of implementation of climate adaptation efforts on the ground.

Let me share another example of a critical effort and that is the effort, as documented in the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, the Vienna programme of action for the Landlocked Developing countries and the SAMOA Pathway programme of action for the Small Islands Developing states, on internet connectivity. Internet connectivity as we know is critical to early warning systems and disaster risk reduction and especially so in countries with either fragmented geographies or highly isolated communities. While progress is in the making , we are not nearly where we should be.

Then we have SDG7 which is critical to addressing climate change and current estimates say that achieving universal access to modern energy in LDCs by 2030 would cost US\$12 billion to US\$40 billion per year.

None of these goals though can be seen in isolation. Now, what does this tell me? This gives me a message:

this sounds pedestrian but may also be one of the most challenging issues: we cannot look at goals in isolation.

The SDGs are rightly so all linked and linked with the climate goals we have set.

So how can we best support countries to manage this complexity and support capacity-building to manage complexity and including the capacity-building for implementation and especially at local levels? Isn't it so often at local community levels that we find the drive to better the environment?

Now, I alluded to the topic of finance for adaptation to climate change. I will not add to the numerous discussions around the topic.

I feel nevertheless that a few salient points warrant emphasis.

The actual financial flows reaching the most vulnerable countries and people are not nearly adequate to meet adaptation needs.

Now, more detailed data, data broken down by geographical settings, by gender would also help us better understand why that is so. This just as a side remark - yet, I am sure we all agree that we also must invest in more timely, relevant and trustworthy data to guide policy-design and decision making.

The capacity and implementation issue is an issue we really must look into, we must better understand where capacity constraints and difficulties arise in the implementation of projects. Is it a matter of looking more closely at how we can simplify finance access without jeopardising accountability and transparency?

What we know is that the longer it takes to implement, the longer it will take to have the result we want: increased resilience on the ground.

So, it is a dual challenge of increasing climate change finance to the most vulnerable while investing in the capacity-building and understanding what it takes to notch up the speed of implementation.

For example, since its establishment in 1991, only an estimated 12.2 per cent of the GEF Trust Fund has been allocated to the LDCs. And yet such components of the GEF as the small grants programme have shown considerable community impact. So we have programs that work and let us look how to scale these up.

Last but not least, our own understanding of the finance flows must get better including of what they achieve.

Many multilateral sources of financing publish figures on financing to the three groups of countries OHRLLS is a voice for. OECD has also invested in this breakdown for reporting but it would be useful if the same could be done by bilateral sources of funding, including South-South cooperation, so we can have a more complete picture of funding flows to the LLDCs, LDCs and SIDS.

My final point is about the notion of “smooth transitions” .

In the three groups of countries OHRLLS advocates for, we find graduating and recently graduated LDCs. They have specific needs so as to ensure the sustainability of the major milestone graduation represents.

It is especially critical to ensure the gradual phase out of international support measures, and including climate finance, granted to this group of countries so that their transition does not risk shocks which , in turn, could jeopardise often decades-long efforts.

In a March 2018 review, 12 additional LDCs were found to be meeting the thresholds for graduation out of the LDC category. This is an important achievement considering that only 5 countries have graduated since the creation of the LDC category in 1971. Now, a multitude of criteria is looked at for a graduation and it is worth noting that only one of the twelve countries has crossed the threshold of a key index which is the Vulnerability Index.

This means that although countries are meeting the criteria for graduation, they remain highly exposed to external shocks whether these are economic or climate change-related.

So, this is quite a bit of food for thought I shared with you - I hope this food for thought does find its way into action. I fear this time, time is not on our side.

The multiple, the ever faster occurring and ever more violent climate related disasters over the past 12 months have shown that.

Just as much as we must care for our fellow human beings, we must care for this one and only planet all of us share and who is our host.

As your Champion, you can be assured that I will act as your strong voice.

Thank you.
