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**Keynote address
by**

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

**Leadership Dialogues
Achieving SDG7 in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS**

Venue: Conference Room 2, ESCAP

Bangkok, Thailand
22 February 2018
3:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very grateful to have the opportunity to deliver brief opening remarks at your very important Leadership Dialogue on what needs to be done to turn the promise of SDG7 in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS into REALITY.

The global 2030 Agenda for sustainable development has a special focus on vulnerable countries with its key theme of leaving no one behind.

Your leadership, our partnerships will be critical to moving the ambitions of Agenda 2030 into tangible progress for countless people expecting action from us.

Our focus today is on SDG 7 of Agenda 2030.

SDG 7, access to energy for ALL, is a key driver, like food and water in achieving the linked goals of Agenda 2030.

How can a girl go to school and learn if she has no light at home? How can productivity be increased if there is no reliable energy supply for machines? How can we ensure better health outcomes when we know that due to lack of energy access, people continue to use biomass emitting health comprising fumes?

Energy is indeed a central development enabler. I am sure we all agree that we must meet the targets of SDG 7 to achieve both the 2030 Agenda and implementing the Paris Agreement.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We already are into the third year of implementing Agenda 2030. We have a mere 24 months left to meet the targets of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the LDCs, we need to meet the goals of the Vienna Programme of Action for the LLDCs, and of the SAMOA Pathway for the SIDS.

The good news is that all of the agreements we have signed off recognise the the pivotal role of sustainable energy in the development of countries.

Yet, access to energy remains a major challenge for the people of the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

The latest data on the proportion of the population having access to electricity in LDCs is 38%, in LLDCs it is 60%, and SIDS it is 77%. However, these are averages masking considerable inter-and intra-country disparities. For example, some countries have an access rate as low as 5% and I do not need to remind you of the strong rural-urban divide within countries

During the past years, a strong global momentum has developed around sustainable energy. This momentum has not fully translated into tangible progress on the ground in vulnerable countries.

In 2014, the majority (54 per cent) of people without access to electricity worldwide were living in the least developed countries.

Yes, there has been progress in LDCs in recent years and access to electricity increased faster between 2010 and 2014 than in the previous decade.

However, this promising development remains far from what we need to achieve universal energy access by 2030.

Why is this so, and what can and must be done, are the leadership questions we must address.

At present, expanding access is hindered by high connection costs, unreliable or unavailable grid electricity, high leakage, high operational costs that pose challenges for utilities and consumers ability to pay, lack of investment and general capacity constraints.

Landlocked developing countries face the costs imposed by their geographical locations with high transport and transport-related trade costs. LLDCs rely on imports of fossil-fuel for power generation and the costs of access to energy are especially high. Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are geographically isolated, internally fragmented and transport costs to remote and small island communities not only pose logistical challenges but also are prohibitive in cost.

I am sure I do not need to go into further detail on what this means for structural transformation, trade development and inclusive development for all affording quality standard social services.

Reliable, cost-effective, environmentally sustainable energy access for all will be critical to turning this situation around. This must include developing affordable renewable energy solutions to shift from the current high dependence on imported fossil fuels to more sustainable locally harnessed energy sources.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

So what are the key actions and critical steps to take in order to achieve SDG7 in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS?

What is it that we must do at global, regional and national levels to end energy poverty in vulnerable countries and ensure that no country or person is left behind?

OHRLLS has worked with its 91 countries for whom we are a voice to promote sustainable energy in the vulnerable countries. It is of great concern to us to help in ensuring that vulnerable countries achieve the global goals on energy precisely because of what I noted earlier; energy is a key driver, a key means for development across different sectors.

All the activities we have carried out conveyed key messages I wish to share with you.
First,

it will be essential to act quickly towards creating enabling environments to attract private sector investment. This, in turn, requires solid pipelines of bankable projects.

To achieve this, we must address capacity issues. They range from the need for well-functioning institutions and policy and regulatory reforms to help build credibility with investors and effectively scale-up private investment and leverage public resources for country-level implementation.

Second,

DFIs and partners should increase the funding allocated to sustainable energy in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS. Such funding will have an impact across different sectors, including most of the SDGs, accelerate poverty eradication, structural transformation, and reduce vulnerability to fluctuating global energy prices.

We also must address simplification of procedures to access funding without diluting transparency and accountability.

In previous work lives, I have managed financing programmes and the implementation of grant funded programmes. Vulnerable countries and small island countries can not afford to devote scarce, trained capacity solely toward often highly complex administrative processes.

This brings me to the third observation

preparing bankable projects and accessing funds is often a huge challenge for the vulnerable countries. It requires significant time and human and capital resources and therefore, vulnerable countries need a more targeted support from their partners for project preparation to fast-track progress.

Fourth,

we must boost regional energy programmes. Development of regional energy infrastructure and institutions and stronger integration of regional energy markets is critical for ensuring economies of scale and lowering the unit cost of energy generation.

It goes without saying that all of this has to be part and parcel of strong and dynamic national energy plans and policies.

Countries have to be in the driver's seat.

But it is critical that national energy policies take into consideration the energy demand profile of the poorest people and ensure access to affordable energy.

We must, through participatory processes, ensure that local needs are taken into account.

The development impact of sustainable energy typically is highest when we target the poorest.

So, the three challenges beyond our shared SDG 7 goal of universal access which for which leadership is needed concern:

Energy security: the capacity for the effective management of primary energy supply from domestic and external sources, the reliability of energy infrastructure, and the ability of participating energy companies to meet current and future demand.

Energy equity: the accessibility and affordability of energy supply across the population.

Environmental sustainability: the achievement of supply and demand-side energy efficiencies and the development of energy supply from renewable and other low-carbon sources.

As I noted earlier, just from the financing perspective of needs alone, countries will not be in a position to go it alone and so our leadership ability to form strong public-private partnerships will be called upon.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Indeed, if we agree that we want no woman to die in childbirth because a hospital only has candle light, if we agree that our daughters and sons should be able to study at night with light, if we agree that women and men in rural areas should be able to lead productive lives beyond spending hours collecting firewood then

all stakeholders- including bilateral donors, international organisations, development finance institutions, private sector and civil society - let us join as partners in this effort.

During the past 2 days, I have been privileged to listen to many inspiring stories of rapid progress achieved through strong and visionary leadership, innovative financing together with the deployment of new technologies.

I very much look forward to hearing from our panelists today on how progress can be accelerated in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

I assure you of my personal commitment and that of OHRLLS to be your voice and helping hand so that the vulnerable countries will achieve SDG 7 and that your unique and specific challenges are brought forward during the upcoming High-level Political Forum.
Let us be partners in making Goal 7 happen.

Thank you.