



Statement by

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High Representative

and

Under-Secretary-General

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

at the

Ambassadorial Meeting of the Landlocked Developing Countries

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Conference Room 6

Excellencies, Distinguished colleagues
Friends and Partners

Let me first once again congratulate His Excellency Ambassador Julio Cesar Arriola on his election to the Chairmanship of the Group of the LLDCs.

Excellency, thank you for inviting me to participate in this inaugural meeting of the Group under your Chairmanship.

Ambassador Lazarous Kapambwe thank you also for the deep commitment and determination you showed leading the group.

I also wish to congratulate the Members of the Bureau who have come on board to support the Chair in moving the Agenda of the Group forward.

As the saying goes “A single leaf working alone provides no shade” and I can see the formidable tree you will be guiding us. Yours is truly a key element of the Group given the LLDCs’ wide agenda.

Indeed, holding this meeting at the beginning of the year to review the status of work and mapping the road for the work of the Group together is vital. I very much look forward to dialoguing with you and an opportunity for a conversation and it is important for OHRLLS to hear what your priorities are and how you expect the office to serve you better.

Excellencies,

The situation of the LLDCs remains concerning and the Secretary General has repeatedly expressed his unwavering commitment for your concerns and special needs and the need that our UN system combined capacities respond to your concerns effectively and efficiently.

Indeed, it is worrying that LLDCs’ share in global trade is in decline, continues to rely very heavily on export of primary commodities making them excessively vulnerable to commodity price and demand volatility, experience high joblessness, extreme poverty, declining productivity in agriculture and limited resilience to internal and external shocks including the impact of climate change.

FDI and ODA are declining. Infrastructure development including that of transport, ICT, and energy remain underdeveloped compared to that of coastal counterparts.

It goes without saying that this situation severely affects the developmental prospects of the LLDCs and therefore achievement of the SDGs.

My take-away is we have no time to waste, we need to work smart and hard and notch up our engagement for the LLDCs to be heard and supported. We need to accelerate support to the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action goals and the aligning objectives of the LLDC priorities with implementation of Agenda 2030.

How does OHRLLS as your office and your partner come into play?

Allow me to quickly recap what you mandated OHRLLS to do:

monitor, report and follow-up on the implementation of the VPoA and other global commitments towards the LLDCs; advocate and raise awareness on the special needs of the LLDCs; provide substantive backstopping support to intergovernmental processes and strategic articulation of positions by the LLDCs; and mobilize and coordinate international support for the effective implementation of the VPoA. Now, this coordination starts at home and that is the coordination and facilitation of mobilising the support of all of the UN system capacities.

It may be recalled that the General Assembly approved the programme of work of my office for the 2018/2019 biennium.

I will highlight some of the work that we have been asked to undertake and I very much look forward to listening to you and your suggestions on areas that you would seek our support for within the OHRLLS mandate.

Mid-term review of the VPoA

The General Assembly decided that the Vienna Programme of Action Mid-term review should be held no later than 2019.

OHRLLS is tasked to coordinate this midterm review including the preparatory process.

OHRLLS will work closely with the Chair and I very much hope for the full participation of all Members in this process. Your full involvement, your engagement are vital. I will rely on your full support and that of your capitals.

As agreed during the last LLDCs Ministerial meeting, the review process will be preceded by the Meeting of Ministers of Trade and Transport.

Consultations are underway with our host, the Government of Kazakhstan. The meeting is expected to convene during the Astana Economic Forum scheduled to be held in May 2018.

Three regional meetings are also planned. My office are currently consulting with the UN Regional Commissions to prepare for the meetings. We are also discussing with other organizations within the framework of the Inter Agency Consultative Group to organize thematic pre-conference events and related substantive work.

This preparatory process for the midterm review is to be carried out with extra-budgetary resources as decided by the General Assembly. This means that my Office is working hard to mobilise resources for these meetings as well as for the bulk of its programmatic work. I call upon the Chair and the Bureau to assist OHRLLS in this endeavour.

Mainstreaming of the VPoA

As we are moving ahead with the midterm review of the VPoA, there are some LLDCs who have not yet mainstreamed the VPoA in their National Development Strategies. This mainstreaming is critical, and will facilitate the implementation of the VPoA as well as the SDGs.

I held discussions with UNDP to support the LLDCs in mainstreaming of the VPoA, in line with the Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) process. This process is member states driven. I encourage you to engage with resident coordinators on this issue.

The Office also stands ready to facilitate sharing of your experiences on mainstreaming the Vienna Programme of Action and we currently explore the possibility of working with UNDP to help all the 3 groups to harmonize reporting on globally agreed goals, including the SDGs, and programmes of action for vulnerable countries. This will reduce the transaction cost of complying to multiple reporting processes.

This brings me to the important role of the national focal points (NFP) in facilitating the mainstreaming of the VPoA, its implementation as well as its follow-up process and facilitation of localisation of relevant development frameworks.

This network of National focal points from capitals has been successful with the LDC Group and we are in the process of establishing this with the SIDS Group. It will be very important if your Group can also institute a National focal point network. We will follow this matter in writing so nominations can be made of a national focal points in your capitals.

Follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda

The follow-up and review process of the 2030 Agenda is very important to ensure that the LLDCs issues are truly integrated into the Agenda. We must ensure that none of the 480 million people living in LLDCs are left behind if we mean what we say with “leaving no one behind”.

It is crucial for the group to fully engage in the follow-up and review process of the 2030 Agenda and my office is ready to provide you with the necessary support. It is important that we continue to build synergy and coherence among various processes and issues - in particular the HLPF, Financing for Development Follow-up, the Global Infrastructure Forum, WTO negotiations, South-South Cooperation and others.

OHRLLS will continue to make a forceful case that the LLDCs deserve special consideration and treatment in order to overcome their vulnerabilities. We will continue to support your effective participation in intergovernmental processes relating to the follow-up and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, including through the articulation of needs, concerns and interests. In line with your priorities, OHRLLS will produce thematic reports and organise meetings on themes relevant to the acceleration of the implementation of both the Vienna Programme of Action and Agenda 2030

Mobilizing Inter-Agency support

OHRLLS will continue to place emphasis on its facilitating role for strong UN system support and collaboration in meeting your priorities. This will include outreach to strategic institutions like the WTO and World Bank through the inter-agency consultative mechanism. This must lead to prioritized allocation of support to the LLDCs.

Advocacy

To me advocacy is about your voice being heard. We will advocate for enhanced support to be provided to the most vulnerable countries. OHRLLS will continue to be your active voice by participating in initiatives that are of importance to the LLDCs including for example sustainable mobility for all, UN-Transport, Broadband Commission, Sustainable Energy. We will also strongly advocate on the challenges and opportunities faced by the LLDCs in such areas as transit infrastructure, aviation sector, e-commerce and sustainable energy.

Think Tank

One of the key issues your 2018 agenda is bringing the International Think Tank for the LLDCs to full operationalisation for good reason as the Think Tank is important in supporting development through research and providing policy advice to LLDCs.

The Think Tank will also help in strengthening the collective voice of the LLDCs in global dialogue. It is important for us to work together to bring the Think Tank to full operationalisation.

The establishment of the Board of Governors is a critical step towards the full operationalisation of the Think Tank.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the Government of Ethiopia on their recent ratification of the agreement and would also wish to encourage LLDCs that have not acceded to the Multilateral Agreement to do so as soon as possible as we together must ensure that the Think Tank delivers on its mandate.

Projects

OHRLLS will continue to work on specific priority thematic projects focused on policy recommendations to help address the special development needs of the LLDCs. Areas that we plan to work on include: enhancing cross-border cooperation and coordination; facilitating faster and efficient multimodal transit corridors; promotion of e-commerce in LLDCs; and enhancing the role of the private sector in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action.

UN development system reform

Excellencies, The discussions on making the UN Development System fit for purpose continue. I think we all agree that we cannot address the challenges of today and tomorrow with the tools of yesterday. It is important that the Group continue to stay fully engaged in the process. Engagement is about ensuring that the LLDCs are not left behind.

In closing, I would like to assure you all of my deep personal commitment and the commitment of OHRLLS to support the Chair and the Group in your important work.

I will pursue strong advocacy and outreach activities - with urgency, we must generate the necessary awareness and build wider and deeper global partnerships for the LLDCs so that

we truly leave no one behind. I very much look forward to our dialogue and hearing your recommendations, views and priorities.

Thank you.