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United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States

Statement by

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**at the lunch for the Group of Friends of LDCs
5 February 2018**

**on
Outlook on OHRLLS activities for LDCs**

Permanent Mission of Belgium

Distinguished Chairs of the Group of Friends of the LDCs,
Excellencies,
Partners and Friends

Thank you for giving me the floor again to share an outlook about our planned activities for the coming months. I look forward to your feedback on these.

Well, doing this in a few minutes is actually not all that easy. The programme budget for the biennium that just started includes more than 200 outputs for the LDC Subprogramme alone! Listening to you ever since I took up my position now some eight months ago - I see three key thrusts for this year:

1. we must continue if not accelerate support to activities already engaged in
2. the OHRLLS voice on your behalf must get stronger and
3. we make a big push, in line with the mandate you have given OHRLLS, to be a facilitator capable of leveraging all of the UN system capacities in support of the 91 countries we stand for.

So, effective voice, rallying capacities responsive to your needs and delivering on agreed upon activities broadly is the roadmap.

I now turn to priority ongoing activities.

The **operationalisation of the Technology Bank** is well under way but is also a challenge. The signing of the Host Country Agreement with Turkey in September 2017, marked the achievement of the first SDG target (17.8.).

The Bank has tremendous potential to tackle one of the great new divides of our times: access to science, technology and capacity to innovate. The Council met in November 2017 and adopted the annual work plan and budget. Recruitment of the Managing Director and other staff is progressing and the physical premises are being finalised – the opening is anticipated for April 2018.

The Bank is starting the implementation of activities focusing on Technology Needs Assessments and Digital Access to Research in selected LDCs. The Contributions have been received from Turkey and Norway together with indications of contributions from several LDCs.

However, to make the Bank truly operational and cover all 47 LDCs, the new Director once selected, as a top priority, must focus on resource mobilization.

Investment promotion is at the heart of your efforts to trigger inclusive sustainable development. OHRLLS promotes investment promotion regimes for LDCs, which include providing legal and technical support to LDCs through IDLO in investment-related negotiations and dispute settlement and improving the capacity of the investment promotion agencies of LDCs.

The FFD Forum in April of this year will discuss the investment promotion regimes for LDCs as per the **GA resolution on LDCs**.

The GA resolution of last year also recognized that the multilateral risk reduction strategies and mechanisms have proven insufficient and underlined the importance of improving the coordination and effectiveness of resilience-building initiatives for LDCs. We will undertake further analytical work on crisis mitigation and resilience building. Our **Flagship report 2018** will also address and thus contribute to the 2018 HLPF theme of transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies.

Strengthening and effective support to the **network of National Focal Points** in LDCs is a priority. The Focal Points coordinate the implementation of the IPoA in their respective capitals.

We must leverage this network to further advance the mainstreaming of the SDGs into national development plans and building coherence between the implementation and review of the IPoA and those of the SDGs.

Our annual meeting of the National Focal Points is designed as a platform to promote peer-learning and exchange of best practices. This year's meeting will take place during the HLPF in July.

As I said before, strengthening the OHRLLS voice on your behalf is a top priority and I will continue with global advocacy efforts in the priority areas of the LDCs, including broadband connectivity, sustainable energy, and data.

Progress towards the **graduation goal** of the IPoA has accelerated. The next review of the list of LDCs by the CDP in March is expected to find 6 countries meeting the criteria for the second time and additional 3 countries meeting the graduation criteria for the first time.¹ This positive and encouraging development signals that LDCs have made progress in many areas. Yet, countries still face many challenges, new challenges are arising and we must pay greater attention to the sustainability dimensions in graduation. The GA resolution of last year has requested the Secretary-General to elaborate on the implementation, effectiveness and added value of smooth transition measures, covering both graduating and recently graduated countries, including ways that graduated countries can be supported on their development path. This will be reflected in the SG report on graduation, which we are preparing this year. OHRLLS recent meetings on this topic in Bangladesh and here in NY, highlighted once more the need for enhanced support for smooth transition toward sustainable developmental paths truly leaving no one behind.

OHRLLS will convene follow-up meetings on graduation, for example on 16 March to celebrate graduation progress. We also plan a consultative meeting of LDCs and friends on graduation and smooth transition sometime in the Spring.

The annual LDC Ministerial Breakfast Meeting will be held at the premises of the World Bank on 21 April 2018, during the World Bank/ IMF spring meetings. This meeting has been institutionalised and will be the fourth in its series.

¹ For the second time these are Kiribati, Sao Tome and Principe, Solomon Islands and Timor Leste, Bhutan and Nepal. The CDP might not recommend all of these for graduation. For the first time these are Bangladesh, Myanmar and Laos.

It will be very important that we have a productive, forward looking and action focused discussion on financing the SDGs for LDCs, with a special focus on SDG 7, which calls for ensuring universal access to energy by 2030. The meeting will bring together LDC Finance Ministers and Development Partners to discuss financing challenges. The outcome of the LDC Ministerial meeting will feed into this year's HLPF deliberations. This meeting is co-organised by OHRLLS, the World Bank and ONE Campaign.

This for a snapshot - but I also have to mention that OHRLLS receives very limited resources apart from staff resources from the UN regular budget to execute its mandated activities. As you all know regular budget resources have been cut further this biennium. While we at OHRLLS must make it our goal to most efficiently and effectively use resources you have entrusted us with, OHRLLS does rely on the support of your governments to implement the activities you mandated us to carry out in our programme budget and beyond.

I would like to especially thank Norway and Denmark for recent new commitments in this regard. I also remain grateful to all of you who contributed previously to our Trust Fund. Thank you - I look forward to our dialogue and our continued strong and productive collaboration.