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**United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States
(UN-OHRLLS)**

**Statement
by**

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**High Representative
and
Under-Secretary-General**

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

at

**High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies: Perspectives of
LDCs, LLDCs and MICs**

**Wednesday, 11 July 2018, 11:00am-1:00pm
Conference Room 4, United Nations**

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
dear fellow panelists,
colleagues and friends

It is a true privilege to be with you this morning!

The topic of our meeting goes to the core of our work in OHRLLS.

The LDCs and LLDCs have entrusted OHRLLS with being their voice and a helping hand in becoming sustainable and resilient societies.

We already are into the third year of implementation of the landmark 2030 Agenda.

The global community promised people to deliver on this Agenda by signing off on it.

The good news is that from a macro perspective, progress has been made toward achievement of the SDGs.

Yet, the macro picture hides major disparities between and within countries.

The focus of my few remarks concerns the LDCs and LLDCs.

The reality I have to alert you to is that generally LDCs and LLDCS continue to lag behind other developing countries in almost all targets and indicators of the 2030 Agenda.

This is cause for ACTION.

This weak performance finds its causes in a range of factors and quite often very country-specific factors.

Factors range from resource and capacity constraints, to structural impediments, new and emerging challenges and the generally high exposure and vulnerability to domestic, regional and global shocks and crises.

The latest global estimates we have suggest that the percentage of people living below the poverty threshold in 2013 stood at 10.9 per cent.

This macro figure hides that in LDCs and LLDCs, the poverty rates stood at 36.2 per cent and 31 per cent respectively or one out of three people still living in poverty!

We have a mere 12 years left to achieve the ambitious goals of Agenda 2030.

At the pace at which we act right now, my sense is that we can not achieve what we promised people in the 2030 Agenda.

So, my first message here is: TIME is more than ever of the essence and ACTION has to be accelerated.

Let me turn to a couple specific areas where we need to pay more attention in my view.

First, the impact of climate change on the economies and above all the lives of peoples in the LDCs, LLDCs and particularly the SIDS.

This constituency of countries and especially the SIDS are extremely vulnerable to natural disasters and climate change induced events and often live in fragile ecosystems.

I do not need to tell you about the many ramifications climate related disasters bring from health epidemics to destroyed infrastructures in turn slowing down if not destroying hard won economic and social gains.

Let me take the example of Hurricane Irma.

World Bank estimates are that Hurricane Irma caused damages equivalent to 14 percent of GDP for Antigua and Barbuda, and up to 200 percent of GDP for Dominica.

Another example concerns Nepal. The total value of the damage and loss caused by the earthquake in Nepal was estimated at about a third of Nepal's GDP.

Unfortunately, I could give you many more such examples.

My message number two is: we need to accelerate support for countries to have the capacity to pro-actively manage and mitigate climate and environmental change related events.

As I have said in many meetings, we need to look at **accelerating access to available finances in this area, streamline access and disbursement procedures without compromising on transparency and accountability.**

The LLDCs face special challenges.

They relate to lack of direct territorial access to the sea and thus remoteness and isolation from world markets. That is a challenge in itself but further compounded by many of them being located in dryland regions. I do not need to tell you how changed rainfall patterns do impact drylands and the livelihoods of farmers.

According to FAO data, from 2005 to 2015, LLDCs across the world suffered a \$11.6 billion loss in crop and livestock production due to natural-hazard induced disasters such as droughts, floods and tropical storms. That is a figure but think of the herder who then no longer can earn a livelihood and feed the family!

Allow me now to speak to a couple key actions where we need to accelerate work.

Sustained economic growth and structural transformation are essential components of resilience building.

GDP growth has begun to pick up in LDCs and reached 4.9 per cent in 2017. The growth rate in LLDCs was only 2.79 in 2016!

As I said before, macro figures hide very uneven situations.

The Istanbul Program of Action already aimed for 7 per cent growth ! I let you do the maths.

We have a long way to go and a few key areas must be looked at urgently.

One, access to reliable and sustainable energy.

This is a key driver. The latest data show us that only 44.8 per cent of people in LDCs have access to electricity.

The percentage is 51.8 for the LLDCs and we reach 76 per cent in the SIDS.

Strong national and global efforts will be essential to address this challenge in LDCs and LLDCs.

If you want to gain a quite vivid sense of what energy access means, take a look at our OHRLLS exhibit in the 1B corridor on the theme “Voices of a Brighter Future”.

The exhibit features the stories by journalists from LDCs on how sustainable energy transforms communities.

I will also talk a little more to this at a HLPF side event on Accelerating the energy transition in LLDCs that will be held tomorrow in conference room B at 1:15pm.

Two, we need connectivity.

We here take it for granted that in seconds we can reach out to all corners of our globe and search for a piece of data or information on the net.

Mobile cellular and broadband connectivity have a very significant role to play from enhancing disaster preparedness, resilience to inclusive economic and social development in LDCs.

We highlight the critical contributions of connectivity in a new report by the Working Group on Broadband entitled

“Broadband for national development in four LDCs: Cambodia, Rwanda, Senegal and Vanuatu”.

This report will be launched on 12 July in Conference room 11.

Third, we must make sure that we do not leave the LDCs and LLDCs behind in technology and innovation.

We all know about the tremendous technological advances of the past couple decades from artificial intelligence, to biotechnology, robotics to renewable energy technologies driving increasingly progress and growth

We risk to leave the LDCs and LLDCs behind.

The need for enhanced technology and knowledge access for these countries was recognized some time ago by the General Assembly.

The Technology Bank for LDCs became finally operative with the recent inauguration of the Bank's premises in Gebze, Turkey.

Similarly, the International Think Tank for LLDCs, the first intergovernmental body of LLDCs, was inaugurated in Mongolia in June 2018.

I hope both initiatives will be centres of excellence for research and policy advice on issues of critical importance to LDCs and LLDCs.

Fourth, concerns INCLUSION for women and men, boys and girls.

The central promise of Agenda 2030 is to leave no one behind.

It is urgent to focus on building universal access to basic social services for ALL. Yes, we need to create infrastructure condition that allow for sustainable growth but we must focus equally on building sustainable human and social capital in inclusive ways.

Fifth, concerns access to finance and capacity building.

This is of course a vast topic so I just share a couple key observations.

There is no way that domestic resources and capacities alone can meet LDC and LLDC needs.

We need to accelerate work on increasing assistance, on speeding up disbursement on existing resources, build more partnerships as the public sector can not go this alone and we need enhanced capacity-building. These issues are linked.

LDCs and LLDCS must also be equipped to gain access to capital-market-based risk transfer mechanisms in the form of insurance and catastrophe bonds, among others.

Finally, I would like to stress the importance of promoting sustainable FDI and in this context I would like to note that my Office, in collaboration with the International Development Law Organization (IDLO) desined a dedicated investment Support Programme aimed at providing legal assistance to requesting LDCs on investment related negotiations and dispute settlement, and ensuring that they derive maximum benefit from FDI. The IDLO programme is expected to be fully operational by October this year.

To conclude, **we indeed have no time to waste.**

LDCs and LLDCS have to be in the driver's seat but it will take concerted global, regional, national and local level action and partnerships to turn the promise of Agenda 2030 for inclusive sustainable and resilient societies into reality.

Thank you.