



UNOHRLLS

Opening Remarks

by

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

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

**High-Level Event on Leveraging Green Growth Potential in Vulnerable
Countries**

13:15-14:30

28 September 2018

**Conference Room 5
New York**

- Your Excellency Mr. Vincent Biruta, Minister of Environment, Rwanda
- Mr. Mauro Petriccione, Director-General, Directorate-General for Climate Action, EU
- Mr. Frank Rijsberman, Director-General, Global Green Growth Institute, and the co-organizer of today's event,
- Excellencies, dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen, friends

A warm welcome to all of you and thank you for joining us here today.

My gratitude also goes to our distinguished Panel of speakers and I very much look forward to listening to you.

Foremost, I must express my great appreciation to Frank Rijsberman for initiating the idea for this event when we first met at COP23 in Bonn.

Last but by no means least, I thank the Permanent Mission of Korea for their cooperation in organizing this event with us.

Today's topic – Leveraging Green Growth in Vulnerable Countries – is critically important for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

It is also one that is very dear to me.

I am an islander. When you are an islander you know that nature sustains you and that nature can also take your life. And ours is the land and the ocean natures coming together as our living space.

Natural resources are critical to the economies not only of the SIDS but also the Least Developed Countries and Landlocked Developing Countries.

For example, in LDCs in 2016, 70% of the population lived in rural areas, with agriculture playing a vital role in the economy and therefore people's livelihoods.

In the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, millions of people depend on marine resources for nutrition and livelihoods.

Harnessing land and ocean resources in a sustainable manner will be key to lifting people and communities out of poverty.

New and emerging sectors such as aquaculture and offshore mineral exploration hold great potential for these countries to further sustainable economic benefits - and thus benefits for people's livelihoods - from the ocean.

The tourism sector typically plays an important role in the economies of the most vulnerable countries attracting tourists given the unique yet also very fragile eco- and marine systems in these countries.

In some cases, tourism accounts for up to 25 per cent of GDP, and even reaches up to 79 per cent in some SIDS.

This tourism is what I call environmental capital intensive and if not properly planned and managed, tourism could significantly degrade the environment on which it draws.

But tourism development and environmental management must not be mutually exclusive.

We have the technologies and tools nowadays to make them mutually supportive.

But we need to give access ranging from technology transfer to capacity building to finance to have the most vulnerable countries and their peoples access a path to sustainable development.

This is not an abstract plea I make- this is about ensuring we do not leave the most vulnerable countries behind with people left to poverty and the kind of poverty leading to rapid and all-encompassing environmental degradation ranging from deforestation, to groundwater pollution and ocean pollution.

As you all know, climate change is a threat hitting the most vulnerable countries by virtue of their geography in a disproportionate way.

We must pay special and much faster attention to this.

While the vulnerable countries typically have a low carbon footprint, it is particularly important for them to lead the way in moving toward a low-carbon growth path. Access to “leap-frogging” clean technologies should be facilitated and notably moving out of fossil fuels.

I certainly could go on providing more examples but I am sure a rich sharing of experience and above all solution proposals will be at the core of our being together here.

The 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and other international sustainable development agreements all call for ACTION including the provision of finance, capacity-building and technology transfer to assist developing countries in meeting their commitments, with special provisions for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

We began this week with our Secretary-General’s High-level Meeting on Financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Christine Lagarde cited new IMF analysis which found that across 49 low-income developing countries, USD520 billion additional spending per year is needed for sustainable and inclusive growth to meet the SDGs.

It is clear that we must step up our efforts- step them up considerably in size and speed.

We do not have the luxury to do business as usual - yes, we have traditional means but we also must explore new and innovative ways for action including finance.

On the one hand, established instruments such as the LDCs Fund and Green Climate Fund need to be properly resourced while at the same time applying novel approaches such as blended financing, and the use of public funds to underwrite and de-risk investments.

Time is not on our side - the time for action is now.

With this I now look forward to listening to you and wish you a successful and productive meeting.

Thank you.