

Please check against delivery



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

**Statement by
Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States**

at the Ministerial Meeting of LDCs

**26 September 2018, 10:00am – 1:00 pm
Conference room # 11
UN Headquarters, New York**

Your Excellencies,
HE Mr Shadriar Alam, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh and the outgoing Chair of the Group of LDCs
HE Dr Emmanuel Fabiano, Minister of Foreign Affairs & International Cooperation of Malawi, Incoming Interim Chair of LDCs
Honourable President of the General Assembly
Honourable Commissioner of the European Union
Excellency President of the ECOSOC
My colleague Associate Administrator of the UNDP
Honourable Ministers from LDCs and the Friends of LDCs
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I extend my warm appreciations to Bangladesh for its strong leadership of the Group of LDCs over the past three years. I commend the dynamic stewardship of Ambassador Masud Bin Momem and his able team in meaningfully representing the Group in various forums. I would also like to commend the other members of the Global Coordination Bureau, namely Benin, Malawi, Tanzania and Yemen and the entire membership of LDCs for their efforts in promoting their common interests in the economic, social, environmental and related fields.

Let me now welcome and congratulate His Excellency Dr Emmanuel Fabiano for taking on the responsibility of the interim chair for the Group. You can rest assured of our complete support in carrying out your responsibilities.

Excellencies,

Allow me to briefly present before you the status of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for LDCs.

In 2017, LDCs growth was estimated to have increased to 4.9 per cent, from 4.3 per cent in 2016. This upward trend is projected to continue in the near term, with growth of 5.4 per cent and 5.6 per cent in 2018 and 2019, respectively.

The proportion of their population living on less than \$1.90 per day fell slightly, from 38.9 per cent in 2010 to 33.7 per cent in 2013. However, at this pace of progress, poverty eradication is not likely to be achieved by 2020.

The contribution of manufacturing value added to growth has progressively increased from 11.8 per cent in 2011 to 13.2 per cent in 2016. Services account for almost half of the growth in the least developed countries, while agriculture accounts for around a quarter.

Mobile cellular subscriptions increased to 68 per cent in 2016 from 63.6 percent in 2014, while Internet penetration reached only 16 per cent, up from 5 per cent in 2011. Access to electricity has increased from 35.8 per cent in 2012, to 38.3 per cent in 2014. However, attaining universal access will require major new investments, and improved governance of public utilities.

Trade performance has also faced downward trends. The share of world exports originating in LDCs declined from 1.09 per cent in 2014 to 0.89 per cent in 2016, thus moving the LDCs' overall performance further away from the target of 2 per cent called for in the IPoA and SDG17.11.

School enrollment rates have improved, but two in five of all out-of-school children and adolescents in the world are in the LDCs, while gender disparities persist. Maternal and infant mortality rates are still high. Youth unemployment remains alarmingly high in many LDCs. Some progress has been registered on key indicators on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

LDCs continue to remain highly vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters. Disasters affected an estimated 23 million people in LDCs, including floods, drought and cyclones, and especially landslides which claimed over 1,400 lives. Concerted efforts are needed to address the impacts of climate change in LDCs. Let me inform you that my Office is organising together with the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) and in cooperation with the Republic of Korea, a High-level Event on Leveraging Green Growth Potential in Vulnerable Countries, on Friday, 28 September at 1:15. The meeting will take place in conference room 5, and I would like to encourage your active participation.

We are witnessing considerable progress on graduation. Since the creation of the least developed countries category in 1971, only 5 countries have graduated. At the March 2018 meeting of the Committee for Development Policy, an additional 12 LDCs met the graduation thresholds, including three who met them for the first time, namely Bangladesh, Lao PDR and Myanmar. Vanuatu is scheduled to graduate in 2020 and Angola in 2021. The ECOSOC resolution of this year endorses the recommendation on the graduation of Solomon Islands, Bhutan and Sao Tome and Principe with some flexibility with the latter two countries. The Council also decided to defer the consideration of the graduation of Tuvalu and Kiribati to no later than 2021. The graduating countries have emphasized the need for continued international support during and after graduation.

OHRLLS has set up an Inter-Agency Task Force on graduation to enhance support for graduation and create related incentives. The last meeting of the Task Force was held on 21 September 2018, which discussed concrete ways in which the IATF can better support graduating countries.

External official support remains of critical importance to LDCs. In 2017, bilateral aid from the OECD DAC members increased by 4 per cent in real terms, reversing several years of decline, to reach USD26 billion. However, the share of ODA still remains at 0.09 per cent of the donors' GNI.

Foreign direct investment flows to LDCs contracted by 17 per cent in 2017 and make up less than 2 per cent of the total global flow. FDI in LDCs is concentrated in a few mineral and oil extracting countries.

The status of implementation of the IPoA clearly underlines that we must redouble our efforts to ensure the full implementation of the IPoA in the next two and a half years. Let me share with you some specific measures and initiatives that my Office is undertaking to accelerate the implementation of the IPoA.

The headquarters of the Technology Bank in Gebze was inaugurated on 4 June 2018. The bank is already starting its work, including STI and technology needs assessments and the promotion of digital access to research, in collaboration with other UN agencies. On the operational front, we anticipate the Managing Director, 2 programme officers, and 2 support staff will be on the ground in few weeks' time. We are grateful for the generous support received from Turkey, Norway, India and Bangladesh. I hope donors will consider providing additional financial support to increase the activities of the Technology Bank.

My Office is promoting two initiatives in the area of investment promotion: the Investment Support Programme, implemented by the International Development Law Organization (IDLO), providing legal and technical support to LDCs in investment-related negotiations and dispute settlement, and a Capacity Development Program for Investment Promotion Agencies of the LDCs, developed in cooperation with UNCTAD, UNIDO, ILO, the Enhanced Integrated Framework and the World Association of IPAs. We are very grateful to the EU which pledged 1 million Euro, expected to be disbursed by this year, for the Investment Support Programme. We invite our development partners to consider contributions to these initiatives to ensure increased FDI flows to LDCs and to enhance their contribution to achieving the SDGs.

We are also focusing our analytical work on building resilience of LDCs. Last year, we published a report on this topic. This year, the theme of our annual flagship report will be reducing vulnerabilities and strengthening resilience in LDCs, which will be published in the Fall of 2018.

We also undertake various initiatives to promote broadband connectivity and sustainable energy in LDCs. Currently, I am Chairing The Broadband Commission Working Group for the most vulnerable countries and recently the Commission has prepared a report entitled "Broadband for national development in four LDCs: Cambodia, Rwanda, Senegal and Vanuatu". My Office jointly with UN-ESCAP prepared a policy brief on achieving SDG7 in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

My Office is engaged in the ongoing UNDS repositioning measures with a view to ensuring that the UN can support LDCs effectively and in a coordinated and coherent manner.

Finally, I would refer to paragraph 157 of the IPoA and paragraph 58 of the Ministerial Declaration of LDCs, to be adopted today, on the holding of a Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. We look forward to the decision of the General Assembly at its 73rd Session with regard to the specificity and organizational details of the Conference, which will facilitate holding the Conference in an effective and successful manner.

To conclude my remarks, we would also seek support of LDCs and the Friends of LDCs in strengthening the capacity of OHRLLS to provide extended and targeted support to LDCs in

enabling them to implement the 2030 Agenda and the IPoA in a coordinated and coherent manner.

I thank you all for your kind attention.