STATEMENT

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY DR PERKS LIGOYA

CHAIRPERSON LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES GROUP
AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE/AMBASSADOR
OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI TO THE UNITED
NATIONS

AGENDA ITEM 23 (a): FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOURTH
UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE LEAST
DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

COMMITTEE OF THE 73rd SESSION OF THE UNITED
NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK, USA

22nd OCTOBER, 2018
Chairperson,
Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of LDCs. We align ourselves with the statement of Egypt delivered on behalf of the G77 and China. We commend the Secretary-General for his comprehensive reports on this agenda item. We also thank the Director of the OHRLLS for her comprehensive presentation of the reports.

Chairperson,

We see a mixed picture in the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action. There are some positive signs in the area of economic growth. In 2017, LDCs achieved 4.9 per cent growth. This upward trend is projected to continue in the near term. However, the projected growth is still far from the 7 per cent target, as set out in SDG 8.1 as well as in the IPoA. We may recall that on average LDCs experienced more than 7 per cent economic growth in the past decade and we are yet to regain the pre-crisis level of economic growth.

Poverty has been declining in LDCs. The poverty rate, estimated on less than $1.90 per day, fell from 38.9 per cent in 2010 to 33.7 per cent in 2013. The rate of progress is not sufficient to achieve SDG-1. The UN study suggest that at the current rate of economic growth, around 35 per cent of the population of LDCs will still remain in extreme poverty by 2030. This is a serious concern and needs focused attention of the international community if we want to realize the 2030 Agenda.

Chairperson,

One of the key objectives of the Istanbul Programme of Action is to achieve structural transformation in LDCs. There is little progress in this area. We see that the contribution of manufacturing value added to GDP has 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. This scenario does not represent the requisite level of structural transformation that would lead to greater diversification of the economies of LDCs.

Mobile cellular subscriptions increased to 68 per cent in 2016 which is increasing. However, Internet penetration reached only at 16 per cent, up from 5 per cent in 2011. Only 39 per cent of their population has access to electricity. Attaining universal access to internet and energy will require significant leapfrogging in new investments.

**Chairperson,**

One of the key focuses of the IPoA was to achieve beneficial integration of LDCs into the world economy by increasing the size of markets, improving their competitiveness and enhancing regional connectivity. The IPoA and the 2030 Agenda set a concrete target to double the share of LDCs exports in total global exports. This is a matter of grave concern that we see continued regression in this field. LDCs’ share of world exports declined from 1.09 per cent in 2014 to 0.89 per cent in 2016. Full implementation of the decisions of the WTO Ministerial in favour of LDCs, especially DFQF market access, preferential rules of origin, services waiver and cotton can make important contributions to the accelerate LDCs’ exports.

School enrollment rates have improved. Yet, two-fifths of all out-of-school children and adolescents in the world are in the LDCs. Maternal and infant mortality rates are still quite high. Youth unemployment remains considerably high in many LDCs. Some progress has been registered on key indicators on gender equality and the empowerment of women. However, we still need to do more to achieve gender-related goals and targets.

LDCs continue to remain highly vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters. Climate change has already warmed the world by around 1°C. The recent IPCC report suggests that even with half a degree Celsius (0.5 C) warmer than it is today, the world will face devastating impacts, and LDCs will be impacted disproportionately. Ambitious actions are essential at all levels to achieve the 1.5 degree benchmark. We call upon development partners to fulfill their commitment to mobilise 100 billion USD annually by 2020, under the Green Climate Fund (GCF). We look forward to the
adoption of a comprehensive, robust and effective set of guidelines at COP24 that will enable full and ambitious implementation of the Paris Agreement. We also call for building crises mitigation and resilience building mechanisms for LDCs.

Chairperson,

We are left with only two years in the implementation of the IPoA. While we need increased international support, we see a dwindling scenario. Despite some increase in ODA, the share still remains at 0.09 per cent of the donors’ GNI. The Addis Ababa ODA targets for LDCs need to be fully realized.

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. We invite the General Assembly to undertake appropriate measures to implement SDG 17.5 entitled “Adopt and implement investment promotion regimes for least developed countries”.

We welcome the establishment of the Technology Bank for LDCs. We thank the Government of Turkey and the UN-OHRLS for their support in its operationalisation. The Bank needs to begin its operation at the earliest, especially in STI capacity building and Technology Transfer to LDCs. We invite donors to provide financial support to make the Bank meaningfully operational.

Chairperson,

We have seen an encouraging move in the area of graduation. Twelve LDCs are at various stages of graduation process. While graduation of a country symbolizes its long-term socio-economic progress, it also brings a lot of challenges in the form of losing the entire package of LDC-specific benefits and flexibilities. We want the graduation to be sustainable and irreversible. Some of our graduating countries have special concerns, particularly in relation to their susceptibility to environmental and other shocks. These need to be addressed. Graduating and graduated countries need continued support from their development partners to sustain their development trajectory. We commend Secretary-General’s report on graduation and smooth transition in this regard.
As the implementation of the UNDS repositioning is unfolding, the special priorities of LDCs as reflected in the QCPR resolution need to be fully translated. We call for strengthening the OHRLLS to provide extended and targeted support to LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

Finally, I would refer to paragraph 157 of the IPoA and paragraph 120 of the Comprehensive Mid-term Review, with regard to holding the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in 2021. We have already made necessary proposals on the scope and some organizational details of the Conference in our resolution in the Second Committee. We seek support of the Member States in favour of holding the Fifth United Nations Conference on LDCs in 2021. We also request UN-OHRLLS to explore the potential host country for the Conference.

Thank you all for your kind attention.