

Statement
by

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High Representative
and
Under-Secretary-General
for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing
Countries
and Small Island Developing States

NAP Champions High-level Event:
[Time: 10-15 mins]

“Advancing formulation and implementation of National
Adaptation Plans”

Venue: tbc

Katowice, Poland
12 December 2018
13:15 - 14:45

Ms. Patricia Espinosa, Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC
Prof. Jae Chun Choe - my fellow NAP Champion,
Honourable Ministers,

Mr Moderator
Prof Jae Chun Choe – my fellow NAP Champion
Hon Ministers
Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I stand here as one of your NAP Champions.

I sincerely thank the UNFCCC secretariat for organizing this important event.

For me, it is a big responsibility I take to heart to be one of your NAP Champions.

I am sure we all do agree that there is great urgency to advance in formulating and implementing NAPs. I am sure we also all agree that we must ensure to leave no one behind.

The Least Developed Countries are among the most vulnerable nations as are the Small Island Developing States and Landlocked Developing Countries - that is over one billion human beings we put at risk of being left behind.

The most recent assessment of the science underscores this more than ever. The IPCC Special Report on 1.5 degrees clearly outlines how adaptation will be a particular challenge for the LDCs and SIDS, with its alarming findings about the implications of global warming above 1.5 degrees.

This year's GA resolution on LDCs "notes with concern the scientific findings contained in the Special Report".

OHRLLS, the Office I am responsible for, is tasked to deliver advocacy, facilitate inter-agency coordination but also to monitor the implementation member states agreed on Programmes of Action for these three groups of countries – the Istanbul Programme of Action for the LDCs, the Vienna Programme of Action for the LLDCs and the SAMOA Pathway for the SIDS.

At the outset, across the board in these countries, financial resources and national capacity remain extremely limited for implementation of NAPs and generally climate action. This constraint also extends to the SDGs of Agenda 2030 and the Sendai Framework. Indeed, climate change imposes an extra burden on these countries.

In LDCs, their limited tax base given their limited economic diversification offers necessarily limited scope for increasing domestic public resource allocations. As far as FDI is concerned, flows are among the lowest in the world.

So, we continue to have a situation where many LDCs primarily rely on ODA and this includes for climate action. However, ODA flows from OECD-DAC countries to LDCs remain below their 2011 levels, they do not meet IPoA targets. At least we witnessed a slight increase in 2017, the first in years.

The shortfall between available financial resources for adaptation in LDCs, SIDS and LLDCs as compared to the estimated requirements is **SERIOUS**. Furthermore, as emphasized by SIDS and others, historically a much larger portion of financing has been allocated to mitigation than adaptation.

The forthcoming State of the LDCs Report prepared by my Office will include an update on the major climate vulnerabilities facing the LDCs including the gap in available financing compared to estimated needs.

Countries in all three groups face capacity challenges. These range from the capacity to prepare bankable adaptation projects including technical capacities, deal with the many layers and complexities of funding processes to obtain financing in a timely manner.

These capacity constraints are felt at all levels of the policy making process.

In many SIDS, National Statistics Offices are comprised of only a handful of people, and yet they must cover populations spread over large and remote geographical areas and deliver on all functions of a state and across a range of funders.

So, each time we add additional programmatic or reporting requirements we further tax scarce capacities and it is therefore so important to look at key interlinkages between the NAPs and the other global frameworks. We must focus on the synergies between them, potential for streamlining as otherwise we will have only limited success in each.

The devastating impacts of the 2017 hurricane season in the Caribbean saw record losses, with years of development progress wiped out within mere hours. In my own country – the Pacific island nation of Tonga – Cyclone Gita which struck this past February, the strongest in 60 years, caused damage to over 2000 homes completely destroying 327 of them, and severely affected water sources.

Now, when you are a small island nation, you cannot just overnight get new building materials, you cannot just draw on additional labor and it makes rebuilding double if not triple more complex.

Implementing NAPs and Disaster Risk Reduction strategies thus is **CRITICAL**.

The respective Programmes of Action of the three groups of countries also provide us with opportunities for increased advocacy for NAPs and stepping up climate action.

The beauty is these are programmes really owned by countries, they are based on strong will and determination and ours is the task to give a helping hand.

It also is very encouraging that the importance of climate adaptation and building resilience is increasingly recognized in discussions on the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the LDCs.

For now three consecutive years, the Declaration by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the LDCs at their annual meeting during the High-level week of the General Assembly has called for the full implementation of the Paris Agreement. The declaration calls for the provision of financial and technical support to LDCs, full operationalization of the GCF, and has highlighted the need to enhance resilience-building measures for LDCs. Climate change also features prominently in this year's General Assembly resolution on the IPoA.

We know that agriculture remains a key economic sector for the three groups of countries and we also know that infrastructure has a key role to play in their path to a sustainable development.

NAPs have a strong role to play in this. They have the potential to make a significant contribution to climate-proofing investments in infrastructure and ensuring resilient agriculture. This, in turn, will positively impact on building productive capacity and safeguarding development progress made across the board.

Despite the major shortcomings in meeting IPoA targets on ODA, FDI and trade, there has nevertheless been progress on graduation.

As a side remark, let us take an approach of the “glass-half-full” - yes, we have plenty challenges but let us also acknowledge how much progress countries have made!

The General Assembly is expected to adopt a resolution in December graduating three more LDCs from the category – Bhutan [2023], Solomon Islands [2024] and Sao Tome and Principe [2024]. Three other LDCs have met the graduation criteria for the first time. However, many countries considered for graduation – especially the small islands LDCs – continue to be well below the threshold level for graduation on their Economic Vulnerability Index.

The countries are meeting the criteria on GNI per capita and Human Asset Index. So, we must look much more in what support it takes to improve on the Economic Vulnerability Index and that is clearly linked to climate action. If your economy gets wiped out by one dramatic climatic event, it should make us think!

This persistent vulnerability highlights the importance of granting smooth transitions measures for graduating LDCs particularly in the UNFCCC context.

I encourage Parties to consider granting these smooth transition measures in the same way as has been accorded in almost all other fora where specific support measures are provided to LDCs – such as the Duty Free Quota Free access under the WTO, the Enhanced Integrated Framework for Trade-Related Assistance for the LDCs, the Technology Bank for the LDCs.

The IPoA will come to end in 2020. There has been agreement in the Second Committee of the General Assembly to convene a Fifth Conference on LDCs in 2021.

The preparatory process kicks off next year. All key areas and themes will be reviewed and this of course includes climate change. This process offers the opportunity to build further momentum for climate action in the LDCs, particularly in the adaptation area.

Similarly, the ongoing Mid-Term Review of the Vienna Programme of Action for the Landlocked Developing Countries provides the opportunity to emphasize the importance of NAPs for achieving the VPoA goals. They are among the poorest of the developing countries, with the weakest growth rates, and are typically heavily dependent on a limited number of commodities for their export earnings. Half of them are also in the LDC category. They are highly vulnerable to climate change, desertification and land degradation due to their high proportion of drylands. With that comes fragile soils, sparse vegetation and high water stress. The Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs identifies priorities to help overcome these constraints.

That includes infrastructure development for transport, energy and ICT, and structural economic transformation. The Vienna Programme of Action explicitly calls for building resilience. For those who are interested in hearing more, the UNFCCC secretariat together with my Office will organize a dedicated side event entitled “SDGs and Climate change: Challenges and Opportunities for landlocked developing countries”, on Thursday 13 December during the lunch period.

Let me turn to the Small Island Developing States, eight of which incidentally are also LDCs. The NAP process is fundamental for SIDS and you all, I am sure, have seen the documentaries on rising sea levels, impact of hurricanes and we all recall Fiji hosting our last year’s COP.

My Office has a longstanding engagement with the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action back from the 1990s, the Mauritius Strategy and the SAMOA Pathway. In all of them, adaptation plays a central role.

OHRLLS is active in a variety of other ways on adaptation. We are pushing the issue in the UN’s work on disaster risk reduction, at the Oceans Conference in June last year, and with the World Bank to identify and operationalize metrics of vulnerability.

My Office is co-organizing with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs the ongoing Mid-Term Review of the SAMOA Pathway. This review process is contributing to building momentum for further climate action, including on NAPs.

At the last- incidentally in a series of SIDS preparatory meetings, - which we just held in Samoa , the “Apia Outcome” was adopted.

The “Apia Outcome “is clear in noting the gaps in implementation, and calls for accelerated action at the national, regional and interregional level on climate change, disaster risk reduction and resilience building.

Simply put - time is not on our side and time for action is NOW.

The discussion will continue next year in New York, and will culminate in a High- level meeting to review progress made on SAMOA during the high-level week of the General Assembly.

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen, colleagues and friends

Beyond any doubt, NAPs play a critical role in developing a systematic approach for countries to integrate climate change considerations into decision-making.

They are essential to a sustainable development process.

In today's ever more rapidly changing world, it is clear that they are not a luxury nor an add-on, but a prerequisite.

There is urgency to prepare these plans and implement them.

You have my pledge that I will work even harder as your NAP Champion.

Thank you.