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UN-OHRLLS

Opening Statement by

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High Representative
and
Under-Secretary- General

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

Ambassadorial Meeting of the Landlocked Developing Countries

4 March 2019 at 15:00 to 17:00hrs

Conference Room 8
Excellencies,
colleagues and friends

it is late but never too late -
Happy New Year to you all!

Thank you for your invitation to update you on the work of OHRLLS in 2019.

I am pleased to brief you on where we stand in preparing for the Comprehensive Midterm review on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action.

At the outset, I wish to thank His Excellency Ambassador Arriola for your relentlessly advocating for the special needs of the LLDCs!

It is hard work, but I know this hard work is precisely what will ensure the success of the preparatory process for the Midterm Review.

My thanks also must go to the Bureau for the excellent cooperation between the Chair and OHRLLS.

The Group of Landlocked Developing countries stood out with its active engagement and commitment across the agenda of the United Nations last year.

These are much needed efforts and you have made important progress in advancing your special needs in 2018. The landlocked developing countries were recognized in some of the key documents including the ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development follow-up; the High-level Political Forum Ministerial Declaration; and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

You continued to demonstrate your strong commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with 6 LLDCs conducting Voluntary National Reviews of implementation in 2018 and with 7 in 2017.

So, I think it is encouraging that this year, 10 LLDCs have committed to presenting their VNR.

Your commitment to the VNR process is essential.
This is YOUR tool to monitor progress, peer-learn and identify ways of accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through domestic efforts and international support measures. We have no time to waste, we already are in 2019 and so it is important we remain alert on progress but also gaps and what we need to do with urgency.

In 2019, a number of global processes will take place. These are all of great importance to the LLDCs.

I urge the group of LLDCs to actively participate and contribute to these processes, to stay fully engaged as it is about ensuring that your interests are taken onboard.

The Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation takes places from 20 to 22 March in Buenos Aires - so in just a couple weeks!

The theme of "Role of South-South cooperation and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: challenges and opportunities" is highly relevant.

I will participate and OHRLLS and China have organized a joint side event on “Leveraging South-South and Triangular Cooperation to Advance Sustainable Development in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDs” on the 21st March 2019.

The World Summit on the Information Society Forum will take place from 8 to 12 April in Geneva. I do not need to tell you about the importance of ICT for landlocked countries in overcoming the high transaction costs they face. I am participating, and OHRLLS and ITU also have jointly organised a side event on “Strengthening ICT Connectivity and Digital Inclusion on LLDCs”. In addition, we also plan to launch the Joint OHRLLS/OIM Report titled “Climate change & Migration in Vulnerable Countries, A snapshot of the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, and small island developing states”. It may be recalled that OHRLLLs & IOM jointly organized a briefing session on migration and climate change for LLDCs last year, which also inputted into the joint report.

ECOSOC’s fourth Forum on Financing for Development Follow-up will take place from 15-18 April 2019.

The high-level political forum on sustainable development under the auspices of the ECOSOC, will be held from 9 to 18 July 2019 under the theme "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality".
The Global Review of Aid for Trade will take place from 3 to 5 July 2019 at the WTO under the theme “Supporting Economic Diversification and Empowerment for Inclusive, Sustainable Development through Aid for Trade”.

There will be several high-level events taking place in September.

As you can decipher from the range of topics, this series of meetings really covers the critical ground of what we now need to look at if indeed in 2030 we want an Agenda for sustainable development that is a reality for all.

It is very important that the LLDCs Group contribute their inputs to these events to ensure that the outcomes address their special needs. It is about " voice being heard and acted on,” if I may say.

The UN SDG Summit takes place in September. The summit will assess progress achieved so far since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda some four years ago already in September 2015.

This will all be about leadership and guidance on the way forward that would help accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

The UN 2019 Climate Summit will convene under the theme ‘A Race We Can Win - A Race We Must Win ’.

I do not need to recall here the concerns of our Secretary- General, I do not need to stress how climate change is at the core of sustainability and human rights but I add my voice to saying we really must act more and faster.

The summit aims to mobilize political and economic energy at the highest levels. This we need to advance climate action, to enable implementation of many of the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achievement of the goals of the Paris Agreement.

The UN General Assembly will also hold a high-level dialogue on financing for development on 26 September 2019. This will be a key opportunity to discuss how to scale up the quality and quantity of investment for sustainable development action in order to implement the commitments the global community made in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.
We will also see the conduct of the second and third sessions of the Intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The focus is on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas that are beyond national jurisdiction. This will occur in March/April and August 2019 respectively. I encourage you to participate in these sessions.

Well, when I wishes you a happy new year, I probably should have said a happy and busy new year!

2019 will be a critical year for all of us.

Time has come to take stock of the implementation of the VPoA. This stock-taking must include a hard look at progress made, the gaps and challenges and come up with recommendations to accelerate implementation in the last 5 years now remaining to reach the VpoA goals.

We must analyze successes, failures, look at policies, the resources and the political engagement needed to transition to a new phase of action, partnerships and implementation.

Implementation of the VPoA is intricately linked to Agenda 2030 - implementation of the VPoA is at the core of ending poverty, reducing inequalities, facilitating structural economic transformation and transition toward more inclusive and sustainable economies.

So, where are we in the preparatory process for the Midterm Review.

The General Assembly resolution 73/243 adopted last December decided that the midterm review of the VPoA would be held in early December 2019 for a duration of 2 days in New York. The President of the General Assembly will be the Chair.

The President of the General Assembly appointed H.E. Mr. Jan Kickert, Permanent Representative of Austria to the UN and H.E. Doma Tshering, Permanent Representative of Bhutan as co-facilitators for the outcome document.

We are now preparing the regional review meetings.
The Euro-Asia regional meeting successfully took place on 11-12 February 2019 at ESCAP headquarters in Bangkok. It adopted an outcome document that presents an assessment of the implementation of the Vienna Programme in the region during the first five years and provides proposals for the next five years.

The Africa regional review meeting will be held on 18 and 19 March 2019 in Marrakesh, Morocco. It takes place back to back with ECA’s Conference of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.

The Latin America regional meeting will be held in Paraguay in June.

The regional meetings are important as they provide for important regional perspectives and proposals on how to accelerate the implementation of the VPoA.

It is very important to ensure consideration and inclusion of regional outcomes in the global preparatory process and its outcome. There is no one-size-fits all solution.

In our last meeting there was a proposal for the Group to establish a core group of negotiators at expert level. The purpose is to work together and support each other throughout the negotiations of the outcome document of the Midterm Review. This will strengthen the voice of the LLDCs in the negotiation and it will also be important for continuity in other negotiations.

I am glad that this has been accomplished. Some were already able to participate in the regional review meeting in Bangkok. The co-facilitators also attended the regional review meetings to observe and bring the regional dimensions into the global process.

Let me now turn to national level preparations.

To date, we received national reports on the implementation of the VPoA from 15 LLDCs.

Once again, I must urge countries to submit national reports on the implementation of the VPoA in time for the findings to feed into the substantive preparations of the outcome document of the Midterm Review.

In collaboration with partners, we are also planning to organize additional preconference thematic events.
They include: an Expert Group Meeting on Trade facilitation measures in landlocked developing countries; an event on Strengthening ICT Connectivity and digital inclusion in LLDCs; Expert Group Meeting on Promoting science, technology, innovation and policies for achieving structural economic transformation and sustainable development in LLDCs; and an event on Promoting Euro-Asian Transport and Trade Corridors.

We also plan to organize a dedicated retreat bringing together LLDCs, transit countries, development partners and UN system partners and other international organizations to consult on the Midterm Review.

The retreat is scheduled to take place in April 2019.

Also, OHRLLS will prepare the draft report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for the 74th session General Assembly. The report will reflect inputs from the LLDCs’ national reports, reports of the regional review meetings and inputs from relevant organizations.

OHRLLS will organize a joint preconference event with the World Bank Group to discuss priorities of the LLDCs.

OHRLLS will also organize interagency meetings this year to coordinate the preparations for the Midterm Review. The first interagency meeting for 2019 will be held on the 10th April in Geneva.

A busy year, indeed!

Together, we have an ambitious agenda to achieve. Your support will be crucial every step of the way.

Inclosing my briefing, I wish to assure you of my office’s commitment to the success of the midterm review of the VPoA and I will continue to work closely with the Chair in this process.

I thank you.