Statement
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Under Secretary-General and High Representative

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

at the Ambassadorial level meeting of LDCs

Room No. 8
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New York
HE Ambassador Perks Ligoya, Chair of the global coordination bureau of LDCs, Distinguished Vice-Chairs of the Coordination Bureau, Permanent Representatives of Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Senegal, Solomon Islands and Yemen), Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I take this opportunity to express my warm gratitude to the Chair of LDCs for convening this meeting. Since this is our first meeting in 2019, let me extend to you all a happy New Year!

The year 2018 was quite eventful in the UN. Among others, the ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development (FFD), the High-level Political Forum (HLPF), Global Compact on Migration, UNDS repositioning and the management reform kept the delegates extremely busy and overwhelmed. I would like to commend the former Chair Bangladesh and the current Chair Malawi as well as other members of bureau, who did an excellent job in promoting the interest of LDCs in various forums.

Let me share with you some recent activities that my Office has been engaged with.

As you are aware the Technology Bank for LDCs is now fully operational. On 4 December 2018, our Director Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox formally handed over the leadership to the new Managing Director Mr. Joshua Setipa. In the first year of operations supported by my Office, the Technology Bank is carrying out capacity building in digital access to research in 12 LDCs and STI/Technology Needs Assessment in 5 LDCs. The initial phase of the functioning of the Bank remains challenging. My Office will continue to support the Bank as far as possible, including with the preparation of the 2019 work programme. It is critical that LDCs continue to keep the Technology Bank high on the agenda of intergovernmental discussions, with a view to promoting further mobilization of resources.

There has been considerable progress in the area of graduation. It is encouraging that 12 of the current LDCs have already fulfilled the criteria for graduation at least once. The ECOSOC and the General Assembly have already taken decisions on the graduation of Bhutan, Solomon Islands and Sao Tome and Principe. We have been advocating for continued and coordinated support to graduating and graduated countries to ensure that the graduation is sustainable and irreversible.

My office has set up an Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) on graduation to enhance support for graduation and create related incentives. The IATF has agreed to send a joint mission to one of the graduating countries to provide coordinated support in preparation of its smooth transition strategies. As recommended by the Bureau of LDCs, we will invite some member States to the next meeting of the IATF.

Last year, my Office organized a consultative meeting of LDCs and the Friends of LDCs on Accelerating Progress Towards Graduation from the LDC Category, and progress towards access to broadband and sustainable energy, in Glen Cove. The event provided a platform to discuss progress towards graduation from the LDC category and the importance of graduation support.

We convened a two-day meeting of LDC national focal points with a number of UN agencies, on the sidelines of the HLPF 2018. It provided an opportunity for LDCs to learn from each other’s best practices and identify a range of effective policy options to accelerate
implementation of the IPoA. The 2018 meeting also addressed statistical constraints of LDCs in monitoring the implementation of the IPoA and support for capacity building. The meeting also took stock of progress on graduation and exchanged views on enhanced support to graduating and graduated LDCs.

My Office is actively engaged in promoting access to sustainable energy in LDCs. We prepared a policy brief on achieving SDG7 in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS. The Office actively participated in the work of SDG7 Technical Advisory Group and UN Energy to ensure that the concerns of LDCs are integrated into international development agenda. The Office organized together with UNCTAD a side event at the Global SDG7 Conference on Energy Access for Structural Transformation and Sustainable Development in the LDCs in Bangkok, February 2018. We also organized a competition for journalists from least developed countries on sustainable energy.

Last year, we convened the annual LDC Ministerial Breakfast meeting in Washington D.C. on the margins of the World Bank/IMF Spring Meetings. The meeting focused on maximizing finance for development in LDCs on sustainable energy. The Deputy Secretary and Senior Officials from the WB attended the meeting. This year, the breakfast meeting will be held on 13 April focusing on how IDA 19 replenishment would strengthen resilience to shocks in LDCS. We will share with you the details shortly once they are finalized.

OHRLLS is supporting two main initiatives on investment promotion and support for LDCs. The Office designed the Investment Support Programme in cooperation with International Development Law Organization (IDLO). This provides investment-related negotiation and dispute-settlement advisory and representation services to LDC governments and LDC companies on a “pro-bono” or reduced-fee basis. The Programme is operational and I warmly invite you to make best use of it. The Office also designed, together with UNCTAD, UNIDO, ILO, EIF and WAIPA, a Capacity Development Programme for LDC investment promotion agencies. I would request your assistance in the fund-raising effort for this program.

The GA resolution of last year recognized that the multilateral risk reduction strategies and mechanisms have proven insufficient for LDCs. The GA also underlined the importance of improving the coordination and effectiveness of resilience-building initiatives for LDCs by leveraging existing measures at national, regional and global levels to respond to various kinds of shocks and crises. We will continue to undertake further analytical work on crisis mitigation and resilience building.

As part of our continued engagement in this area, our Flagship report 2018 has focused on crisis mitigation and resilience building for the LDCs. Our report suggests that resilience building needs to be a central element of the development strategies of LDCs using an integrated approach. The report recommends to further strengthen the ex-ante and ex-post risk management strategies for LDCs. A two-page summary of the report is shared with you today. The electronic version of the full report is available in our website.

OHRLLS facilitated preparation and the launch of the Broadband Commission report “Broadband for national development in four LDCs: Cambodia, Rwanda, Senegal and Vanuatu”. The report shows how broadband, or high-speed internet, helps LDCs overcome vulnerabilities, grow economies and enhance people’s livelihoods.
I had the opportunity to attend COP 24 held in Poland in December last year. COP24 agreed on the Paris Agreement “rulebook” - or “transparency framework”. At the COP24, the Parties updated the LDCs work programme to reflect the needs of the LDCs, thereby continuing support provided on a range of issues in favour of LDCs. As of 1 January 2019, the Chair of the LDCs Group under the UNFCCC has passed from Ethiopia to Bhutan. We seek to arrange briefings on the LDC climate change agenda to the PRs of LDCs in New York.

The UN-OHRLLS and the Global Energy Interconnection Development and Cooperation Organization (GEIDCO) of China are organizing a Global Conference on “Scaling-up Energy Access and Finance in Least Developed Countries”, which will be held from 30 -31 May 2019 in Beijing, China. The invitation for this event will be shared with you shortly.

My Office is also organizing a high-level side event on the theme “Leveraging South-South and Triangular Cooperation to Advance Sustainable Development in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS” tentatively on 21 March 2018 in Buenos Aires, Argentina on the margins of the BAPA+40. We will share with you the details including invitation in due course.

Excellencies,

I would now turn to the Fifth UN Conference on LDCs.

The Second Committee resolution of last year contained very important decisions about the Fifth UN Conference on LDCs. Some key features of the Conference, as decided in the resolution, are as follows:

(i) The Conference will be held for five days in 2021;
(ii) There will be two Preparatory Committee Meetings for a duration of five days each in 2020/2021
(iii) Two regional review meetings will be held for a duration of 3 days each
(iv) There will be national level preparations and the UN System is encouraged to provide necessary support and to contribute actively to the preparatory process and the Conference itself;
(v) Broad terms of reference of the Conference, which include comprehensive appraisal of the implementation of the IPoA; addressing special needs of LDCs; new and emerging challenges; and mobilizing additional international support measures and action, to formulate and adopt a renewed partnership between the LDCs and their development partners;
(vi) OHRLLS has been designated as the focal point for the preparations of the Conference

We are working on developing concrete roadmap for the LDC-V and its preparatory process. We have shared with you an initial draft for your kind review and consideration.

We organized an inter-agency consultative group (IACG) meeting attended by almost all the UN Development System (UNDS) entities, WB group, OECD-DAC and the regional commissions. Towards the preparation for the Fifth United Nations Conference on the LDC, the IACG agreed to undertake coordinated preparations for successful organization of the conference, including substantive publications from the UN agencies to inform the preparations of the next LDC programme. Next IACG meeting will have concrete discussions on the preparatory process of the LDC-V.
This year, we need to start preparation at the national level in each LDC. National level review of the implementation of the IPoA will be critical to get information from the ground on the lessons learned, share best practices, challenges encountered in terms of the implementation of the IPoA as well as the recommendations on the way forward to achieve 2030 Agenda and sustainable graduation in LDCs. My Office will shortly prepare guidelines/template of the national reports on the implementation of the IPoA. We will seek your strong support in finalizing evidence-based national reports in each LDC in a timely manner.

Identifying a generous host country of the LDC-V is vitally important for smooth organization of the Conference. We are reaching out to potential host countries, but yet to receive any concrete response. My Office will send letter to member Sates inviting them to express their interest in hosting LDC-V. In a bureau meeting of LDCs held yesterday, we agreed to approach potential host country or countries collectively to expedite the finalization of the host country.

Before I conclude I would like to draw your kind attention to the global partnerships for LDCs. I am concerned that while LDCs are in need of scaled up international support, external assistance going to LDCs, continues to decline since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda.

My Office is undertaking rigorous advocacy works with the donor countries and the countries of the emerging South to insist them to reverse the decline trend in their support to LDCs and to fulfil their commitments in the IPoA on DFQF market access, ODA, debt relief, FDI, capacity building and technology transfer. We are also engaged with the regional commissions, the OECD-DAC and the WB Groups to promote the issues of LDCs in these forums. I would request LDCs to speak-up and raise their voices in all relevant forums. We stand ready to extend all necessary support that you may need in this endeavor.

Excellencies,

The year 2019 is going to be packed with important conferences and summits. We need to undertake strong preparations for these events.

As you have seen, a draft “strategic priorities of LDCs for 2019-2021” has been shared with you. My Office worked closely with the Chair in putting together these strategic priorities. It has identified five strategic priorities and 12 specific activities to realize them. The document is quite comprehensive and will serve as an important guideline for the group and my Office in carrying out our activities in next three years. The draft also contains a list of upcoming events, that are especially important for LDCs. Your thorough examination and substantive contributions will further strengthen the document. My office stands ready to extend all necessary support in implementing this strategic paper.

I thank you all.