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Remarks

by

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Under-Secretary-General

High Representative

for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries

and Small Island Developing States

at a side event on

“Regionalisation and South-South Cooperation: Sharing best practices and nurturing synergies across regions”

Tuesday, 19 March 2019, 16:35-17:50

Sala de Prensa, Palacio San Martin

Buenos Aires
HE Mr Isarabhakdi, Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand,
Mr Jorge Chedick, Envoy of the Secretary General for South South Cooperation &
Director of UN Office of South South Cooperation,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for inviting me to attend this meaningful side event.

Since the adoption of BAPA 40 years ago, South-South cooperation has increased both in scale and scope along with the multiplication of actors.

Of these actors are regional organizations, from ECOWAS in West Africa to SAARC in South Asia, from the Pacific Island Development Forum and to CARICOM in the Caribbean. These organizations have indeed become active players in fostering South-South cooperation.

In the Asia-Pacific region, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is standing at the forefront of South-South cooperation through initiatives to accelerate regional integration, the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, ASEAN Economic Community, ASEAN Smart City Network, to name a few.

The dynamism and vibrance of ASEAN also speak volume about the mutually reinforcing feature of regional cooperation and South-South cooperation.

The growing contribution of regional organizations is recognized in outcome document of the Conference, which calls for the enhanced role of these organizations in South-South cooperation.

I am pleased that this event intends to take up the conversation on regionalization and South-South cooperation a step further and discuss how to nurture synergies across regional organizations in support of sustainable development.

As the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States-in short the three groups of most vulnerable countries-let me share with you a few thoughts anchored in the experiences of these 91 countries.

I have seen two avenues through which collaboration and partnerships among regional organizations have resulted or could result in significant outcomes. One is the implementation of continental wide initiatives and second is opportunities for peer-learning and exchange of best practices.

First is the continental wide initiatives. One example is in the area of transport infrastructure. African regional organizations are heavily involved in continental highway projects. Working together, these organizations lead the development and maintenance of portions of the continental network that run through their respective geographic delineations. They also come together in bridging the missing road links in an attempt to build trans-African road corridors, which are essential for intra-African trade.
On trade, we have also seen how the Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA), which is an agreement between three regional organizations in Africa, was a precursor of the African Continental Free Trade Area, which was established in May 2018.

Second, there is much that regional organizations could learn from one another, ranging from addressing perennial issues pertaining to their funding models to ways to address regional priorities.

In this context, I note some interesting experiences in regional organizations that least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states belong to. Consider the funding model of ECOWAS in West Africa, which rests mostly on community levies. The effective administration of these levies has put ECOWAS on sound financial ground. Similar experience is now being explored at the continental level in the context of the funding of the African Union. And there is more that other regional organizations can learn from this experience.

From my own personal experience as a Pacific Islander, having worked in a regional organization covering twenty two small island developing states, regional support is critical where there are diseconomies of scale with small population, limited HR, finances and therefore benefitting from pooling of resources at a regional level to provide services at very specialized level to member states.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

BAPA+40 is taking place four years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. At this conjecture, the challenge before developing countries, in particular those with the least capacities such as LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, is to forge partnerships to achieve sustainable development.

BAPA+40 and this event provide us with the opportunity to think and work together in guiding the regional organizations in their efforts to share best practices and nurture synergies in advancing global agendas to which all countries subscribe to, including the 2030 Agenda and the programmes of actions for the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states.

Let seize this opportunity.

I look forward to the productive interaction and thank you for your kind attention.