



**Welcoming remarks by**

**Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa**

**High Representative**

**and**

**Under-Secretary-General**

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

**working dinner of the**

**Ambassadorial Retreat on the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review on  
the Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for the Decade 2014–  
2024**

**HNA Palisades Premier Conference Center, Palisades, New York**

**7-8 May 2019**

HE Ms Inga Rhonda King, President of ECOSOC and Permanent Representative of St Vincent and Grenadines,

HE Mr Julio Cesar Arriola Ramirez, Permanent Representative of Paraguay to the UN, Chair of the LLDC Group & members of his Bureau;

Our Co Facilitators for the MTR, HE M Doma Tshering, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Bhutan to the UN

HE Mr Jan Kickert, Permanent Representative of Austria to the UN

Ms Toni Shae Freketon, Senior Adviser, Office of the President of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Session of the UNGA

Ms Ahunna Eziakonwa, Assistant Administrator, Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa, UNDP,

Your

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Colleagues

Friends

A very warm welcome to you all!

I am encouraged to see you all here taking the time and bringing the willingness for us all together to engage in forward looking, constructive discussions. We meet at a strategic moment - the high-level comprehensive midterm review of the Programme takes place this year.

The review is our key opportunity to assess progress in meeting the commitments member states made when they adopted the Vienna Programme of Action.

The Vienna Programme truly was and remains a major milestone.

The preparatory process we are now in was designed to be very participatory and has been in full swing for some time.

As we now come closer to the midterm review itself, the onus is on us to identify practical, practicable and forward-looking ways and means to accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the SDGs.

Five years left is not much - especially not in our fast evolving world !

The implementation of the Vienna Programme is all about bringing real tangible impact, about including more than 500 million people in the landlocked developing countries. That is almost 7% of the world's population, occupying around 12% of total world land area.

So, again I very much hope that our retreat allows for a rich exchange of ideas and action proposals.

Tomorrow, we will have in-depth discussions in the various sessions.

Almost five years into the implementation of the Vienna Programme Action there is hope that "it can be done" when we look at some of the progress that has been achieved.

The past five years were full of developments for the LLDCs and, I think we all agree, for the entire international community.

However, challenges remain that we must address with urgency.

Over the course of tomorrow, we have ample opportunities to discuss what has been achieved and what has not been achieved and why that is so.

We will talk about the pressing challenges, the lessons learned and best practices.

Ultimately, let us try to identify how those best practices and lessons learned can feed into the next five critical years of the Vienna Programme.

We will focus on identifying the actions needed to accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Programme. Those will be the key inputs into the next stage of the preparatory process. That stage concerns the deliberations on the outcome document of the midterm review.

I am delighted that the co-facilitators for this process are here with us.

We also have with us a number of experts from the UN system and other international organizations. They will brief you tomorrow on the progress in the implementation of the different areas of the Vienna Programme, the remaining challenges and where the opportunities lie.

The aim is that by the end of our meeting tomorrow, we will have a clearer idea of the outstanding areas for action and a corresponding action plan that the LLDCs, transit countries, development partners, as well as the broader international community can have as the guide to focus work ahead. Focus will be essential in order to accelerate implementation of the Programme and achieving the sustainable development goals contained in Agenda 2030.

Once more, it is my sincere hope that we will have deep, frank and productive discussions. The outcome of this retreat will set the tone for the draft outcome document of the midterm review.

And now enjoy the dinner and informal exchanges. Let us rest tonight and be ready to engage in the discussions tomorrow.

Thank you very much.