Statement

by

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High Representative
and
Under-Secretary-General

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

Ambassadorial level meeting of LDCs

3:00-6:00
9 May 2019

Conference Room 12
New York
Mr. Chair
Your Excellency Ms. Sheila Carey, Permanent Representative of Bahamas
Your Excellency Mr. Olof Skoog, Permanent Representative of Sweden
Excellencies
dear colleagues and friends

first, let me thank the Chair of the global coordination bureau of LDCs, Ambassador Ligoya for convening this timely meeting.

Thank you also to you the co-facilitators for the political declaration of the High-level Political Forum.

I appreciated our exchanges earlier on and your giving me the opportunity to once more highlight the complex challenges and vulnerabilities that LDCs face in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Globally, the positive trends in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda are encouraging. Yet, the pace of progress is not sufficient and considerable inter-country variations in implementation rates must be noted.

Generally, growth rates are accelerating in LDCs.

But these rates remain below those that the group experienced in the past decade and far below the SDG target of at least 7 per cent.

LDCs are especially lagging behind in the areas of poverty and hunger eradication, access to public health, infrastructure development, providing quality education, access to modern energy, and the share of manufacturing in GDP.

The premise was that structural transformation will be a key growth driver but that premise is not taking hold.

All this is compounded by LDCs limited institutional and financial capacity to effectively monitor and implement the SDGs.

As I have stated many times before, LDCs are highly vulnerable to endogenous and especially external economic and environment shocks.

Climate change is a serious challenge for all. The impacts of climate change impact almost every facet of daily life.

It thus is of great concern that progress in the implementation of the Paris Agreement, especially replenishing the Green Climate Fund is very limited.
We all have heard Secretary-General Guterres warning us repeatedly that the world is “losing the race” against climate change. Bolder, faster action from governments is needed now if we are ever to even get a chance to arrest runaway warming.

A further major concern is that since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, despite strong promises from the international community, global partnership is conspicuously dwindling. Yet, partnering is key to the LDCs.

ODA continues to decline. It declined by 3 per cent in 2018. We are far away from the targets set in our shared 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

External debt has again reached crises level for many of LDCs. FDI, export earnings and remittances are also declining. These trends need to be reversed and urgently so if what we signed off on as a global community in Agenda 2030 is to become reality.

Many studies underpin that the most vulnerable countries, especially LDCs, are the battleground where SDGs will be won or lost and the rural areas in the LDCs are the front-line in the battle.

Agenda 2030 sets a goal of leaving no one behind and if we do not pay special attention to LDCs now we may put this promise into serious jeopardy and lose the trust and hope people place in us.

Under the most experienced stewardship of Ambassador Sheila and Ambassador Olof, I am though very confident that the interest of LDCs and their peoples are in highly experienced and safe hands.
Part-II updates on the recent developments

Mr. Chair
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am sure we all by now know how intense this year is for the delegates in New York. A number of events are taking place on issues related to the follow-up of the 2030 Agenda, Addis Ababa Action Agenda and Paris Agreement and global compact on migration. All these events are vitally important for LDCs.

It also is an intense year for OHRLLS. We are more than ever engaged in substantive, advocacy, resource mobilization and related activities covering the programmes of action for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

This year is also a strategic year for OHRLLS.

We are holding the mid-term review of the programmes of action for the SIDS and LLDCs as well as preparations for the Fifth UN Conference on LDCs.

The preparation for the LDC-V is one of our top priorities in our agenda.

After receiving the broader mandates for the Conference by the General Assembly last year, we started reaching out to a number of potential countries, including the Group of Friends of LDCs, requesting them to indicate if any country is considering to host the LDC-V.

I also met with a number of them.

While countries are examining the possibility of hosting the LDC-V, I wish to inform you that the Government of the State of Qatar has offered to host the Conference.

I have met with the Permanent Representative of Qatar and shared procedural aspects required of a host country for the conference.

I informed that although my responsibility is to advocate for and identify a potential host country, it is up to you Excellencies and to the broader Membership of the UN to consider and endorse the offer.

I understand that the offer of Qatar is being considered by LDCs. Some other countries may also be interested to host the LDC-V. It is important to finalize the
host country of the Conference as early as possible, so that we all can focus on the substantive preparations of the Conference.

Generally, preparations for the LDC-V are moving well.

We already developed a timeframe for various events leading up to the Conference. We have distributed a copy of that.

We developed a template for the national level review of the implementation of the IPoA in each LDC.

I have contacted all LDCs to finalize their national reviews and send us the findings and recommendations by 30 November 2019.

I have also written, jointly with ASG Robert Piper of the UN Development Coordination Office (DOCO), to all the RCs with a request to support the National Focal Points in LDCs to ensure that the preparation of the national reports is done on time.

We will prepare synthesis reports for the national reviews for the Asia-Pacific and the African regions. This which constitute an important input to the draft outcome of the LDC-V.

We also work to mobilize resources for the preparatory works of the Conference.

We prepared the corresponding funding proposals and shared these with potential donor countries.

I met with them personally to seek their support. Some donors have provided positive indications, but we are still waiting to receive final commitments.

We collaborate with the Regional Commissions of Africa (ECA) and Asia (ESCAP) to organize regional review meetings in preparation of the LDC-V.

The ECA meeting, has already been decided, to hold the regional review meeting for the African region in the early part of 2020.

ESCAP is expected to take a similar decision for the Asia/Pacific region at its 75th Session, which is held by the end of this month.

We have mobilized the entire United Nations System in support of LDC-V.
Two rounds the inter-agency meetings on the preparations of the Conference were held. Agencies, funds and programmes have shown keen interest in organizing preconference events, side events and thematic studies.

It goes without saying that we will be guided by and work with the member States to host the preconference events on various themes that are vitally important for LDCs.

Allow me to now briefly highlight some of our recent activities.

We organized, in partnerships with some other organizations and member States, a side-event on “Leveraging South-South and Triangular Cooperation to Advance Sustainable Development in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS” on the margins of the BAPA+40.

It was good to witness the considerable attention the event drew among the participants. We now have a set of recommendations on how to harness South-South cooperation for the effective implementation of programmes of action for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

We took stock of best practices and lessons learned. We identified new areas for South-South and triangular cooperation to advance SDGs in the vulnerable groups of countries.

OHRLLS is committed to following up on this meeting as part of a big push for partnerships - as I said so many times, making reality what we promise in Agenda 2030 can only happen through partnering!

It is a key concern of mine to build effective multi-stakeholder partnerships including enhancing South-South cooperation for the benefit of the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

Our Office, jointly with the World Bank Group, organized a breakfast meeting for LDC Ministers of Finance, and development partners on the margins of the World Bank/IMF Spring Meetings on 13 April 2019.

The event focused on strengthening resilience to debt vulnerability in the LDCs. As I said earlier, we need to be concerned by again rising debt levels!

The meeting recommends that the debt sustainability framework for the LDCs should systematically take into account their structural constraints and longer-term investment requirements for the implementation of the SDGs.
The meeting further recommended the following:

- Consider new forms of debt relief measures for the LDCs.
- ODA and other innovative, sustainable forms of concessional finance and debt-management including of technical assistance would support the ability of LDCs to retain and best enlarge fiscal space to meet their development needs.
- Increase debt transparency
- Develop local capital markets
- Ensure global coordination and monitoring of debt.

Activities related to the Technology Bank are moving.

Recently, we had a meeting of the Governing Council of the Bank in Gebze, Turkey, and the Council has finalized the programme of work and budget for 2019.

In view of the new management, the work plan for 2019 is a transitional one.

For the time being, OHRLLS will continue both the administrative and substantive support.

At the next Council meeting, tentatively scheduled for November 2019, a more ambitious budget and programme of work will be discussed. In the interim, the Bank will focus on the critical issue of resource mobilization and expansion of its existing activities.

The Inter-Agency Task Force on graduation, established by OHRLLS, has met regularly.

The Task Force decided to extend enhanced support for graduation and agreed to send a joint mission to two of the graduating countries this year, to extend coordinated support in preparation of its smooth transition strategies.

There are demands for such joint missions by other countries. This support will be delivered in phases.

The Office has been undertaking a wide range of work on various themes. We will continue our stream of analytical work on various thematic areas.

Our last flagship report on the State of LDCs focused on resilience building of LDCs. Copies of the report are made available in the room.
Advocacy is key and we are organizing various meetings and side events to build awareness and mobilize global support for the LDCs.

A meeting will take place in Beijing from 30-31 May on the theme “Scaling-up Energy Access and Finance in LDCs”. We will discuss concrete measures to accelerate energy access and enhance financing for sustainable and modern energy in LDCs in line with the targets of SDG7.

Excellencies,

as I said, this is a very active year!

I wish to express my appreciation to Malawi for your pro-active role and also to other members of the Group in the discussions and negotiations we all are engaged in.

It is good that the recently adopted outcome of the ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development captures a number of priorities of LDCs.

The Group is also active in the processes related to climate change. To me, both issues are intrinsically linked and so I appreciate that the Group has finalized its position on climate change.

It is so important to provide a common, strong message to all climate change related processes.

Last but not least, you have all my assurances that OHRLLS stands ready to provide all necessary support to the Chair.

I thank you.