United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States

Statement by

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

luncheon meeting on
Graduation, International Support Measures and
Leveraging Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals

16 April 2019, Tuesday 13:15-14:45pm
Riverview Room, Millennium Hilton Hotel New York
at One UN Plaza, Manhattan, NY
Excellencies
Secretary General Kituyi, dear colleagues and friends from the UN system
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are here together around an issue of strategic importance! Thank you to the Permanent mission
of Bangladesh to once more spearhead this meeting and pushing us to continue to be active.

In recent years, a growing number of countries are now meeting graduation thresholds. Our glass
indeed is becoming half full.

Twelve countries are now at different phases of graduation.

I have said it over and over since I took office, yes this is good news but we MUST pay attention
to ensure the sustainability of this very encouraging trend we see.

Graduation does not mean "END - all is done " no, it means having reached considerable levels
of development and resilience. Graduation represents an overall strength of the economy and
stability in economic progress.

Graduation means we have a solid platform to preserve and build from.

And let us not forget, nothing stands still and challenges for all countries only seem to get more
intricate, complex and ever faster in their happening!

The intricate sustainable development challenges that the country faces as an LDC indeed does
not just disappear overnight or because we say graduation has happened.

Most of the graduating and graduated countries continue to face considerable domestic imbalances
in levels of development, high levels of poverty as well as economic and environmental vulnerabilities.

Yet, the recently graduated countries have experienced reductions of the share of grants in total
official assistance flows and lost access to LDC-specific concessional funding sources.

With this, many LDCs now actually apprehend graduation because it may negatively affect
development financing and prospects.

Countries are calling for continued international support after graduation for defined periods of
time to consolidate and build on gains made.

Some provisions to continue support to LDC graduated countries exist. These exist for a period of
three to five years, namely the Everything but Arms (EBA) initiative of the EU, support to actively
engage in the work of the UNGA, access to the Enhanced Integrated Framework, access to NAPA
funding and I add capacity building support from the technology bank for LDCs.

But is this sufficient and targeted enough?
I table before you a couple of thoughts on support measures that could be considered for LDCs:

i. Technical support and advice to carry out more in-depth analysis of the potential impacts of graduation and identification of additional support to address the challenges of graduation;

ii. Dedicated capacity-building support to enhance access to new sources of financing, from domestic and international resources;

iii. Facilitating increased access to other means of financing, including private finance, green bond financing and GDP-indexed bonds;

iv. Continuation of capacity building support and flexibility under the WTO;

v. Continued access to concessional funding for climate change mitigation and adaptation - this is very important given the high and often disproportionate vulnerability of the countries to the impacts of climate change

AND

vi. Increasing the flow of FDI through various investment support measures.

I see this as a package deal toward sustainability of gains made and as an insurance against the risk of falling back into the category of LDCs. But these also would be strong measures to support the achievement of the SDGs by 2030.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we all know, the UN system has an important role in supporting LDCs to prepare their graduation and smooth transition strategies.

The QCPR resolution of 2016 requests the United Nations development system to provide assistance to graduating countries in both the formulation and implementation of their national transition strategies. It also requests to consider country-specific support for graduated countries for a fixed period of time and in a predictable manner.

Within the parameters of this resolution adopted by member states and to contribute to coordinated UN system support to graduating and graduated countries, OHRLLS established an Inter-Agency Task Force on LDC Graduation and Smooth Transition in late 2017.

The Task Force has focused its work on supporting information exchange on activities related to graduation, raising awareness and, most importantly, on providing a strengthened, coordinated delivery of UN support to graduating countries.

At the request of countries, we are planning to send a joint UN mission to some graduating countries.

The joint mission outcome should provide us all with
(i) in-depth knowledge of the process and policy advice, (ii) facilitate learning from experiences of other graduating or graduated countries and (iii) effectively assist countries’ requests for post-graduation support.

Yes, graduation is a milestone achievement for LDCs but also for the international community at large in our shared strive for peace, security and leaving no one behind.

It now is our shared, our collective responsibility to ensure not to squander hard won gains.

Loss of momentum is not an option.

We therefore urge the international community to continue their support to graduating and graduated countries to sustain their development progress keeping in mind that this also will strongly support achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

Thank you.