UNOHRLLS

Remarks
by
Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu
High Representative and Under-Secretary-General
Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries
and Small Island Developing States

Economic and Social Council
Operational Activities for Development Segment
ECOSOC Chamber
New York, 21 May to 23 May 2019

Session VI
Multi-country office review
Excellencies,
Deputy-Secretary General, dear Ms. Amina Mohamed,
Ladies and gentlemen,
friends
Good Afternoon first!

For me, it is very important to be here with you today at this session on the Multi-Country office review.

No, not just because I am from a SIDS region that has longstanding experience in this regard.

But indeed, this is an especially critical exercise for the SIDS.

Let the figures do the talk: 38 of the 41 countries served by multi-country offices are SIDS.

As our Secretary-General just highlighted during his very recent mission to the Pacific, the SIDS face very complex, very unique challenges and really are where climate change is a make or break situation.

So, the challenge for the MCOs is their ability to enhance and tailor support to all countries served. There are shared issues of course but there is no one size fits all solutions.

As our Deputy Secretary General keeps stressing, “we are at a critical juncture in the implementation of the SDGs”.

That fully applies to the SIDS where we are also truly in the midst of the mid-term-review of the SAMOA Pathway.

We must prioritize support to SIDS in line with their needs, capacities and national priorities to ensure no-one is left behind.

Allow me to say a word on capacity - I think all of us were encouraged to hear our Secretary General stress that we must simplify, we must expedite access to and implementation of support available to SIDS who are threatened in their very existence by climate change. I have seen it done, it can be done and now it must be done.
I was co-chairing the Senior-Level Steering Committee with Her Excellency Lois Young, the Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and the Permanent Representative of Belize. This senior level steering committee, was composed of member states representatives from the Pacific, the Caribbean, the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea (AIMS) region and El Salvador.

The purpose is to provide overall strategic guidance over the course of the review, to serve as a sounding board on findings and recommendations, assurance that the review approach and methodology is robust and impartial, and the framing and content relevant to and addresses the inputs and interest of the key stakeholders, and keep the membership informed.

The Secretary-General and our Deputy Secretary General have been relentless in making every effort to ensure that the review is guided by Member States and the mandates you member states gave us in the QCPR and the General Assembly resolution on the reform of the UN development system.

There is just one way forward - full consultations and discussions with all governments involved.

Excellencies,

The Secretary-General's Report reflects the calls of SIDS that we must do more, faster and better to support countries served by Multi-Country Offices.

SIDS have consistently and for many years voiced the need for a stronger advocate in the international global arena to advance their needs and priorities.

I assure you that you can count on us and me.

I once more reaffirm my commitment to advancing the calls of small islands to be heard and supported as they should be.

In line with the Secretary-General’s recommendation in his report, I will present at the high-level review of progress on the SAMOA Pathway in September 2019 a clear and detailed roadmap to increase OHRLLS' capacities in support of SIDS.

I am listening carefully to you and I am looking carefully at where outreach and support can best be deployed and scaled-up.
There can only be one goal and that is advance results on the ground for SIDS, working closely with governments, I will also give due consideration to where resource gaps must be bridged to ensure UN coherence in addressing the needs of SIDS.

Excellencies,

My plea to you is please do make the best of this effort to improve the MCOs.

Advancing is premised on dialogue and I hope for constructive dialogue to seize this landmark opportunity for SIDS.

Our SG has been very strong, I even say very passionate in his own plea for the SIDS and so we must ensure that SIDS issues are not lost among the many priorities the system is called on to respond to.

The review of MCOs and of the SAMOA Pathway this year are opportunities that we simply cannot afford to miss.

Thank you.