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**United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least
Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small
Island Developing States
(UN-OHRLLS)**

Statement by

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

**at the Closing of the Joint United Nations Workshop on the
Graduation of Solomon Islands from the Category of the LDCs**

**18 October 2019
Heritage Hotel
Honiara, Solomon Islands**

Excellency, Dr. Jimmy Rodgers, Secretary to the Prime Minister,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by expressing our most sincere gratitude to the people and the government of Solomon Islands for their hospitality. Let me also recognize the excellent engagement in all the discussions, the detailed contributions, ideas and perspectives shared by the Members of the Government and representatives from various parts of Solomon society.

We sincerely hope that through this two-day workshop the UN Inter-Agency Task Force team has managed to provide a clear, factual and accurate description of the impacts that the graduation of Solomon Islands from the UN List of Least Developed Countries will have on the country.

I can assure you that we have been listening very carefully to your concerns and to your ideas about your vision for the future of this country. I am sincerely impressed by the level and quality of the interventions and we leave the country with a much better understanding of its situation, challenges and opportunities. I would also like to commend the government for the specific actions that have already been undertaken in various areas in preparation of graduation.

In fact, the needs and priorities for sustainable development of Solomon Islands expressed by all of you – panelists and participants - are loud and clear.

A summary report of discussions held in each of the sessions is being prepared and will be finalized and shared with all participants. Also, a dedicated webpage is being created and the summary report and all presentations will be uploaded there.

This first workshop is only a starting point. Now we have to think, all together, about the future, how all stakeholders that participated in this workshop can work together and how the UN Inter-Agency Task Force can work in a coordinated and effective manner to assist the Government in turning its vision into reality.

In my capacity as the Chair of the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on LDC Graduation, I would like to share with you the key elements that should inform our joint way forward – our common roadmap.

Establish a “consultative mechanism” to set up a concrete plan towards and beyond graduation

- To bring together the main development and trading partners
- To facilitate the preparation of the transition strategy
- To identify the necessary actions
- To integrate the strategy with NDS and the UN Pacific Strategy

In this respect, the following steps could be further pursued building on what has already been initiated:

- Establish an LDC transition unit
- Endorse an institutional structure for preparations for graduation
- Identify funding for the consultative mechanism
- Map existing consultation mechanisms with requirements for smooth transition strategy
- Reach out to the local and provincial levels
- Learn from peer countries more advanced in the graduation process
- Establish some mechanism to track progress in implementing the roadmap

It might also be useful to conduct further in-depth analysis of potential impacts of graduation, building on DESA's impact assessment and studies undertaken by the ComSec

- To identify areas and sectors where continued or additional support is needed
- To assess development financing needs
- To prioritize negotiation areas

In the time remaining until actual graduation at the end of 2024 the existing support measures can be used to prepare for graduation.

Some ISMs will be available for an extended period of time after graduation, for example:

- EU's Everything but Arms scheme (EBA) - 3 years after graduation – end in 2027
- Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) – 5 years – end in 2029
- Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) – projects approved before graduation will be funded [capacity building to formulate bankable projects]
- Technology Bank for LDCs – 5 years – end in 2029
- UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) – 3 years + 2 years on a cost sharing basis
- UN travel support for GA sessions – 3 years – end in 2027
- IDLO pro-bono legal support – 5 years – end in 2029

It is also important to identify needs for capacity building and additional support to address the challenges related to graduation, including information gaps. From the experience of other graduating countries and the group discussions earlier today these could include:

- Prepare to compensate for the loss of international support measures, including securing resources for social sectors and people in remote areas
- Seek assistance for access to climate finance and domestic resource mobilisation
- Engage with development and trading partners for extension of ISMs or post-graduation preferential trade
- Explore new exporting opportunities with new products and services but also new markets and seek assistance of the UN and regional organisations
- Promote trade capacity building and the improve business environment to attract FDI for export competitiveness and diversification

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

All these elements are key for the successful preparation to graduation. The Task Force is committed to continue its support towards finalizing your roadmap and starting its implementation. At the same time we recognize that it will be a living document that could be updated throughout the process.

In an effort to reach out to a broader range of development partners, we also commit to present the findings and conclusions of this workshop to the group of friends of the LDCs in the UN in New York. The United Nations is ready, under your leadership, to accompany you during this journey towards graduation and beyond.

Thank you very much.