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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**

**Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox, Director, Office for the Least  
Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and  
Small Island Developing States**

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

**Thursday, 17 October 2019  
Heritage Park Hotel  
Honiara, Solomon Islands**

Excellency, Honourable Peter Agovaka, Supervising Foreign Minister of Foreign Affairs and External Trade

Dr. Sevil Huseynova, WHO Representative to Solomon Islands

Excellency, Dr. Jimmie Rodgers, Secretary to the Prime Minister  
Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you as the Chair of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Graduation. My team and I are delighted to be here in the Solomon Islands

Let me start by expressing our gratitude to the Government of Solomon Islands for your support to organize this meeting and for your strong commitment. I would also like to thank the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office, and the broader UN family in Solomon Islands for our close collaboration through this process and all of you who are here today participating in this workshop.

This is the second workshop on the graduation process and the preparations for the smooth transition from the LDC category organised by the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Graduation. The first such workshop has been organised in Sao Tome and Principe just a few weeks ago and the results of that were very positive.

Graduation from the category of the least developed countries marks an important moment for a country, its development partners and the United Nations.

Since the establishment of the Istanbul Programme of Action in support of the Least Developed Countries, graduation from the category has become an increasingly important issue in the international development agenda and especially in the Pacific. Out of the 12 countries currently in the graduation process half are small island developing states. Vanuatu will graduate in 2021 and I am grateful that we will hear about her experiences with preparations for graduation. Likewise, the countries that have already graduated are predominantly SIDS, Samoa being one who recently graduated. It is important to share information, learn from each other's experience. However, every countries experience is unique to its own circumstance.

An important component of graduation is the preparatory process for a smooth transition out of the category. For Solomon Islands this period started with the decision of the United Nations General Assembly in 2018 that the country would graduate in December 2024. This period provides an opportunity to the graduating country and its development partners to ensure that leaving the category of the Least Developed Countries does not disrupt its sustainable development process. Solomon Islands needs proactively negotiate with development and trading partners to fully counteract any emerging vulnerabilities and challenges.

The design and implementation of a smooth transition strategy that is nationally owned is important and must address the phasing out of international support measures, especially in the areas of trade and development cooperation.

However, many graduating countries remain vulnerable to internal inequalities, external shocks and climate change induced vulnerabilities and we need to focus much more on what must be done to minimize these risks. We are also well aware that Solomon Islands is a post-conflict country and is experiencing the impact of climate change with severe weather events and the risk of losing islands.

During the preparatory period, graduating countries are invited to prepare a national smooth transition strategy, with the support of the United Nations system and in cooperation with the country's bilateral, regional and multilateral development and trading partners.

It is recommended that the graduating countries establish a consultative mechanism to facilitate the preparation of a smooth transition strategy. The strategy is to be implemented only after the effective date of graduation and aims to ensure that the country's sustainable development efforts are not disrupted by the loss of LDC-specific support measures after graduation.

To provide coordinated UN system support to graduating and graduated countries, my Office coordinates the Inter-Agency Task Force on LDC Graduation and Smooth Transition, established in late 2017.

The UN Task Force has been focusing 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. This is an important part at the UN Secretary-General's reform agenda.

The UN Task Force decided, in close coordination with the Government and the Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator, to organize this meeting today and tomorrow as part of the common efforts to assist the country after the Member States of the United Nations General Assembly decided on the graduation of Solomon Islands. I am very pleased that in addition to the various UN agencies also the PIF Secretariat, the OECD and the Asian Development Bank are contributing to this joint effort.

Today's meeting is the beginning of a conversation about the future of sustainable development in Solomon Islands. It is an opportunity for the Government, the United Nations system and development partners to discuss how to best foster sustainable development and ensure that the graduation becomes an opportunity to all citizens of the country to enjoy a better and more sustainable future.

The aim of this workshop is to identify development priorities and challenges and to support the formulation of national policies and strategies to minimize the impact of loss of international support measures, harness graduation benefits and mainstream graduation into development planning.

I look forward to the perspectives and ideas that all of us will share today and tomorrow. I can assure the commitment of our office to continue supporting Solomon Islands in the future and facilitate the coordination of the UN system in supporting the graduation efforts of the country in close collaboration with the UN country team.

At the end, our common success will be measured by the impact our efforts will have on the live and livelihoods of the people of Solomon Islands.

Thank you very much for your attention.