Statement

by

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

Introducing

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011 to 2020  
(A/74/69-E/2019/12)

Seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly  
Second Committee  
Item 21 – Groups of countries in special situations

Friday, 18 October 2019, 3 p.m.  
ECOSOC Chamber
H.E. Mr. Cheikh Niang, Chair of the Second Committee,

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour of introducing to you the Secretary-General’s 2019 report on the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the least developed countries for the Decade 2011-2020.

Just one year is left to the end point of the IPoA.

A broad picture emerges on overall performance at a time where we start preparations for the Fifth UN Conference on the LDCs in 2021.

The report welcomes the progress made in a growing number of LDCs. 12 LDCs now are at various stages of their graduation process.

The General Assembly resolution of last December added Bhutan, Sao Tome and Principe and the Solomon Islands to the countries that will graduate in addition to Angola and Vanuatu.

A further seven LDCs are in the graduation pipeline. Four countries have met the graduation criteria twice.

This is encouraging but at the same time we now must give due attention to ensure that transitions are and remain smooth and do not become disruptive.

In this regard, the report notes that the OHRLLS-led Inter-agency Task Force on the Graduation of LDCs has taken some important new steps.

OHRLLS led the first-ever mission of the Inter-agency Task Force to Sao Tome and Principe this past September. Over 20 UN entities participated to provide stepped up graduation support.

And even as I speak, a second joint UN mission is taking place in the Solomon Islands.

The report reiterates once more the commitment of the UN system to continue its longstanding support and find further ways of assisting graduating LDCs to ensure smooth transitions including on financing.

The report calls on all Member States to join this effort to ensure the smooth transition of LDCs.

This represents encouraging progress overall but this progress is quite mixed.

I will just highlight a few key findings given the limited time available.
On international trade, exports have increased but the LDCs share of global exports remains far from the envisaged 2% target.

Progress on strengthening productive capacities is very mixed.

Access to modern energy for all lags. Much remains to be done to achieve access for all.

Mobile cellular subscriptions have risen. They provide a platform for various applications, including for improvements in basic health and financial inclusion.

In contrast, Internet access remains low.

Progress has undeniably been made on several critical human development indicators. Yet such key indicators as maternal and infant mortality rates remain high, too many children of primary school age are not in school.

Access to decent jobs is of great concern as the growing number of youth in LDCs will face challenges in finding decent jobs.

ODA has declined in real terms. This is a source of concern, and more development partners should strive to reach the target of at least 50% of ODA to the LDCs.

LDCs all are highly vulnerable to manifold impacts of climate change on livelihoods and too often life.

This truly risks undoing gains achieved so far.

Floods, droughts, hurricanes and cyclones took and continue to take a heavy toll in LDCs.

In 2017, average annual losses from disasters were estimated at 8.5 per cent of GDP.

The Secretary-General’s Climate Action Summit this September succeeded in generating a significant set of commitments from governments and other stakeholders.

We must be grateful to the LDCs for their active engagement and ambitious announcements at the Summit. I especially thank the Chair of the LDCs at the UN, the Chair of the LDCs at UNFCCC as well as those LDCs that co-led the tracks or were actively engaged in coalitions.

As the report notes, it is now our shared duty not to loose the important momentum generated. This momentum must continue through to COP25 and beyond. This momentum must be translated into more ambitious NDCs.
Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I can only say again what I have said so many times - time is not on our side. We must act with urgency.

It is NOW that we must accelerate and intensify our preparations for the Fifth United Nations Conference on the LDCs taking place in 2021.

In this regard, ECOSOC through its resolution welcomed with appreciation and endorsed the offer of the Government of Qatar to host the Conference.

I thank the Government of Qatar.

OHRLLS engages in continuous consultations and we have made progress on the organizational arrangements, including proposed dates of the UN LDC-V.

This should allow us to move forward in an expeditious manner with the modalities of the conference as well as its preparatory process.

I understand good progress has been made on a draft resolution to this effect.

Your full support and active engagement will be critical throughout this preparatory phase.

Partnering is key and as a UN family, we have begun preparations.

The Regional Commissions, the CDP, UNCTAD, UNIDO, WTO, EIF, WIPO, ILO, WHO, IAEA, UNFPA, UNWTO and more, have all indicated keen interest in supporting the process.

The first dedicated preparatory event by a UN system entity will be convened in two weeks’ time.

It is the Eighth UNIDO LDC Ministerial Conference. It will take place on 2 November in Abu Dhabi.

At the meeting, LDC Ministers of Industry and Trade will identify best practices, success stories and lessons learned over the IPoA implementation period. This is so done with a view to drawing up recommendations as an input to LDC-V.

The LDCs are also preparing national reviews which in turn will serve as important inputs to the Conference. I congratulate Malawi for being the first LDC to submit its review!

OHRLLS will then prepare a synthesis report reflecting the national reviews as a technical input to regional and global substantive preparations for the Conference.
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Let there be no doubt, an intensive and critically important process lies ahead of us.

We must deliver a new Programme of Action that is capable of completing the “unfinished business” of the IPoA.

We need a programme that helps accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs.

We need a programme that takes advantage of new opportunities while dealing with emerging challenges.

We need a programme that ensures that the people's of the LDCs are not left behind because we allowed the LDCs to fall further behind!

You have the pledge of OHRLLS and my personal commitment to do our utmost to deliver a rigorous, inclusive and robust preparatory process to ensure a successful outcome at UNLDC V in 2021.

People count on us, we count on all of you and I invite your full engagement.

Thank you.