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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High Representative
and
Under-Secretary-General

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

Ministerial Meeting of LDCs

26 September 2019, 3:00pm – 6:00 pm
Conference room # 5
UN Headquarters, New York
Honourable Foreign Minister of Malawi and the Chair of the Group of LDCs
Honourable President of the General Assembly
Crown Prince of Norway
Excellency President of the ECOSOC
Honourable Ministers from LDCs and the Friends of LDCs
Honourable Minister of State of Qatar and the host of the LDC-V
Excellency Ambassador of the European Union

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A warm welcome to you all to this Ministerial Meeting of LDCs.

Thank you Mr. Chairman for your strong leadership of the Group of LDCs.

Thank you Ambassador Perk Ligoya and your able team for leading the work of the Group.

I also thank the other members of the Global Coordination Bureau, namely Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Senegal, Solomon Islands and Yemen and the entire membership of LDCs for their efforts in promoting the common interest of LDCs in the area of sustainable development.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

In less than two years now, the implementation period of the Istanbul Programme of Action closes.

We can record satisfactory progress in some areas. Yet it also is clear that we must work hard and fast in other areas to achieve the goals and objectives of the Programme of Action.

On average, GDP of the LDCs increased moderately to 5 per cent in 2018 but is projected to decline to 4.6 per cent in 2019.

Extreme poverty fell to 35.5 per cent in 2015. But the number of undernourished people increased by 32.7 million during the period from 2011 to 2017. Around 80 million people of LDCs are estimated to face a food crisis.

Current growth projections for the LDCs imply that more than 30 per cent of the LDC population will remain in extreme poverty by 2030.

Since 2010, the share of the manufacturing sector has only grown from 10% then to 12% in 2017.
While mobile subscription increased to 70 per cent, internet access remains only at around 18 per cent of the population. This is far from the IPOA target of universal internet access by 2020. In 2017, the average access to electricity across LDCs was only 45%.

The order is tall!

These challenges are further exacerbated by new and emerging challenges.

Just to name a few: climate change impacts, natural disasters as well as health pandemics.

LDCs are disproportionately affected by climate change and external shocks. Their food security, agricultural development, sustainable eco-systems and physical infrastructure all are greatly stressed by the impacts of climate change.

It is encouraging to see the LDCs play such active role in the Climate Action Summit.

The two initiatives launched at the Climate Action Summit, that is the Coalition on Energy Access and the Initiative for Effective Adaptation and Resilience, are highly significant.

I ask development partners to support LDCs in implementing these initiatives. My Office will provide further support in this regard.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Accessing the necessary means of implementation for the IPOA continue to remain a major challenge for LDCs.

Government revenue in LDCs stagnates.

ODA flows to LDCs once again declined by 2.7 per cent in 2018.

Although there is some progress in exports of goods and services, we are far away from the target of a 2 per cent participation rate in global exports.

The increasing uncertainties in the global trading system pose a major challenge for LDCs.

External debt continues to be a major threat.

A growing number of LDCs are in debt distress or at a high risk of debt distress.

The provision of means of implementation for the IPOA agreed goals is vitally important and must happen now also to enable LDCs to meet the SDGs.
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Yes, the challenges are many and may seem daunting.

Yet, everyday, the LDCs and their peoples are diligently striving to graduate from the category of LDCs. Twelve countries are at different phases of graduation.

So, you can see it is possible!

I call on the international community to continue its support to graduating and graduated countries.

The UN should also do its part.

OHRLLS has set up an Inter-agency Task Force on the Graduation of LDCs. We did so to step up coordinated UN system-wide support to graduating LDCs. We have already sent a joint UN mission to Sao Tome and Principe and are in the process of sending our next mission to the Solomon Islands. The IATF is supporting graduating countries in developing their smooth transition strategies. In this context, we should take note that the Secretary-General's roadmap on financing for the 2030 Agenda provides special focus on support for graduating LDCs.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

OHRLLS is focused on mobilizing international support, cooperation for the LDCs by advocating for those most in need and bringing their perspectives to global debates and decision-making processes.

We are not a big office but with our in-house capacities, we are producing narratives, knowledge products and analytical reports, including on broadband connectivity and sustainable energy as a basis for advocacy and follow-up activities.

We also provide backstopping support to the most vulnerable countries in their inter-governmental negotiations.

We work on several fronts indeed and this included establishing the Technology Bank for LDCs.

The Bank is now operational under the leadership of its new Managing Director.

We designed an Investment Support Programme in cooperation with the International Development Law Organization (IDLO), which supports LDCs in their investment contract negotiations and dispute settlement on a pro bono basis.

We carry out a pilot project on sustainable energy with the involvement of all major stakeholders.
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me to now update you on the preparations of the Fifth UN Conference on LDCs.

We work with the Permanent Mission of Qatar to set out the detailed preparatory activities leading up to the LDC-V.

We have submitted a project document to Qatar and other potential donor countries with a request to make contributions to the Trust Fund.

We thank Turkey for its pledge to contribute to the trust fund.

Once more, may I urge countries to make contributions for the preparatory activities.

We have developed a template for the national level review of the implementation of the IPoA in each LDC.

The national reports are expected to be submitted to us by November of this year.

The results of these reviews will be presented at the upcoming National Focal Points’ meeting, which will be held in New York on 13-14 November 2019.

We will prepare a synthesis report of the national reviews highlighting lessons learned and best practices, which will provide important inputs to the draft outcome of the LDC-V.

We are also working with the Regional Commissions of Africa (ECA) and Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) to organize regional review meetings in preparation of the LDC-V in the first half of 2020.

We indeed have mobilized the entire United Nations System in support of the LDC-V.

Agencies have shown keen interest in organizing preconference events, side events and thematic studies in their respective areas of competence.

We work with academia to access their knowledge.

Above all, we work with the member States to host preconference events on various themes that are vitally important for LDCs.

In closing, allow me to highlight once again that it is now and with urgency that we all must come together to ensure LDCs are fully included in realizing the objectives of Agenda 2030. I also seek your support in strengthening the capacity of OHRLLS to provide extended and
targeted support to LDCs in enabling them to implement the 2030 Agenda and the IPoA in a coordinated and coherent manner.

Thank you all.