Opening remarks

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

Nineteenth Inter-Agency Consultative Group Meeting of the
United Nations system and international organizations on the
implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for
the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020

10:00-10:30, 11 November 2019

Conference Room 11, UN HQ, New York
Dear Colleagues,

I warmly welcome you all to our opening session of the nineteenth Session of the Inter-Agency Consultative Group on the Istanbul Programme of Action for the LDCs.

Here we are close to the final year of the IPoA! while the process for preparing the next Programme of Action has begun in earnest.

This next phase, this new Programme of Action is critically important. We must build on the energies, the successes achieved in reaching graduation thresholds. We must leverage these important steps forward to provide further impetus to LDCs in meeting the SDGs. We must leverage what has been achieved to identify and respond to new and emerging challenges, and seize opportunities new technologies afford. This we must do to ensure that there is no regressing, no falling farther behind.

This is a broad agenda, an agenda needed in our increasingly rapidly moving and complex global setting.

This is an agenda that cuts across the work of the development pillars and intersects with the other pillars in critical ways.

This demands nothing less than the full engagement of all of the UN system capacities.

This call on the UN system to engage has been made explicitly in last December's GA resolution on the IPoA.

Just over a week ago, I addressed the opening of the UNIDO LDC Ministerial Conference. This marked the first pre-conference event feeding into LDC-V, and a formal kick-off of the preparatory process.

I thank UNIDO for their excellent cooperation, hard work and efficient organization. As one of its outcomes, the meeting adopted a Ministerial Declaration. I understand that you will hear more about this and the other outcomes of this meeting from UNIDO staff later in this session.

The key starting point in preparing the LDC-V conference is to gather the experience of the LDCs themselves. The LDCs are preparing their national reports on the implementation of the IPoA. Reports are due by the end of the year.

Five have already been received – from Guinea, Malawi, Mali, Senegal and Zambia. These can be accessed from the UN-LCD-V page on the OHRLLS website. We convene a meeting of our network of LDC national focal points later this week - on 13 and 14 November – at which they will share their preliminary findings from these reports.

A synthesis report with the main findings from the LDC national reports will be prepared by my Office and will feed into the preparatory process.

OHRLLS will also prepare the regular Secretary-General’s report on the implementation of the IPoA. This time it will be the final report.
As we are limited to 8500 words!, we will try to identify relevant broad trends in the IPoA implementation in the eight priority areas of the IPoA. Your inputs will be very important for this exercise.

In September, I wrote to the principals of all UN entities inviting submissions by the end of November. We invited three types of input:
(a) an analytical assessment of progress made by the LDCs and their development partners over the decade 2011-2020;
(b) identification of best practices, obstacles and constraints, as well as recommendations to address them; and
(c) the latest available data for the LDCs that your organization regularly compiles, related to the implementation of the IPoA.

At the regional level, two preparatory review meetings are envisaged.
One for the Africa region (including Haiti) - most likely taking place in February 2020.
One for the Asia-Pacific region - most likely taking place in April 2020.

Malawi has offered to host the Africa preparatory meeting in Blantyre. We hope a formal offer for the Asia-Pacific regional meeting will follow soon. Both, the governing bodies of ECA and of ESCAP will consider the outcomes of the preparatory meetings.

It is essential that the UN system participates actively in these regional preparatory meetings. The meetings are essential in furthering our understanding of the challenges faced on a regional basis, and how the Member States might wish to shape the new Programme of Action.

There will be a series of other high-level intergovernmental milestones that could provide important inputs into UN-LDCV.

I give you examples -
the WTO Ministerial in Nur Sultan, Kazakhstan in June 2020,
the International Labour Conference in Geneva, Switzerland,
the ECA and ESCAP annual meetings,
the Sustainable Energy for All Forum,
and the UNCTAD XV Conference in Barbados in October 2020.

In addition, in New York, the FFD Forum and the DCF Forum will provide important engagement opportunities. And we have an indication that the PGA will organize a one-day high-level event.

It is important that these meetings do come up with concrete and practical recommendations on what the new Programme of Action should address. These will be gathered together at the first Prep Com which will take place in September 2020.
Following this, we will continue to gather inputs and start working the zero draft of the new Programme of Action. The second Prep Com will then take place in January 2021.

As always, this must be transparent and participatory processes and we will engage with the various stakeholders.

Academia through applied research has a lot to contribute and so OHRLLS has just issued a call for papers for a major academic conference entitled “Achieving Sustainable Development in the Least developed Countries: Towards LDC-V”.

The Conference will be held in Helsinki on 15-16 October 2020. Our partners in this endeavour are UNU-WIDER, Columbia University Sustainable Development Solutions Network, with financial support from the Government of Finland.

We will hear more about this initiative.

The conference aims to bring together the academic community, policy-makers and practitioners to solicit new thinking on the challenges and policy recommendations for LDCs for the next decade.

It is equally critical to engage civil society. We are seeking ways to support the engagement of both civil society and parliamentarians throughout the preparatory process and at LDC-V.

With regard to the private sector, we invite IACG members to come forward with any suggestions for specific events and initiatives.

We already have a significant list of pre-conference events, but there are still some thematic areas that we feel warrant specific consideration and have not yet been addressed. On some of these, we hope to fill the gaps ourselves, in partnership with relevant agencies. These are very critical areas as they concern climate change, disaster risk reduction and resilience.

On others, we are hoping that UN agencies will come forward and offer to take the lead in organizing pre-conference events. One such area is food security, poverty and resilience. Another is indebtedness.

So, I hope that this morning’s discussions help to further shape the preparatory phase, build synergies, and craft an inclusive and comprehensive process.

Thank you.