Remarks
by
Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu

High Representative

and

Under-Secretary-General

Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries

and Small Island Developing States

Eighth Ministerial Conference of the Least Developed Countries:

“Accelerating industrialization in LDCs: Lessons learned and innovative approaches”

Opening Session

2 November 2019, Abu Dhabi
Your Excellency Mr. Suhail Mohamed Faraj Al Mazrouei, Minister of Energy and Industry, United Arab Emirates, Chair, Hon Minister of Trade & Industry, Ethiopia
Vice Chair, Hon Deputy Prime Minister, Vanuatu
Mr. LI Yong, Director General, UNIDO
Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my privilege to co-convene once again the UNIDO Ministerial Conference of the LDCs.

I thank my colleague Mr. LI for your leadership in organizing this very important meeting. I also thank you for our partnership at the service of the LDCs, the LLDCs and SIDS.

We are indebted to and thank the Government of the United Arab Emirates, our hosts, for your hospitality and your generous and unwavering support to the LDCs.

OHRLLS is above all a voice, an advocate and a partner for 91 countries representing over 1 billion people presently most at risk to be excluded from what we wish to achieve in Agenda 2030. Commonly we refer to the grouping of countries as the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

47 of these countries are LDCs and among the poorest nations of our planet. The Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries which spans the Decade 2011-2020 had agreed on specific goals and targets to help the LDCs build their productive capacities.

The IPoA period is drawing to a close. Just one year is left.

We must now take stock of what could be achieved and we must look to the future. This future must include the negotiation of a new Programme of Action.

I wish to share with you a few observations on progress made by the LDCs but also the way forward.

The glass is half full and there are some remarkable achievements.

In December 2018, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a resolution on LDC graduation. As a result we will see five more LDCs graduate by the end of 2024. An additional 7 LDCs are in what we call the graduation pipeline. Clearly we have much greater momentum than in previous decades.

We must congratulate these countries and their partners for their hard-won development progress.

This is encouraging but we also must step up efforts. Graduation never is an end - in so many ways it is a beginning. A beginning where it is critical for the UN, development partners and graduating LDCs to pay due attention to smooth transitions for graduating LDCs.
OHRLLS is very mindful of this and this is why we set up an Inter-agency Task Force on the Graduation of LDCs. The purpose is simple. We must step up coordinated UN support for smooth transitions.

The Inter-agency Task Force conducted its first-ever joint UN mission to Sao Tome and Principe this past September. Over 20 UN entities participated in the mission. A second mission was fielded to the Solomon Islands in October.

The macro trend looks good. But as is the case with all macro data, when reviewing the situation across the LDCs, there has been uneven progress. Notable disparities exist between countries and regions.

We will hear much more about country experiences during the sessions that will follow. The global efforts on eradication of extreme poverty show progress but not enough. Extreme poverty persists and must be addressed as a priority.

As I said earlier, LDCs are at risk of being excluded from what the SDGs are set to achieve. So, support for the implementation of the SDG agenda will be critical for the LDCs.

And to add to the complexity but also for formulating the follow up programme for the future, we need to be mindful of the rapidly changing world in which we live. Both, the opportunities but also the threats are many. Just think of climate change, migration, water access, food security, pandemics and I could go on. And we see new opportunities such as rapid technological advances, AI and blockchain.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

In December 2018, the General Assembly adopted a resolution to convene the Fifth UN Conference on the LDCs in 2021, most likely in March.

The Conference is mandated to undertake a comprehensive appraisal of the IPoA implementation, share best practices and lessons learned, and identify obstacles and constraints encountered.

It will identify actions and initiatives needed to overcome them, including effective international and domestic policies. It will review new and emerging challenges and opportunities, and the means to address them.

It is intended to mobilize additional international support measures and action, in addition to domestic resources, in support of the LDCs.

And last but by no means least, the Conference is tasked to formulate and adopt a renewed partnership between the LDCs and their development partners.

This new programme of action for the LDCs will also coincide with the last 10 years of implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Preparations will be highly participatory and take place at all levels.
At the national level, all LDCs are expected to report on the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action in their country through reports due in by the end of the year.

I congratulate Malawi, Mali, Zambia and Guinea for having submitted their reports! You can access the reports on the UN-LCD-V page on the OHRLLS website.

A synthesis report reflecting the main findings from national reports will be prepared by OHRLLS to feed into the preparatory process. At the regional level, two preparatory review meetings are envisaged.

One for Africa as well as Haiti - most likely taking place in February 2020. A second review meeting for the Asia-Pacific region will most likely take place in April 2020.

My Office is also organizing UN inter-agency meetings to coordinate and step up preparations for the Conference.

UN Agencies and partner countries will organize pre-conference events. These are thematic events on issues of particular concern to LDCs. They evolve around thematic appraisals in order to outline possible strategies to make further progress in specific sectoral areas that are key to LDCs' sustainable development.

Today’s Ministerial Conference represents the first major UN-agency led preparatory meeting for UN-LDC- V.

I can say that today we are officially kicking off the process

Today’s Conference will pave the way for a series of other high-level events to feed into UN-LDCV where we will carry out similar reviews of progress, obstacles and best practice.

These events are

the WTO Ministerial in Nur Sultan, Kazakhstan in June 2020, the International Labour Conference in Geneva, Switzerland, and the UNCTAD XV Conference in Barbados in October 2020, to mention but a few.

We will also engage with various stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, parliamentarians and academia.

With regard to the contribution of academia, my Office has just issued a call for papers for a major academic conference entitled “Achieving Sustainable Development in the Least developed Countries: Towards LDC-V”. We organize this conference 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.

The Helsinki conference will 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.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,
The preparatory process for LDC-V begins today.

Through presentations and discussion, we will hear success stories and best practices. I hope this will inform us, inspire us, renew our energies and determination to move forward and guide us along the path to the LDC-V in 2021.

I am sure we all share the determination to do everything we can to include the LDCs and their peoples in our promise to leave no one behind.

Thank you.