Statement

by

Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu

Under-Secretary-General
High Representative
for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries
and Small Island Developing States

High-level Forum on
South-South Cooperation on Climate Change

Co-hosted by the Ministry of Ecology and Environment of China
and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation,
supported by the Environmental Defense Fund.
14:00-17:30

Session on Supporting Low Carbon and Green Development Transition in Developing Countries
14:40-16:00

11th December 2019
COP 25 China Pavilion
Distinguished panel members,
Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to express my warm appreciation to the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation for organizing this High-Level Forum on South-South Cooperation on Climate Change.

I congratulate the organizers for bringing together such an eminent group of panel members.

I am especially pleased to see so many representatives from the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS since my Office advocates for these groups of developing countries in special situations. These nations face unique challenges due to their structural handicaps and geographical disadvantages.

They face a two-fold challenge – switching existing power generation to low emissions sources and meeting future energy demand in a sustainable manner.

Yet high rates of economic growth are essential for them to meet their aspirations and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Growth must be inclusive, sustained, and sustainable. For this, it is essential to decouple growth from greenhouse gas emissions, not least because these nations are the most vulnerable to the extreme weather events caused by climate change.

The lack of access to affordable and reliable energy is a major barrier to development - from powering rural health clinics to local agricultural processing that add value to production.

One half of the world’s population without access to electricity are in the least developed countries. Many vulnerable countries, especially the small islands developing states and the landlocked developing countries, are far away from their major markets, are highly dependent on energy from outside, and suffer further disadvantages from the resulting higher energy costs. However, the move towards renewable energy and low-carbon development is often an economically viable option in these countries, particularly given the high renewable energy potential in these countries and remoteness of some locations from energy grids.
Despite the challenges they face, as well as their small historical contributions to greenhouse gas concentrations, I am proud to say that the both AOSIS and the LDC Group have displayed exemplary leadership in announcing climate action and ambition at the Secretary-General’s Climate Action Summit last September in New York.

South-South cooperation continues to offer great opportunities to provide effective support in accelerating the energy transition in the most vulnerable countries, through technology transfer, capacity building, peer learning, knowledge sharing and financial resources.

Scaling up finance especially remains a top priority. The regions with the highest needs, such as sub-Saharan Africa, receive the smallest share of global energy finance.

I would like to highlight a few examples of the important role that South-South cooperation plays in the low-carbon transition in the work of my own Office.

India has provided valuable financial assistance to the recently concluded Medium-Term Review of the Vienna Programme of Action for the landlocked developing countries as well as other activities.

Turkey is hosting and providing generous financial and technical assistance for the Technology Bank for the LDCs. This new UN organ will help LDCs with access to science, technology and the capacity to innovate. I also pay tribute to the other developing countries – including the LDCs themselves – that have pledged financial contributions to the Technology Bank.

China has funded a capacity-building project to increase access to finance for sustainable energy in LDCs. I also wish to express my appreciation to China for supporting such a meaningful initiative, and I thank our collaborating partner, GEIDCO, for the positive cooperation and support for a global conference on scaling-up energy access and finance in LDCs, which took place in May 2019, in Beijing, China. With the conclusion of the “Malawi Sustainable Energy Investment Study” launched in Lilongwe in October this year as part of the project, we are ready to replicate the successful country-level experience to benefit other LDCs.
In recent years, China and many other developing countries have been at the forefront of climate actions. Their effective and context-specific solutions and technologies contribute immensely to closing the “adaptation gap” facing LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

In May this year, I had the opportunity to meet with the Vice-Minister of Environment of China during the Belt and Road Forum, and we agreed to scale up South-South climate cooperation.

In closing, I would like to draw attention to the upcoming preparatory process for the Fifth UN Conference on LDCs which will take place in Doha, Qatar, in March 2021. I wish to thank Qatar for its generous offer and the support it is providing for the Conference, as well as the announcement it made at the Secretary-General’s Climate Action Summit of US$100 million for LDCs and SIDS on climate change. The LDC-V Conference will provide an important opportunity to assess the role of and the scaling up of South-South and Triangular Cooperation in support of the LDCs’ efforts to build productive capacity and reach the graduation thresholds, and to ensure the LDC will not be left behind.

Thank you.