

Remarks Deputy Secretary-General

**First meeting of the LLDCs at Ambassadorial level under
Kazakhstan Chairmanship**

Conference Room 8, 22 January 2020, 3:00 pm – 6:00 p.m.

**Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Dear Colleagues,**

I am pleased to participate in this first Ambassadorial meeting of the Group of LLDCs in the year 2020.

I thank His Excellency Ambassador Kairat Umarov for his kind invitation.

Allow me, Mr. Chairman, to congratulate Kazakhstan on your election as the new Chair of the LLDCs Group and my congratulations also to the new Bureau.

I also wish to thank Paraguay and the previous bureau for leading the Group over the past 2 years.

Excellencies,

2019 was a significant year for our collective efforts to end poverty and achieve sustainable development.

In September, the United Nations hosted the most development-focused high-level week since 2015 - with the SDG Summit, the Secretary-General's Climate Action Summit, and high-level meetings on universal health coverage, small island developing states, and financing for development.

And we closed the year in December, with the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Vienna Programme of Action for Land-locked Developing Countries, which gave us a forward-looking Political Declaration.

A common narrative ran across each of these meetings.

Governments and development partners are embracing the 2030 Agenda and related-development frameworks that identify the challenges and way forward for specific country contexts, such as the Vienne Programme of Action.

And progress is being made.

Many LLDCs, for instance, have integrated the sustainable development goals and the priorities of the Vienna Programme of Action into their national development strategies.

Some indicators related to health, education, energy, gender equality and ICTs show positive movement.

Efforts are underway to develop transit transport and economic corridors.

Regional, sub-regional and multilateral initiatives have been developed in support of transit amongst LLDCs and transit countries, including the African Continental Free Trade Agreement.

And ratification of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement by the LLDCs and transit countries was high.

But, in spite of notable progress in some areas, across the world we are not on track to achieve the SDGs, which are an integrated whole, and many LLDCs continue to face major hurdles.

One-third of the population of LLDCs is still living in extreme poverty.

On average, LLDCs continue to pay more than double in transport costs compared to their transit neighbours.

High transport costs, together with market concentration in a few primary commodities, limited capacity to produce high-value products, and other constraints, impact LLDC competitiveness, integration in regional and global trade. They hinder sustainable development and resilience of the economies and societies of land-locked developing countries.

Excellencies,

If we are to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, then each and every actor will have to up their game.

This morning, the Secretary-General outlined what he sees as the greatest threats endangering 21st-century progress and imperiling 21st-century possibilities – the “Four Horsemen”. The first comes in the form of the highest global

geostrategic tensions we have faced in years; the second is the climate crisis; third, we are seeing deep and growing global mistrust, with more and more people feeling left behind by globalization; and fourth, the dangers posed by the dark side of the digital world, with technological advances moving faster than our ability to respond.

These existential and interlinked challenges require our engagement to go beyond 2020. This is why the Secretary-General declared the next 10 years leading up to 2030 a Decade of Action for delivery and opportunity on the SDGS.

The Decade of Action is an opportunity to generate an unstoppable movement for people and planet – to inspire greater mobilization, ambition, financing and solutions for the world’s biggest challenges – ranging from poverty and inequality to climate change and gender.

Addressing the challenges facing LLDCs and living up to our pledge of “leave no one behind” will be central to these efforts.

Physical connectivity - the hard infrastructure, and trade facilitation - the soft infrastructure, value addition, diversification, and movement up value chains, are fundamental issues.

Climate change, desertification, droughts, environmental degradation and disasters also remain important challenges where solutions are needed.

To succeed, all key stakeholders, including, LLDCs, transit countries, development partners, private sector, UN System Organizations need to join efforts.

The upcoming WTO Ministerial Conference in Kazakhstan in June will be the first time that a WTO Conference is being held in a landlocked developing country and provides an opportunity to strengthen partnerships around the LLDC agenda.

It is also essential that the Global Sustainable Transport Conference in Beijing focus attention on the opportunities, challenges and solutions towards achieving sustainable transport objectives in LLDCs.

And with 12 LLDCs submitting their voluntary national reviews, this year's High-Level Political Forum can generate greater understanding and support to overcome LLDC development challenges.

Excellencies,

The Political Declaration of the High-level Midterm Review calls upon the United Nations system to continue to provide support to accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action.

The United Nations remains fully committed to continued support to LLDCs towards the attainment of sustainable development.

The repositioned UN development system is now much better placed to support your efforts to achieve sustainable development, with empowered Resident Coordinators, a new generation of UN Country Teams, and a soon to be strengthened regional level to make optimal use of our expertise, enabling us to provide tailored responses to national priorities, informed by the Cooperation Framework and the Common Country Analysis it is based on.

And the Office of the High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS will continue to coordinate and mobilize the relevant United Nations system to support the LLDCs and the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. We look forward to the recommendations that will emanate from the ongoing evaluation of OHRLLS by OIOS and will ensure implementation of the final recommendations.

Excellencies,

Let me conclude my remarks by expressing the full commitment of the Secretary-General and I to serving the needs of land-locked developing states and you drive forward with your ambitions for sustainable and inclusive development.

I look forward to continuing to work closely with you as we push forward the Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs and I wish Kazakhstan a successful tenure as the Chair of the LLDCs Group.

Thank you.

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