

Please check against delivery



**Opening Remarks**

**for**

**Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu**

**High Representative**

**And**

**Under-Secretary-General**

**Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing  
Countries**

**and Small Island Developing States**

**Remarks at the High-Level Meeting on Accelerating the  
Energy Transformation in Small Island Developing States  
through Renewable Energy**

Venue: St. Regis Hotel, Plenary Hall

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

11 January 2020, 09:30 –18:00

Heads of States,  
Heads of Government,  
Ministers,  
Excellencies and Distinguished delegates,

First, I wish to congratulate IRENA for the leadership and vision you show in and for the renewable energy sector.

Thank you for sharing your Annual Report on the Implementation of the work programme and budget for 2018-2019.

You indeed carried out a wide array of activities, worked with a multitude of partners and you have pushed forward the renewable energy agenda.

OHRLLS is the advocate for three groups of vulnerable countries . The LDCs, LLDC and SIDS.

Combined, the groups represent 91 member states. They have a combined population of 1.3 billion people or roughly 15 per cent of the global population.

All countries face several comparable macro development challenges making their their structural transformation highly complex.

The access to sustainable energy is one of their key and shared challenges.

Lack of access to sustainable energy is the norm and this leaves too many unable to transform their economies structurally and move forward in their development path.

The latest data shows that, in 2017, 51% only of the population in LDCs had access to electricity.

This indicator stood at 56% in LLDCs, and an enormous 82% in SIDS.

This data does indeed hide considerable inter- country, inter- regional and above all major urban and rural area inequalities within countries.

For example, in 2016, on average, 75% of the urban population in LDCs had electricity access, compared with only 31% of rural populations.

These gaps are not only limited to electricity. The picture gets worse when we look at access to modern fuels for cooking and heating.

This means that large segments of the population have no access to, are not able to utilise the benefits of modern energy to improve their health, education, income generation and enjoy a fair share in overall social and economic development.

These state of affairs is simply unacceptable.

I firmly believe that if there is one sector where we can bring rapid, life changing transformation to people's lives, it is in access for all to renewable, modern energy.

A majority of these vulnerable countries are endowed with vast reserves of renewable energy resources.

This base when brought together with access to new technologies and taking advantage of falling prices of renewable energy, offers solutions for gaining energy access.

The key question is how ? How can we ensure that the global momentum around renewable energy reaches also those currently left behind?

We certainly do need stronger partnerships to accelerate the energy transition in vulnerable countries.

This will require partnerships around the massive investments needed now. This will require more rapid action within the next years.

Technological advances continue to generate new solutions and clean, green energy is more affordable and competitive than ever. We must NOW combine what the technological advances already have brought about and continue to do so with increased investments in the least developed countries . We must give them a real opportunity to achieve SDG7 by 2030 and contribute to climate change action.

It is not impossible. We have success stories and best practices.

It is encouraging to see the rapid progress made in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Cambodia. They have all electrified at a rate of about 5 percentage points per year since 2010 !

Many LDCs have already successfully tapped into using hydropower. The use of solar, wind power and geothermal is also increasing. Notable progress can be recorded in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Nepal, Myanmar and Rwanda in using off-grid energy solutions serving especially rural areas.

My key message is that SDG7 is within reach. We must have the will and it is high time to deliver.

OHRLLS will not spare efforts in continuing to strongly advocate for and rally support and resources for the vulnerable countries in their energy transition.

Vulnerable countries have and continue to show strong leadership.

At the Secretary-General's Climate Action Summit, in September, both LDCs and SIDS put forward initiatives with the objective of accelerating sustainable energy transition with ambitious targets.

It is now the turn of development partners, in the North and South to extend a helping hand. More focus is also needed on how to strengthen private sector engagement in the sustainable energy sector. The private sector is a key partner in the efforts towards realizing sustainable development aspirations and mobilizing required funds.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I look forward to strengthening the various partnerships to ensure that vulnerable countries will not be left behind in their energy transition.

In this regard, OHRLLS recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with IRENA to strengthen our collaboration.

To conclude, I stress again the need to move beyond the words and to take immediate action to ensure we expand renewable energy access in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

As a global community we must continue to strengthen our collaborative efforts to support sustainable energy development in vulnerable countries. It is in all our interests - inequality and climate know no borders!

Thank you.