



**Statement by**

**Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu**

**High Representative**

**and**

**Under-Secretary-General**

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

**Joint FAO-OHRLLS Briefing on the Impacts of COVID-19 on Food Security  
for the LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS**

**7 May 2020**

**3-4.30 p.m.**

Your Excellencies,  
Amb Perks Ligoya, PR Malawi & Chair of Group of LDCs,  
Amb Kairat Umarov, PR Kazakhstan & Chair of Group of LLDCs,  
Amb Lois Young, PR Belize & Chair of AOSIS,  
Excellencies,  
Assistant Director General & Chief Economist FAO, Mr Torero  
Chief Economist, World Food Programme, Mr Hussein  
Colleagues,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

There is a saying “may you live in exceptional times” - everybody, everywhere I am certain experiences this sense right now.

More than half of the world population finds itself under some form of confinement, social distancing and, let there be no doubt, more or less intense material and psychological hardship.

The globe is united in the determination to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Millions and millions of businesses that often are the glue of local communities’ employment and thus economies have reduced or brought to a stop the production of goods and services.

The ILO anticipates that some 200 million workers risk unemployment. Many and their families are threatened in their very livelihoods.

Governments in the developed countries have engaged in unprecedented fiscal and monetary measures to mitigate the devastating impact that the crisis is having on employment and businesses.

The health systems and fiscal space available to LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS to face this unprecedented crisis of our 21st century is far and really by far more limited.

Regardless of where we are, this crisis has driven home what once was called basic needs such as health, water, shelter and food! The deep economic social and institutional consequences of COVID-19 now unfold. The farm and food systems are disproportionately impacted in LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS.

So many more households are now on a trajectory to even greater poverty and food insecurity!

This global health crisis bears all the signs of a perfect storm triggering also a major food crisis and setting back years of economic development. In such scenario, several of the SDGs will become unattainable and the promise to include everybody in the gains from Agenda 2030 will indeed just remain a wish.

We cannot afford ever growing inequalities and now is the time to provide the LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS with financial emergency relief commensurate with the challenges they face.

To avoid a potentially massive increase in global poverty and hunger wiping out gains made in previous decades, we need an unprecedented policy response. At this dire time, many of us have been inspired by solidarity emerging at community levels. Now is the time for solidarity in action between development partners, the United Nations, the International Financial Institutions, and other international organizations. Now is the time to work for one shared goal: support LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS to have the fiscal space needed to expand health and social protection programmes and mitigate the challenges presented by the pandemic.

Without food, there is no life and so it is evident that we must make every effort to strengthen, already in many cases, weakened food supply chains, and promote measures to facilitate access to affordable food supplies. Immediate and substantial official and commercial debt relief will surely be an essential aspect of a comprehensive support package.

We also must accelerate technical assistance, transfer of technology, and capacity building to scale up the capabilities of LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS in fighting COVID-19. These are immediate measures to take but they will not be sufficient.

We also must invest in concerted efforts to keep trade channels open and facilitate free movement of goods to avoid piling an unnecessary food price crisis on the current health and economic disasters facing the world.

I am confident that today's discussion will help us understand better the impacts that COVID-19 will have on the food security in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

I express my gratitude to the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Food Programme for their availability to share their knowledge and expertise and to answer our questions.

Thank you and we will need your full cooperation in what lies ahead.

I must also express my sincere gratitude to the Chairs of the LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS for organizing this event in cooperation with us and for their leadership during this critical and unprecedented time.

I look forward to listening to you and to our exchanges.

Thank you.