Inside:

Perspectives from High Representatives past and present

UN-OHRLLS’ milestone timeline

Pull out map and guide to vulnerable country groups

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Over the past 15 years, the international community has made great progress in the struggle to achieve a more just, peaceful and sustainable world for all. This era has seen the end of the Millennium Development Goals, the largest anti-poverty campaign in history, as well as the start of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, an even more ambitious bid to usher in a life of dignity for all. At the same time, the world has taken a collective step forward with the adoption of the Paris Agreement on climate change, which holds the promise to protect our planet for future generations.

Nowhere are these achievements and imperatives felt more acutely than in vulnerable countries, and no entity has done more for their interests than the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

For a decade and a half, it has coordinated and mobilized the international community to advance development agendas of the three country groups, providing vital assistance in carrying out global agreements affecting their needs and concerns.

UN-OHRLLS has also supported the engagement of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States in inter-governmental negotiations. This has helped to amplify the voices of those most in need and bring their perspectives to global debates and decision-making.

As we enter a new era for sustainable development, the work of UN-OHRLLS remains crucially important. Our pledge to leave no one behind requires placing the most vulnerable communities in the world at the forefront of our transformative campaign for a life of dignity for all.

UN-OHRLLS at 15
Supporting vulnerable countries towards a sustainable future

Foreword by Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya, Under-Secretary-General and High-Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States

The Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States face the most binding constraints to growth and development. They represent, in total, 92 member states, with a combined population of 1.1 billion people. In recognition of the development challenges of LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS and the need to address these obstacles in a systematic and targeted manner, the UN membership established, in 2001, the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) with the mandate of advocating for and supporting the development of the most vulnerable countries.

Now 15 years into its existence, UN-OHRLLS has established itself as the leading UN entity delivering global advocacy work, providing substantive backstopping support to the groups in global negotiations, monitoring and following up progress in the implementation of the programmes of actions of the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, coordinating the UN system support and forging strong partnerships with other important stakeholders, all in support of the implementation of their programmes of actions. The office also successfully led the preparation and staging of all recent UN conferences on these groups of countries and made other significant achievements in the past years.

The office has produced knowledge products that have informed its advocacy and follow-up activities and undergirded its on-demand backstopping support extended to the most vulnerable countries in their inter-governmental negotiations. Thanks to the multi-pronged advocacy, follow-up, mobilization, coordination and support, the 2030 Agenda, the
Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA), the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework have stronger references—than before—to LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS in terms of the goals and targets as well as issues covered.

Also, over the last 5 years, a growing number of LDCs have met criteria for exiting from LDC status—a defining aspiration set in the Istanbul Programme of Action. This is the result of continued economic and social progress and deliberate and assertive commitment of the leadership across these countries to move toward graduation. Building on this momentum, graduating and aspiring-to-graduate LDCs have been looking for UN system support in formulating graduation and smooth-transition strategies and deploying global advocacy for targeted support in the areas of development finance, trade, technology and capacity-building. UN-OHRLLS has coordinated UN system responses to these demands.

UN-OHRLLS has also facilitated the participation of the most vulnerable countries to global discussions and engagement with major actors across UN system and the development finance landscape—including multilateral banks and institutions, regional banks, private sector and philanthropic organizations. The office’s dialogue with the World Bank at all levels—both the governing body of the Bank and its secretariat—is yet another example of its more institutionalised collaboration with all stakeholders. Similar outreach efforts to OECD/DAC on development effectiveness have contributed to lending stronger voice to the aspirations and concerns of these countries in OECD/DAC deliberations.

The Office has supported efforts to encourage new and durable partnerships for sustainable development of SIDS, including through acting as a secretariat, together with DESA, of the GA-led Steering Committee on Partnerships for Small Island Developing States.

UN-OHRLLS has also promoted enhanced south-south cooperation, with increased collaboration with all the emerging economies. It has, for instance, supported the organization and servicing of the High-Level Round Table on South-South Cooperation in New York, which was co-chaired by the Secretary-General and the President of China and held in September 2014. The event resulted in the announcement of important deliveries to LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS. Further, the office was also instrumental in supporting the establishment and the work of informal groups of Friends of the vulnerable countries to promote and amplify understanding and collaboration among vulnerable countries, development partners and countries from the South.

Looking forward, success in advancing the development agenda of the most vulnerable countries will depend on the strength of multi-stakeholder partnerships that will be built across sectors in the years ahead. Success will also hinge on the degree of synergy and coherence between the three programmes of Actions and the newly adopted the 2030 Agenda, AAAA, the Sendai Framework and the Paris Agreement—at global, regional and local levels.

Success will therefore require that UN-OHRLLS continues to lend support for the effective participation of the three groups of countries in these processes, including through the provision of additional on-demand analytical backstopping support in the context of the groups’ coordination meetings as well as intergovernmental negotiations. It also demands that the office carry out new activities to mobilize a larger number of other stakeholders, including private sector, the civil society, academia and foundations, to ensure that LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS are supported in creating integrated and tailored solutions aimed at building resilience and sustainable development based on their own specific circumstances. Finally, UN-OHRLLS remains committed to advocating for enhanced support to LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS in the days ahead. It would consider itself successful only when these vulnerable countries bring about transformative changes in the lives of their people in an equitable and sustainable manner.
Bangladesh – H.E. Ambassador Masud Bin Momen
Finance would be the biggest challenge for the LDCs to implement SDGs. Development partners must fulfill their commitment to provide the equivalent of 0.15-0.2% of their GNI as ODA to the LDCs. Robust investment support would help these countries achieve productive capacity particularly in agriculture, manufacturing and services. Serious attention must be given to the fact that vulnerable countries still face difficulties in having access to, and availability of, technology and innovation. Operationalization of the Technology Bank would be a way forward for us. Finally, efforts must be redoubled for greater integration of the vulnerable countries with global economy. Conclusion of the current trade negotiations to ensure duty-free and quota-free market access for the LDC products and other trade issues is a prerequisite for the vulnerable countries to that end.

As the countries of the world were united to devise ways to combat global poverty and underdevelopment through the global agreements, they must demonstrate the same level of commitment to forge partnership for the implementation of the goals and targets in the LDCs.

Zambia – H.E. Ambassador Dr. Mwaba Kasese-Bota
The successful implementation and achievement of the SDGs will be possible only if progress is made in these groups of vulnerable countries and when no one is left behind. Therefore, the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS deserve special attention from the international community in our pursuit of sustainable development. The most vulnerable countries also need to be made part of and be actively engaged in the follow-up efforts to these global processes and frameworks to ensure that our issues are fully incorporated.

“...successful implementation and achievement of the SDGs will be possible only if progress is made in these groups of vulnerable countries and when no one is left behind.”

Maldives – H.E. Ambassador Ahmed Sareer
Access to the appropriate means of implementation has long been a major challenge in moving from the negotiation phase of sustainable development to implementing projects on the ground. Without adequate resources we simply cannot make the investments needed to get the work started and see it through to completion. Relatedly, we must continue to build on the partnerships that are so fundamental to doing sustainable development right. That means continuing an open dialogue about what is working and what isn’t, and having the flexibility to make adjustments along the way. Sustainable development is a long-term endeavor and it is critical that we allow for a learning process to occur as we work to be more responsive to needs and efficient.

We need to take advantage of the synergies and convergences between the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and other global frameworks to maximise the sustainable developmental outcomes for the LLDCs.
Climate change has been referred to as the defining issue of our time. In light of the Paris Agreement, what are your hopes for adaptation and building resilience to the increasing challenges posed by climate change in your country group?

H.E. Ambassador Ahmed Sareer

Small islands are particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts and we are already seeing extreme weather that is pushing our ability to adapt. For example, the powerful El Niño conditions last year, which were driven by climate change, wreaked havoc across our membership: from record cyclones to record droughts to the longest and potentially most destructive coral bleaching event in history. In terms of resilience and adaptation, it is critical that we continue to gather the baseline data that is so important to effective disaster risk management. We should also look at how we can better collaborate on sharing best practices, both in building resilience in our infrastructure and recovering in the aftermath of a drought, flood, storm, and so forth. In terms of the Paris Agreement, delivery of the resources pledged to help vulnerable communities adjust to the new realities of climate change is indispensable to our ability to adjust to the new realities of climate change.

“...delivery of the resources pledged to help vulnerable communities adjust to the new realities of climate change is indispensable to our ability to adjust to the new realities of climate change.”

H.E. Ambassador Masud Bin Momen

Climate change impacts continue to undermine the development efforts of the many of the LDCs. For example, in Bangladesh, a considerable amount of our development gains are taken away by the adverse impacts of climate change every year. The incidence of poverty also exacerbates the climate vulnerability of the LDCs. There must be wider appreciation of the fact that the threat of climate change disproportionately affects LDCs. Countries like Bangladesh would need more external support to tackle the challenges posed by climate change. This support would have to come in the form of additional finance, technology and capacity building. Rules must be made easier for ensuring the accessibility to the existing funds such as the Green Climate Fund, LDC Fund etc. by the LDCs.

H.E. Ambassador Dr. Mwaba Kasese-Bota

LDCs are especially affected by the effects of climate change which constitute serious challenges to the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. Because our countries are characterized by large proportions of dryland, they are highly vulnerable and disproportionately affected by desertification, land degradation and drought. Some landlocked developing countries are also affected by flooding, including glacial lake outburst floods. Glacial lake outburst floods in have also been reported in some LLDCs especially those with high mountainous regions. These climate change effects exert tremendous pressure on our economies and people and have serious consequences including on agricultural production, food security, energy constraints, transport infrastructure, water availability, erosion of biodiversity, migration and general human health. The Paris Agreement resolves to enhance the provision of urgent and adequate finance, technology and capacity-building support to developing countries and particularly countries vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.

As the international community begins implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), leaving no one behind how can vulnerable countries build on momentum made towards meeting these goals and ensure successful implementation?

H. E. Ambassador Dr. Mwaba Kasese-Bota

First and foremost, ensuring successful implementation of the new global development agenda requires national commitment. The development of each country is the primary responsibility of that country itself. This is what we, as LLDCs, have also acknowledged in the Vienna Programme of Action. For that reason, we need to continue to enhance our domestic resource mobilization efforts. LLDCs should also undertake the necessary domestic actions to mainstream the 2030 Agenda and the Vienna Programme of Action into our national development plans and strategies in order to ensure effective implementation.

Realizing that our national efforts require international support, we need to create the necessary pre-conditions and the enabling domestic environment for development assistance, private sector investment, partnerships, development projects and programmes implemented by international organizations.

H.E. Ambassador Ahmed Sareer

I think it is important that we continue the dialogue we started at the beginning of this process so many years ago. As the slogan “durable and genuine partnerships” suggests, sustainable development is a team effort that asks something of donors and recipients. Both sides need to be open and flexible enough to adapt to changes that inevitably occur over the course of the implementation phase. But, the truth is, we have learned a lot over the years and many of those lessons are reflected in the outcome document. If we stick to those
principals and honor the commitments we made to each other, I’m confident we will be successful.

**H.E. Ambassador Masud Bin Momen**

The sustainable development goals are transformative as they are universal and indivisible.

Nevertheless, while international cooperation for the LDCs has been highlighted in the SDGs, the implementation of these goals is primarily the onus of the LDCs themselves. We would have to invest more in furthering our productive capacity in all sectors with particular focus on agriculture, and rural development, putting in place sustainable infrastructure, and ensuring energy availability. While mobilizing external resources, we must also focus on domestic resource mobilization for financing the SDGs. All our economic efforts must aim at employment generation particularly targeting the youth and women of the society.

Although the goals are indivisible, the governments of the LDCs would have to attach importance to their national priorities. The implementation of the goals must be integrated with the mainstream development plans and actions.

**H.E. Ambassador Masud Bin Momen**

UN-OHRLLS has played a constructive role in resource mobilization for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS through advocacy and coordination. Thanks to the UN-OHRLLS, the IPoA and its Mid-Term Review, the Almaty Declaration, Vienna Declaration, Samoa Pathway and the Mauritius Strategy have been important milestones where the interest of these countries featured quite prominently. UN-OHRLLS has been overseeing the implementation of internationally agreed goals and commitments for accelerating the pace of development in these vulnerable countries. It has been working as an institutional memory for these countries by collecting and collating information and data concerning their development. By organizing different events, workshops, seminars and meetings on issues related to the LDCs, UN-OHRLLS has provided the platform for sharing best practices and lessons learnt among these countries and all stakeholders. Arranging funds and facilitating participation of LDCs in events has been a remarkable contribution of the UN-OHRLLS to ensure effective representation of the LDCs.

**H. E. Ambassador Dr. Mwaba Kasese-Bota**

UN-OHRLLS has been a key advocate for the special needs and challenges of the LLDCs ever since its inception. UN-OHRLLS has been coordinating and mobilizing support from the UN system and other international and regional organizations to our Group, with a view to ensure effective and coordinated implementation.

UN-OHRLLS marks its 15 year anniversary this year. How has the Office supported your country group and what are some key milestones reached so far?

“Thanks to the UN-OHRLLS, the IPoA and its mid-term review, the Almaty Declaration, Vienna Declaration, Samoa Pathway and the Mauritius Strategy have been important milestones...”

What we have seen over the past 15 years is that there is greater visibility and international recognition of the challenges and special needs of the LLDCs and that our issues are now firmly integrated into the international development agenda. Increased international awareness and recognition of our issues could not have been possible without the support of UN-OHRLLS to the LLDC Group in achieving our goals and ambitions.

**H.E. Ambassador Ahmed Sareer**

The Office has played an invaluable advocacy role in calling international attention to the challenges our groups face and our successes as well. We have also been pleased to see it bring a high level of engagement with the private sector, which has a crucial role to play in achieving full implementation.
International community review progress of the Istanbul Programme of Action

The Midterm Review (MTR) of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries took place in Antalya, Turkey from 27 to 29 May, 2016. The three-day meeting, co-organized by The Government of Turkey and The United Nations’ Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States was attended by two thousand participants including high-level officials and representatives from government, parliaments, international and regional organizations, civil society, private sector, foundations, think tanks and the media.

The MTR featured an intergovernmental plenary, four high-level roundtables, more than two dozen side events, a private sector forum, a civil society forum and a pre-conference event hosted by UNFPA and the Government of Bangladesh. A number of initiatives were announced, including the appointment of a Governing Council for the Technology Bank for Least Developed Countries (LDCs), which will support access to and the better utilization of science, technology and innovation.

The MTR took place on the heels of an unprecedented and ambitious agenda for the United Nations where in 2015, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Agenda for Action, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Climate Agreement were adopted. Antalya was an important opportunity to strengthen synergies between the implementation of the IPoA and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The international community committed to undertake a study that will consider ways in which LDCs can manage and withstand shocks such as natural disasters, health pandemics and economic volatility. It was also agreed to increase the role of the United Nations system in supporting Least Developed Countries to attract an increased flow of foreign direct investment that promotes economic growth and development.

“LDCs represent almost a billion people, an enormous human and natural resource potential for world economic growth, welfare, and prosperity” said Secretary-General of the Conference, Gyan Chandra Acharya. “Leaving no one behind and protecting our planet is possible only by addressing the special needs of the poorest and most vulnerable group of nations.”

The meeting adopted a Political Declaration, in which participants highlighted how the Least Developed Countries have experienced some recent progress in areas including reduced child and maternal mortality rates, gender parity in education and parliaments and access to the internet and mobile networks. Economic growth has also been strong, despite its pace having been more volatile and below the average of the last decade. There has also been an increase in the number of countries fulfilling the graduation criteria.

The meeting reaffirmed a strong commitment to reverse the decline in Overseas Development Assistance and fulfil the pledge made by development partners to allocate the equivalent of 0.2 per cent of their Gross National Income to Least Developed Countries.

It was emphasized that initiatives and programmes, providing Least Developed Countries with access to duty-free and quota-free markets and offering favourable conditions under which exports qualify for preferential treatment, should be fully utilized. There was a further commitment to increase Aid for Trade to LDCs.

“Leaving no one behind and protecting our planet is possible only by addressing the special needs of the poorest and most vulnerable group of nations.”

The MTR presented an important opportunity to foster transformative multi-stakeholder partnerships among governments, private sector, academia, civil society and the United Nations to strengthen the enabling environment in LDCs.

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2001
- UN-OHRLLS is established

2002
- Mr. Anwarul Karim Chowdhury of Bangladesh appointed as High Representative
- USG Chowdhury & Professor Jeffrey Sachs launch report on LDCs, New York
- USG Chowdhury advocates for vulnerable countries at Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, South Africa

2003
- USG Chowdhury submits report to Kyoto Water Forum
- USG Chowdhury is SG of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation, Almaty
- USG Chowdhury pushes for support to vulnerable countries, Marrakech

2004
- USG Chowdhury briefly CARICOM leaders ahead of SIDS PoA Review, Mauritius
- USG Chowdhury highlights path to achieving Almaty PoA to LLDCs Ministerial Meeting, New York
- USG Chowdhury emphasises differential measures to support resilience, build capacity and for small states to benefit from globalization, Washington D.C.
- USG Chowdhury highlights poverty eradication challenges at World Political Forum, Stresa

2005
- USG Chowdhury is Secretary-General of the Implementation Review of the PoA for SIDS, Mauritius
- USG Chowdhury calls for full implementation of Almaty PoA for sustainable transport systems at International Conference on Sustainable Transportation in Developing Countries, Abu Dhabi
- USG Chowdhury calls for international support to vulnerable countries to implement MDGs, Bangkok

2006
- USG Chowdhury urges support to LLDCs in global trade at OSCE, Vienna
- USG Chowdhury encourages pursuit of trade facilitation measures to world leaders, Havana
- USG Chowdhury underscores the needs of vulnerable countries in achieving MDG 8 to ECOSOC on International Solidarity Day

2007
- USG Chowdhury highlights energy challenges for vulnerable countries at Energy Conference on Sustainability, Daegu
- Mr. Cheick Sidi Diarra appointed as High Representative
- USG Diarra briefs AOSIS on special attention needed to SIDS

2008
- USG Diarra underlines need for support to vulnerable countries facing climate change impacts at Conference on Climate Change and Human Security, Athens
- USG Diarra introduces the sixth annual progress report of the SG on implementation of LDCs’ PoA, New York

2009
- USG Diarra emphasises vulnerable countries’ climate change efforts and needs for more support, Washington D.C.
- USG Diarra stresses importance of international development assistance at 8th Annual Ministerial Meeting LLDCs, New York
- Ms. Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri appointed Director

2010
- High Representative lays out recommendations for mobilizing international support for SIDS at the Five-Year Review of Mauritian Strategy, Grenada
- USG Diarra stresses effects of climate change and SDGs in vulnerable countries at High Level Conference on Water and Global Health, New York
- USG Diarra emphasises need for financial resources for progress in LDCs at Ministerial Meeting, Lisbon

2011
- LDC Eminent Persons Group and UN-OHRLLS release report on Inclusive Growth and Prosperity to close development gap with rest of the world
- UN-OHRLLS co-organises Fourth UN Conference on the LDCs (LDC-IV), Istanbul
- USG Diarra elaborates on implementation of Istanbul PoA at UNIDO LDC Ministerial Conference, Vienna

2012
- USG Diarra calls for support to LDCs after adoption of IPoA at World Investment Forum
- Ms. Heidi Schroeder-Fox is appointed Director
- Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya of Nepal is appointed High Representative
- USG Acharya stresses urgency of declining ODA to LDCs in implementation of IPoA, New York

2013
- USG Acharya addresses Security Council on Climate Change and population displacements challenges for SIDS, New York
- High-Level SIDS event by UN-OHRLLS and UNISDR on Disaster Risk Reduction, Geneva
- UN-OHRLLS releases “State of the LDCs” report on development strategy and productive capacity
- USG Acharya introduces reports of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of PoA for the LDCs for Decade 2011-2020 and on establishment of Technology Bank, New York
- Launch of South-South Technology Transfer Facility for the LLDCs, Nairobi

2014
- UN-OHRLLS and Benin identify new partnerships for LDCs at Ministerial Conference, Cotonou
- Ahead of Third International Conference on SIDS, UN-OHRLLS and Apple’s iTune showcase music from SIDS iconic artists
- UN-OHRLLS holds Private Sector Partnership Forum at Third International Conference on SIDS, amounting new partnerships, Apia
- USG Acharya is Secretary General of Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries, Vienna
- UN-OHRLLS organises Ministerial Meeting of Asia-Pacific LDCs on graduation and synergy with post-2015 Development Agenda, Kathmandu

2015
- UN-OHRLLS raises awareness on Disaster Risk Reduction for SIDS at Sendai Conference
- UN-OHRLLS and Italy hold Meeting of African LDCs on structural socio-economic transformation to achieve IPoA, Milan
- USG Acharya calls for financial resources for sustainable development at Financing for Development Conference, Ethiopia
- UN-OHRLLS and China host Roundtable on South-South Cooperation chaired SG and Chinese President, New York
- UN-OHRLLS signs MOU with China to implement 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, IPoA, VPoA and Samoa Pathway
- UN-OHRLLS holds side events for vulnerable countries facing climate change at COP21, Paris

2016
- UN-OHRLLS, Aruba and the Netherlands hold P3a and launch SIDS-Global Business Network
- UN-OHRLLS and Turkey organise the Midterm Review of the Istanbul Programme of Action for LDCs, Antalya
- USG Acharya articulate challenges and opportunities of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as UN-OHRLLS and WTO hold Fifth Meeting of Trade Ministers of LLDCs, Geneva

For more details on UN-OHRLLS’ 15 year anniversary visit www.unohrlls.org
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Did you know UN-OHRLLS:
- Supports 92 vulnerable countries with a combined population of 1.1 billion people
- Mobilizes international support
- Coordinates and implements Programmes of Actions
- Advocates in favor of vulnerable country groups
- Supports countries through the United Nations system

UN-OHRLLS
The United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States

**3 Country Groups**
- 48 LDCs*
- 32 LLDCs°
- 38 SIDS 

**92 Vulnerable Countries**
- 48 LDCs* (including 17 LLDCs and 9 SIDS)
- 32 LLDCs° (including 17 LDCs)
- 38 SIDS **

**3 Programmes of Action**
- Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 (IPoA)
- Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024
- SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (S.A.M.O.A.) Pathway

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* Least Developed Countries (LDCs) - 48 countries, including 17 LLDCs and 9 SIDS

° Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) - 32 countries

** Small Island Developing States (SIDS) - 38 countries (of which 9 are LDCs), 20 Non-UN Member States/Associate Members of Regional Commissions - total 58

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**UN-OHRLLS**

**Facts**
- **Least Developed Countries (LDCs)**: Angola, Bangladesh, Benin, Cambodia, Dem. Rep. of the Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, Madagascar, Mauritania, Mozambique, Myanmar, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Togo, United Rep. of Tanzania, Yemen
- **Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs)**: Afghanistan, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia, Lao PDR, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Nepal, Niger, Rwanda, South Sudan, Uganda, Zambia
- **Small Island Developing States (SIDS)**: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Bahrain, Barbados, Belize, Cabo Verde, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Seychelles, Singapore, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago
Thoughts on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of UN-OHRLLS

Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative, UN-OHRLLS (2002-2007)

Fifteen years have gone by since UN-OHRLLS came into existence as an entity of the UN family! To me it seems like the other day when Secretary General Kofi Annan asked me to head this new Office created by the mandate of the General Assembly in December 2001. Though the Office came into existence formally on 1 January 2002, in reality its physical existence began taking shape when I joined in March of that year as its first formally recruited staff. Thereafter, it was my endeavour to put the structure together, articulate its agenda and mission with needed specificity and build partnerships.

Though the Office came out basically of the efforts of the Group of 77 and China at the Third LDCs conference in Brussels, the General Assembly added the landlocked developing countries and small island developing states to its mandate making it the champion of the most vulnerable countries of the world. Though the budget and staff size was miniscule compared to the mandate of the Office, I was teased as having the longest title in the UN system. Keeping in mind the origin of the idea for the Office, the acronym OHRLLS started getting circulation. But from the outset my objective was to give the three groups of countries in especially difficult situations equal prominence and attention – that way, LLS was thought of to represent the three groups. To give a visual identity to the Office, its original logo with three overlapping globes representing three groups was my design.

I continue to believe strongly that the work of the UN-OHRLLS needs to profile the cause of the three groups with equal emphasis. As head of UN-OHRLLS, I was the Secretary-General of the two global conferences which adopted the Almaty Programme of Action for the LLDCs and the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation for SIDS, in addition to the five-year mid-term review of the Brussels Programme of Action for LDCs.

The role UN-OHRLLS could play became evident when in the second month of my joining in April 2002 when I could intervene to put the special needs of the three groups in the MDGs targets launched for the UN system though everything was already agreed upon beforehand. This lesson became my driving force to make tactical interventions at the right time and place with the full knowledge of the UN system functionality to achieve worthwhile profile for our mandate. I call this operational capacity as “doing more with less.” Now of course things have changed in a big way with increase in the budget and staff – but simultaneously, expectations of the Office has also expanded. My successors Ambassador Diarra of Mali and Ambassador Acharya of Nepal have pursued its agenda with energy and enthusiasm.

I believe three major focus of UN-OHRLLS should be:

• to consider its mandate as a “mission” not as a “job description” — each staff member led by the High Representative should internalize real sensitivity to the cause they are championing rather than endlessly repeating mere statistics;
• to find ways to overcome the system-wide, particularly at the senior management levels, inexplicable apathy which still pervades for these most vulnerable countries; and
• to put women at the center of its advocacy agenda as that will yield best results for sustainable human development of these countries.

With nearly 90 countries — 40% of the UN membership — under UN-OHRLLS mandate, its 15th anniversary should make all of us proud of the opportunity to speak up for cause of the world’s most vulnerable and be the voice for the voiceless millions! 😊

Message from Mr. Cheick Sidi Diarra

Ambassador Cheick Sidi Diarra, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative, UN-OHRLLS (2007-2012)

For the past 15 years UN-OHRLLS has dedicated its work exclusively to the most vulnerable countries. The office has been actively engaged in advocacy and outreach through various avenues including partnerships with: the UN system, academia, civil society and the media. UN-OHRLLS has coordinated the annual review processes on the progress made by vulnerable countries including reports to the UN General Assembly and ECOSOC and has made recommendations on the best approach to improve their progress. Through the senior management tools of the UN Secretary-General, the Office has also made important strides in including the voice of the most vulnerable countries in the decision-making process.

Furthermore, UN-OHRLLS has played a key role in organizing international conferences and other high-level meetings to further the dialogue and renew international commitments to LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

Going forward, it is my hope that UN-OHRLLS will continue to develop its substantive capacities in offering incentives for smooth transition toward graduation and post-graduation of LDCs and likewise, contribute substantively to the internalization of the SDG objectives and targets especially by SIDS. It will also be important to take a more operational role by creating a platform (virtual portal) where major national and regional structuring projects of the most vulnerable countries and opportunities offered by development partners will be posted. This will make information available in real time. The office could also connect the offer and the demand in these areas. 😊
Working towards a bright future for vulnerable countries

Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox reflects on four years as Director of UN-OHRLLS

When UN-OHRLLS came into existence in 2001, it signalled recognition from the international community that focused attention and support from the United Nations that was needed to address the needs and challenges of its most vulnerable Member States: those that were least developed, landlocked and situated on small Islands. In the beginning, the office was given a very large and aspirational mandate, but a relatively small staff and budget. The office went through its first decade under the capable leadership of USG Chowdry (2002-2007), and USG Diarra (2007-2012). This decade included the establishment of the new programmes of action; the Brussels Programme of Action for the LDCs, the Mauritius Strategy for the SIDS, the Almaty programme of action for the Landlocked Developing Countries.

I had the privilege of joining the office in July 2012, at the start of its second decade, and just a few days before Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya was appointed Under Secretary General. The last four years have been extremely busy with the office organizing numerous dedicated meetings and events addressing the special needs and challenges of these countries at global, regional and country level. The office has partnered with many Member States, international organizations, business partners and non-governmental organizations to make sure that dedicated attention and support is provided to the most vulnerable countries. During these four years the office has also grown significantly. 10 new posts were allocated to the Least Developed Countries programme, following the approval of the Istanbul Programme of Action. The office now has a dedicated and highly motivated staff of 30 persons, comprised of 28 nationalities.

UN-OHRLLS works very closely with the Member States that the office represents and their partners. This is a tremendous partnership, and it is an honor to be directing an office that assists these countries in reaching their development aspirations. Some of the highlights of our work during the past four years include: supporting the formulation of the SAMOA Pathway for small island developing States and the Vienna Programme of Action for Land-locked Developing countries, both setting out long-term visions for international support and accomplishment during the next decade and the organisation of the Mid-term Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action). Another recent highlight was when in September 2015 UN-OHRLLS hosted together with China a roundtable on South-South cooperation, chaired by the UN Secretary-General and the President of China.

These are very exciting – and challenging times for the international community, as we turn our attention especially toward achievement of the SDGs, and responding to global climate change. We will not succeed in achieving the SDGs, and successfully combating climate change, unless sufficient attention is given to the special needs of the most vulnerable countries. We at UN-OHRLLS are dedicated to helping LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS on these challenges during the coming years. To that end, we are especially pleased to lead on one of the first deliverables of the SDGs as the General Assembly will consider the establishment of the LDC Technology Bank.

"We will not succeed in achieving the SDGs, and successfully combating climate change, unless sufficient attention is given to the special needs of the most vulnerable countries."

Photo: Joseph Castel, Flikr

Myanmar, rice fields
Drive west round the ring road from Port Vila, Vanuatu’s capital, and you pass three warehouses near the airport. After some outlying villages overlooking the beach, a steep grind over the hill takes you to Havannah harbour and a cluster of fancy resorts. At the north of the island you might pass women in pick-up trucks carrying fruit and vegetables to market. More resorts follow. The trip, mostly on smooth asphalt, takes a couple of hours depending on how long you stop to gaze at the ocean.

A decade ago the story was very different. A potholed road petered out after town, leaving only the sturdiest of 4x4s to struggle along a progressively rockier track, scoured harsh by rain. There were no warehouses. The tourists at the resorts in town rarely ventured far. Those ladies took a day to travel to market.

The revolution wrought by the ring road is part of a long-term economic boom. Driven by tourism and real estate investment, income per head in the Pacific island state has risen by over 2.5 times in real terms since 2002. The economy is bouncing back from cyclone Pam in 2015, paving the way for graduation in 2020.

In many ways Vanuatu’s experience typifies the LDC story. Until 2016 only four had left the category since its formation in the early 1970s – Botswana in 1994, then in recent years Cape Verde, the Maldives and Samoa. Now a host of others are on the brink of graduation. Higher oil prices in recent years have meant Equatorial Guinea will leave the category in 2017, followed by Angola in 2021.

Seven more are likely to follow shortly after, having met two of the criteria for the first time in 2015 at the most recent triennial review of the UN Committee for Development Policy (CDP), the body which monitors the category and makes recommendations on LDC graduation.

While the economic and human development successes of LDCs are testament to the work of government policymakers and businesses in conjunction with donors (Vanuatu’s ring road was built with grant assistance from the United States), the UN agencies have played a vital role.
One of the main successes of UN-OHRLLS was to launch, help promote and implement the LDC programmes of action. The recent mid-term review of the Istanbul Programme (IPoA), among other things, urged official donors to recommit to their target of sending aid worth 0.15% to 0.2% of gross national income to LDCs, and to continue promoting LDC trade and investment.

UN-OHRLLS has helped integrate many IPoA targets into the sustainable development goals (SDGs), including those on doubling the LDC share of global trade and raising productive capacity.

Behind the scenes, UN-OHRLLS has also conducted much of the necessary inter-governmental work, promoting LDC issues at the UN. Partly as a result of this work and at the UN Conference on Trade and Development, LDC trade, investment and aid receive more global attention than ever before.

The CDP, part of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, periodically reviews the category, monitoring LDCs and determining which meet the official criteria. These criteria, measured by objective indexes reflecting per capita income, human assets and economic vulnerability, have been carefully chosen to reveal the broad determinants of sustainable development, moving beyond the view that progress is just about income. LDCs must meet two of the three criteria or exceed double the per capita income criteria for two consecutive triennial reviews of the CDP to be considered eligible for graduation.

The CDP secretariat is developing a diagnostic toolkit to help governments prepare for graduation and understand the implications. It will help remove the uncertainty surrounding the graduation process and diagnose which areas of the economy to target following graduation.

Despite these successes, much remains to be done. Cyclone Pam is one example of the vulnerabilities that will continue to affect the LDCs, particularly the island states and countries with coastal areas hit by climate change.

Inequality within and between LDCs remains a particular challenge. Insecurity and conflict are increasing.

Many of the graduating countries achieved success on the basis of the commodities boom, and economic growth for the LDC group as a whole has faltered during the global economic slowdown. The services-based successes of the graduating island states aren’t replicable everywhere. Diversification remains weak, and many LDCs are excluded from international supply chains.

That’s why the focus of the IPoA and SDGs on productive capacity is so important. LDCs need to develop and enact their own specific, targeted industrial policies in order to boost production and to move from low to high productivity activities. Vanuatu’s ring road demonstrates the multiplier effect of infrastructure investment, which is too low in most LDCs.

In the meantime, Vanuatu’s story provides hope for others. With good policies, increased investment and the backing of the international community, many more will follow.
Civil Society offers vital perspectives from Least Developed Countries

Gauri Pradhan
International Coordinator, LDC Watch

There was a large civil society presence recently at the Midterm Review of the Istanbul Programme of Action. What role can civil society now play in supporting the further implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA)?

GP The civil society presence was indeed exemplary during the Midterm Review of the Istanbul Programme of Action. UN-OHRLLS and the Turkish Government must both be commended for their contribution to the promotion of LDC civil society space during the conference as well as at the conference itself. LDC Watch, as the representative of global LDC civil society, also played a significant role in bringing together prominent representatives of LDC civil society to the Civil Society Forum.

There are still five years to go until the conclusion of the IPoA and a lot to accomplish. Civil society needs to go further in its engagement by fulfilling its role as a watchdog, holding the respective governments, as well as other relevant stakeholder institutions, to account in regard to their respective actions as stated in the IPoA. Civil society can also promote transparency and accountability as well as furthering advocacy by raising awareness of societal issues and challenges in regard to the effective implementation of the IPoA. It also needs to act as a capacity building entity and bring expertise and experience to shape policy and strategy, identifying and building solutions as well as giving power to the voices of marginalized and underrepresented people of the LDCs.

Recognizing that no one sector can solve the problems that are faced by the LDCs, civil society needs to increase and strengthen partnerships and collaborative frameworks within the LDC civil society and beyond, engaging stakeholders from the government and international organizations as well as the private sector.

How can civil society utilise the Sustainable Development Goals and other global commitments made in 2015, such as the Paris Agreement and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, to ensure that Least Developed Countries are at the forefront of sustainable development over the next 15 years?

GP Achieving these internationally declared development goals is a challenge, especially for LDCs where there is an acute level of deprivation. Their economies are vulnerable and their infrastructure is weak and inadequate. CSOs must truly be active to bring sufficient attention to the issues faced by LDCs. LDC as well as Non-LDC Civil Society must use global commitments such as the SDGs, the Paris Agreement and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda as opportunities to increase awareness regarding the challenges faced by LDCs and support sustainable development by improving the quality and implementation capacity. These global programmes of action should go hand in hand with the already adopted IPoA.

Individual LDC negotiating power is weak, but as a group they are able to leverage more power and support. “Leaving no one behind” is an underlying principle of the SDGs and the theme is also reflected in other global commitments. Civil Society in LDCs and beyond should take on a critical role, listening to people at ground level, coordinating with national and local governments and undertaking necessary lobbying and campaigns with development partners.

LDCs need to adopt a cross-cutting approach in order to identify creative solutions at the local level that government institutions may miss. Civil society are closest to the ground and the most aware of local issues, thus enabling them to effectively represent the true voice of the people in LDCs. Civil Society also need to increase their partnerships with governments, the private sector and other international bodies, working in synergy with these entities and sharing the same path towards attaining global commitments. For this, a dynamic and able leadership must be established and strengthened in LDCs.

How, in your view, has UN-OHRLLS supported the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) over the last 15 years?

GP Since the adoption of the Brussels Programme of Action in 2001, LDCs have made significant progress in economic, social and human development with the support and guidance of UN-OHRLLS.

LDCs are faced with inherent geographical, economic and political vulnerabilities and challenges; however, in spite of the multiple challenges and constraints, many have made considerable progress in achieving positive and sustainable development outcomes. Many of the LDCs have significantly increased domestic resource mobilization and used this for sustainable development in the last fifteen years. Furthermore, since the adoption of the IPoA in 2011, LDCs have made some progress in the areas of human rights, good governance, transparency, democratic participation, the role of law at the national and international levels, human development, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Also, many LDCs are meeting the criteria for graduation and many others have expressed their aspirations to graduate. UN-OHRLLS has played a crucial role in the attainment of these outcomes and in the potential for future graduation.
Small islands plan greater collaboration through Public-Private-Partnerships

Aruba, March 2016 – A high-level event supporting public-private partnerships in small island developing States (SIDS) took place in Aruba from 22-24 March, 2016. The Public-Private-Partnerships (P3a) conference highlighted the importance of strengthening national and international cooperation for the future sustainable development of small islands through PPPs.

The three-day event brought together some 300 participants from SIDS and public-private partnership leaders to provide governments, private companies, financial institutions and knowledge centers with the opportunity to network and showcase partnerships in SIDS. A new global business network for small island developing states was launched at the P3a. The SIDS Global Business Network (SIDS-GBN), an initiative of UN-OHRLLS, will link up small islands by connecting the SIDS private sector, global business and other national and international stakeholders.

“My office is delighted to have launched the new online SIDS Global Business Network, a tool that we hope will continue to facilitate exchange of information between small islands and the private sector”. Said Under-Secretary-General and High Representative Gyan Chandra Acharya.

Panelists discussed new models for Public-Private Partnerships utilizing technologies that encourage the uptake of renewable energy while also building the capacities of SIDS and allowing for employment opportunities. The vital role of governments in spurring the growth of renewable energy was raised in addition to the issue of sustainable agriculture, where potential for partnerships between world-class agricultural research institutions and SIDS institutions was identified.

The need for better analysis and new ways to attract youth involvement in sustainable agriculture were highlighted in addition to the great potential for sustainable tourism, which remains the biggest sector in SIDS for income, job creation and growth.

For many SIDS, IT connectivity, particularly to reliable broadband through undersea cable remains a key requirement. Regional approaches were explored in addition to ways in which market size can be expanded. Blended financing is a key component to ensuring that PPP projects can be successful. For SIDS, PPPs are essential for infrastructure plans to be turned into projects and become reality, however there are challenges with implementation.

Organised by UN-OHRLLS, together with the Government of Aruba and support from the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the P3a provided a platform to mobilize efforts in the pursuit of achieving the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals.

“Coming together as private and public sector, is something the UN has been encouraging over the last decades. But in reality, if we look at the development, we can see that recently, with all the global challenges, it has become more evident, also to the private sector, that they can not only focus on making gains for their shareholders, but it is also about the shared responsibility towards the future and the global challenges.” said Prime Minister of Aruba Mike Eman.

For further information: www.sidsgbn.org | www.unohrlls.org www.p3a.org
Landlocked Developing Countries call on international community to meet global commitments and support sustainable development

Ministers and senior government officials from the world’s 32 landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), met in Geneva in June 2016 and urged the international community to mobilize all available resources to help them meet the global goals and targets agreed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

A Ministerial Declaration adopted at the end of the meeting welcomed the recognition by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the special needs of landlocked developing countries and emphasized the importance of strong synergies in their implementation.

The declaration clearly outlines the development objectives of landlocked developing countries, addressing how they can make full use of their trade potential to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction requiring structural transformation, investment in infrastructure and transit facilitation. The Declaration calls for development objectives to be sufficiently met with coordinated policies in areas including investment, infrastructure, logistics, technology and the energy sector. Ministers also encouraged concerted measures and actions required to support LLDCs’ efforts to reduce commodity dependence, including through enhanced value addition and the diversification of their export base.

“Landlocked developing countries possess enormous potential in terms of both human and natural resources. We must be focused on fast and effective ways to turn around the situation in these countries with strong and consistent policy measures at the national level and equally robust and multi-pronged support at the international level”, said Gyan Chandra Acharya, Under-Secretary- General and High-Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. “We wish to turn the landlocked countries into land-linked countries with cooperation of transit countries, development partners and UN and other international and regional organisations.”

Ministers called for the rapid ratification and implementation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement which has important provisions for transparent and efficient transit procedures and if fully implemented will be beneficial to landlocked developing countries. Ministers also called for a dedicated work programme for the Landlocked Developing Countries in the WTO.

“The high level meeting of trade Ministers of the LLDC Group provided the right platform to examine in great depth the important role of trade in accelerating the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and in the achievement of the sustainable development goals.” said H.E. Mr. Raymond Mpundu, Deputy Minister of Commerce, Trade and Industry of the Republic of Zambia and Global Chair of the LLDC Group. “For our countries, enhancing trade is one of the key priorities to unlock the development potential of our economies and to ensure that no LLDC is left behind.”

The two-day event, from 23–24 June 2016, focused on ways in which landlocked developing countries can best utilize recent global development commitments to enhance their trade potential and overcome many of their structural and geographical challenges.

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“We stress the importance to have a specific Work Programme for LLDCs by the 11th Ministerial Conference. This Work Programme will address the special needs, challenges and vulnerabilities of LLDCs in order to increase their participation in the Multilateral Trading System.” said H.E. Mr. Juan Esteban Aguirre, Permanent Representative of Paraguay in Geneva and LLDC Group Coordinator on Trade and Development at the end of the meeting.
UN-OHRLLS’ flagship report ‘State of Least Developed Countries 2016’ was released in September, highlighting how progress towards graduation from the Least Developed Country (LDC) category has accelerated with 10 LDCs currently in the graduation process. Despite this, challenges to the sustainable development of LDCs persist, with new and increasing risks and uncertainties threatening development gains, including volatile commodity prices, major natural disasters, climate change impacts and health epidemics.

Read the report in full online at www.unohrlls.org