

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR DOMA TSHERING  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BHUTAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
ORGANISATIONAL SESSION OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE FIFTH  
UN CONFERENCE ON LDCs  
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Distinguished Co-chairs

Mr. Volkan Bozkir, President of the 75<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly

Madame High Representative and Secretary General of LDCV

Excellencies, Dear Colleagues,

1. As we embark on this important journey of setting priorities for the next ten year program of action for the LDCs, allow me to firstly extend my delegation's congratulations to our dear colleagues, Ambassador Rabab Fatima of Bangladesh and Ambassador Robert Rae of Canada on your election as the Co-chairs of the Preparatory Committee Bureau. We also congratulate Paraguay, Czech Republic, Ethiopia, Malawi, Nepal, Turkey and Uganda for their election as Members of the Bureau. Bhutan has full confidence in your collective leadership to guide us through the work in the months ahead towards preparations for LDCV, that in many respects, will be one of the linchpins for the full realization of the 2030 Agenda.
2. I echo prior speakers in conveying our appreciation to the government of Qatar for graciously assuming the role of host country of LDCV. We are certain that preparations underway, as outlined by Ambassador Al Thani, would lead to a most productive outcome in Doha in January 2022.

Co-Chairs,

3. At the outset, Bhutan aligns itself with the statements made by G77, LDC and LLDC Groups, and in doing so, make the following remarks in our national capacity.
4. I will limit my statement to three key areas which we suggest should guide our thinking as we prepare to articulate priorities for our next ten year program of action, with a view to ensure LDCs achieve the SDGs and are not left behind in this Decade of Action. Needless to say, all these priorities and specificities therein stem largely from the unfinished business of the IPoA.
5. Firstly, while recognising that with Vanuatu, whom we heartily congratulate, having graduated last December, and with 11 more LDCs on track to graduation, we were

brought closer to the IPOA's overarching objective, we note that we are far from having achieved its ambition within the Decade. The level of ambition must not change. But rather, it is the perception of graduation that would benefit from a shift.

- a. If it is indeed recognised that graduation is not an end in itself, but an important milestone in a country's journey towards sustainable development, resilience, and self reliance, we should also recognise that countries must be enabled to graduate on a sure footing with confidence, in a smooth and irreversible manner. Graduation is not a panacea to the significant vulnerabilities and development challenges faced by LDCs. This is underscored by the experience of those who have already graduated, demonstrating that vulnerabilities persist even after graduation, and challenges become even harder without reliable international support measures. The pandemic induced global economic recession has exacerbated these structural challenges.
  - b. Bhutan therefore considers that one of the most important priorities going forward is the need to ensure the sustainability of development momentum through the predictability and continuity of international support measures for newly graduated LDCs, and LDCs on the graduation track. Predictability in international support measures needs to be based on country specific situations and vulnerabilities, and should be the basis in the preparation of a framework for graduation, smooth transition, and sustainability after graduation.
  - c. For Bhutan, COVID-19 induced economic disruptions brought into sharper relief, the factors that kept the Economic Vulnerability Index (EVI) threshold beyond reach during both Bhutan's 2015 and 2018 triennial reviews. While assessment of the full impact of the pandemic on our economy remains underway, Bhutan looks forward to graduating from the LDC category in 2023. We also look forward to the CDP's Report on the comprehensive study undertaken on the impact of COVID-19 in LDCs, to which Bhutan was pleased to contribute its national perspective.
6. Secondly, drawing from our national experience, and as is observed to be the case across many LDCs, there is a need for renewed focus on expanding the productive capacity of our economies to achieve meaningful structural transformation. In this regard, the potential of science technology and innovation, particularly digital technologies, that could enable us to leapfrog, must be harnessed to promote structural transformation of our economies, eradicate poverty, and achieve sustainable development. An important step in that direction is ensuring that the technology gap in LDCs can be closed. From this perspective, Bhutan recognises the work of organisations like the LDC Technology Bank, as well as the need to strengthen their resource base to deliver LDCs with concrete policy options on the ground.

7. Third and most importantly, our next program of action must have ambitious language around Climate Change. For Bhutan, a landlocked least developed country with a fragile mountain ecosystem, the impact of climate change is severe. Himalayan glaciers are melting at alarming rates, in fact its potential for devastation was witnessed within our region in the past 48 hours, in the Indian state of Uttarakhand. Increasingly intense rainstorms activate damaging floods and landslides, incidences of forest fires, drying up of water sources, outbreak of crop diseases, erratic and high intensity of rainfall are all on the rise. LDCs who have contributed the least to the causes of climate change, suffer disproportionately from the impacts of natural hazards and climate induced disasters. The threat of reversal of decades of hard earned development gains is only one glacial outburst, one earthquake, one cyclone, or one tsunami, away. Substantial investments to enhance resilience to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change are therefore essential. In this regard, I echo the concerns raised by the LDC Chair on the need for increased climate adaptation finance for LDCs. The international community must ask why only a meagre 14 percent of climate funding has gone to the world's most vulnerable countries - the LDCs.
8. In conclusion, let me reiterate my delegation's full support to the Co-Chairs and Members of the Preparatory Committee Bureau. Bhutan looks forward to fruitful discussions and meaningful engagements as we work towards elaborating our priorities for the next program of action.

I thank you.