

Introduction

Excellencies, Friends, and Colleagues.

Thank you for the opportunity to join you today and speak at the opening of this important meeting.

Thank you to President Chakwera and the Government of Malawi for their leadership in advancing the programme of action and for hosting us today.

And thanks also to the UN organizers of this event.

Today and in the coming days, you will look back to take stock of the progress made under the Istanbul Programme of Action, and look forward, as you prepare for the new 10-year programme of action to be adopted in Doha next year.

SDGs

This work will take place in the context of the UN's Decade of Action and our shared vision to end poverty, rescue the planet and build a more peaceful world by achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

It is a considerable agenda, to be sure, and it is one that takes place against a backdrop of a pandemic.

For nearly a year, COVID-19 has posed unprecedented global challenges and has disproportionately affected Least Developed Countries where it threatens to rollback hard-won development gains.

In addition to the pandemic, we also face the worsening effects of climate change, protracted conflicts and resulting historic levels of human migration, as well as significant pressure due to debt levels in many Least Developed Countries.

Canada in international forums

Let me say that Canada recognizes the complex and increased challenges facing Least Developed Countries and we are committed to listening and working closely with you as partners.

For African LDCs in particular, we support your efforts to fulfill the promise of the historic African Continental Free Trade Area.

And Canada is delighted to co-chair, alongside Bangladesh, the preparatory committee for LDC-5.

Indeed, we are pleased to collaborate in many forums, including the *Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond* initiative that Canada's Prime Minister co-leads alongside Jamaica and the UN Secretary General.

The menu of policy options stemming from this process, in which many of you have been involved, may prove valuable to consider, discuss and potentially include in the next programme of action.

Building back better

As the world prepares to “build back better” the momentum behind financing for development is growing and Canada will work to ensure that policy options are translated into concrete actions and results.

Canada is listening and seeking to leverage our participation and voice in various international forums.

We are partnering with LDCs on a range of initiatives at a country-level to support your development objectives.

Because too much is at stake.

We cannot see the achievements to increase primary enrolment and completion rates for girls and boys in African and Haitian schools reversed.

Our shared future depends on the young people of African LDCs and Haiti to have the education, training, and job opportunities they need so they can contribute fully to their communities.

And we need to listen to the voices of young people when we make decisions that affect them today and in the future.

Of course, greater prosperity cannot happen without greater participation from women, no more so than through financial inclusion, so that women have equal access to capital, markets, digital technology and business development services.

Conclusion

The next ten years present an opportunity to innovate, to pivot where necessary, and to align our efforts to solve the challenges LDCs face.

The future depends on a lasting commitment to move forward with inclusive solutions that will see the world achieve the SDGs together, with no one left behind.

Canada is here to learn, to listen and to work with you.

May your discussions and deliberations over the coming days be fruitful and inspiring and point us toward a better future.

Merci. Thank you!