

**TALKING NOTES FOR THE HON. MINISTER DURING THE AFRICA REGIONAL REVIEW MEETING ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ISTANBUL PROGRAMME OF ACTION IN PREPARATION FOR THE FIFTH UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES**

***SESSION 8: BUILDING CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND ACCELERATING THE ENERGY TRANSITION IN AFRICAN LDCS,***

***FRIDAY 26<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2020; 15:16:30 HOURS***

- Madam, Moderator,
  - Your Excellencies;
  - Distinguished panelists;
  - Ladies and Gentlemen.
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- I am delighted to be part of this important discussion on building resilience and accelerating the energy transition in Least Developed Countries;
  - As we all know, Least Developed Countries face a range of pressures and challenges that undermine their economic and social development efforts and their achievement of all the sustainable development goals;
  - Climate change is the most serious 'present-day' threat to human and natural systems globally, and adds to these already existing pressures;
  - It is a threat multiplier tied to almost every major environmental and developmental challenge the world faces;

- Africa is home to 33 of the 46 LDCs, and as such building climate resilience and accelerating the energy transition in the African LDCs must be a top priority;
- Adapting to climate change has become an essential component of any planning processes in all countries particularly in LDCs;
- For the LDCs and other vulnerable countries climate change adaptation is a matter of survival of our vulnerable communities and fragile economies;
- While there is some progress towards improving energy efficiency and expanding access to electricity globally, significant deficits are increasingly concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa;
- Energy access in the African LDCs remains low, at less than 30%, therefore Stepped-up efforts are required to enable universal energy access and accelerate the transition to renewable energy and energy efficiency in all the LDCs;
- Globally and within the LDCs, we now have a good understanding of climate risks and potential adaptation solutions;
- In fact, while the LDCs remain vulnerable, they are the champions of adaptation to climate change, addressing the most complex issues of our time, starting with the national adaptation programmes of action (NAPAs) developed 20 years ago;
- We therefore have a solid ground to create enhanced support mechanisms for the LDCs to scale up their work on climate change adaptation and thereby strengthen resilience;
- Presently, all LDCs are putting in place their first National Adaptation Plans that would pave way for tackling medium- and long-term adaptation needs of the LDCs.
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- It is therefore crucial to ensure that each one is supported to make these plans operational and implement concrete adaptation actions;
- Coming from an LDC country, Zambia, myself, climate change has adversely affected our energy security;
- Until a month ago, my country, which relies heavily on hydro power generated electricity, experienced serious energy deficit due to reduced water levels in our reservoirs which meant rationing power supplied to our communities;
- In some cases, this meant households and businesses going without power for up to 12 hours in a day;
- However, Government has worked hard to increase the ratio of other renewable energy sources, particularly solar in our energy mix;
- Coupled with good rain season that we have experienced this year, this has resulted in normal generation and the load shedding, as the rationing of power was known, has been ended;
- The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly demonstrated that the collapse of the global supply chain systems largely crippled the weakest in the system, the LDCs, for managing the situation, in recovery efforts, and jumping to the new ways of development;
- COVID-19 has also taught us that reliance on external systems and products is not only unsustainable but also presents unprecedented challenges.
- With the restrictions in travel, all the support that would have been possible through external expertise is not practical.
- The LDCs must therefore be supported to build long-term capacity and systems;
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- In my own country, Zambia, we had to strike a delicate balance in ensuring we protect our populations from the Covid Pandemic;
- At the same time, we ensured the wheels of the economy continued running to avoid a total collapse of the economy, therefore, we did not have a total shut down, and indications are that we may soon be turning the corner;
- As I conclude my remarks, I wish to emphasise that being the most vulnerable, the LDCs must remain a priority under the UN system and the development community to enable them to catch up with the rest of the world;
- A unified UN led support system with special programmes per regions to support the LDCs to address climate change is critical;
- Therefore, efforts must be elevated to support all African LDCs to build human assets, diversify their economies, and build resilience to present and future shocks, and to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda as well as the Africa Agenda 2063;
- While the COVID19 pandemic is the most urgent threat facing humanity today, we cannot forget that climate change is the biggest peril confronting civilization over the longer term;
- In fact, climate action through the implementation of the Paris Agreement will not only address climate change but help the world build forward from COVID-19 and other shocks we are yet to encounter.
- **I thank you most sincerely for your attention**