

Talking Points for USG Cristina Duarte, Special Adviser on Africa
Organizational session of the Preparatory Committee to the Fifth United Nations
Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC5 PrepCom)
Agenda 6 – General Statement
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(Virtual)

I would like to Congratulate Bangladesh and Canada for Co-Chairing the PrepCom Bureau and all the elected members for their election to PrepCom Bureau.

I would also like to express appreciation for the leadership of Malawi, as Chair of the LDCs Group and Qatar for hosting the next Conference.

OSAA is committed to the successful preparatory process and outcome of the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries to be held in Doha, Qatar scheduled on 23-27 January 2022.

It is our hope that the vision of the IPoA to enable half of the LDCs to meet the criteria for graduation by 2020 will be a reality in the coming decade.

Despite the progress in the various eight areas of the IPoA, it has unfortunately not been impactful enough to change the development trajectory of African LDCs.

The story of the first 15 years of the 21st century in Africa was very optimistic due to high economic growth. However, the “African Rising Narrative” of the beginning of the century was mostly a story of economic growth based on gross domestic product (GDP), which is overly one-dimensional.

It is clear from development experience that high economic growth is not enough to end the vicious cycle of poverty or to ensure inclusive prosperity. Continuous emphasis on the same one-dimensional framework will prevent Africa from tackling its developmental challenges and seizing emerging opportunities.

LDC 5 Conference is an opportunity to reset Africa’s narrative. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has reversed gains and exposed the vulnerabilities to external shocks of LDCs. It is the moment to take action.

The theme of the African Union for 2021 could not be more appropriate.

«Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building the Africa We Want”.

This is a clear appeal to stop equating the business of managing poverty to development. Africa must now shift its focus to retaining and creating wealth, better managing its own

resources and fostering inclusiveness. This is a significant challenge. How can the continent undertake this switch? Over the years, development policies have been too much focused on managing poverty with the support of development partners. The result is that the focus on poverty management has not left space for public policy to focus on growing and retaining Africa's wealth.

The continent will achieve a sustainable "Africa Rising Narrative" only by focusing relentlessly on socioeconomic transformation and by breaking the "business as usual" cycle in terms of public policies in Africa, particularly those related to development financing".

In this regard, the AfCFTA is a huge milestone from a mind-set standpoint.,

In this respect, the role of public policies and institutions in promoting socioeconomic transformation towards a sustainable and inclusive development is a particular concern. Institutions, ... continue to be critical constraints for Africa's transformation, with deep implications for governance, competitiveness and control of value chains, natural resource management and infrastructure management.

Without putting in place the right policies and institutions, a number of obstacles will not be overcome. Among these are the challenge of:

- (i) sustainable infrastructure (a binding constraint to Africa's competitiveness),
- (ii) demographic transition, now that the population of Africa has surpassed 1 billion people,
- (iii) building high-productive labor-intensive African economies; and
- (iv) investing in skills and human development to be able to absorb the growing labor force.

The LDC 5 Conference and the new Plan of Action for the LDCs are an opportunity to give to institutional capacity building its rightful place in policymaking. The Office of the Special Adviser on Africa is ready to work with our partners of OHRLLS in supporting African LDCs in order to ensure that the African Union and African countries' priorities are duly reflected in the forthcoming Conference.

I thank you.