

***STATEMENT OF HIS EXCELLENCY DR. FRANCIS M. KAI-KAI MINISTER OF  
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF SIERRA LEONE FOR THE LDC  
AFRICA REGIONAL REVIEW MEETING  
22 FEBRUARY 2021***

**Mr. Chairman,**

**The Right Honourable Dr Saulos Klaus Chilima, Vice President and Minister of Economic Planning and Public Sector Reforms of Malawi**

**Colleague Ministers**

**MS Fekitamoeloa Katoa Utoikamanu, Under-Secretary General and High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs, Small Island Developing and Secretary-General of LDC5 Conference**

**Excellencies,**

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen;**

It is my pleasure to address this Ministerial Dialogue on Lessons Learned and Back better in this Africa Regional Review Meeting, in preparation for the Fifth UN Conference on LDCs and to bring you warmest greetings from His Excellency President Julius Maada Bio and the People of Sierra Leone. Let me join colleague Ministers in thanking the Government and People of Malawi for convening this timely meeting.

We are gratified that H.E the President of Malawi gave special opening remarks, showing the inspirational leadership of Malawi in chairing the activities of the LDCs Group. We extend our profound condolences to all Member States for the loss of life due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

As the COVID-19 vaccine roll out progresses globally, we hope that LDCs will have access to these life-saving vaccines and that COVID-19 infections will steadily decline to allow for a return to a new normal. We continue to salute our frontline workers globally who continue to put their lives at risk to save humanity. We hope this pandemic will soon be put under control.

As noted in the Secretary General's 2020 report on the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action and that of the Economic Commission for Africa on African LDCs, COVID-19 has worsened the structural challenges of LDCs given the fragilities of our systems and may as well, reverse hard-earned developmental gains in attaining the 2030 Agenda.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Sierra Leone applauds international policies to address the needs of LDCs especially in the post COVID-19 era.

Before COVID -19, Sierra Leone was in a good trajectory in its sustainable development drive and had firmly anchored its policies on developing its human capital. Even with COVID-19, human capital development continues to be the flagship programme of government with the realisation that the future of our country depends on the extent to which its human resources are capable to meet the changes of being a LDCs as well as addressing the post pandemic recovery.

The Sierra Leone Medium Term National Development Plan (MTNDP 2019-2023) with a people centred focus is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, the IPoA commitments and the African Union Agenda 2063. It is our roadmap to meeting internationally agreed agendas and to growth and stability. We are half way into the implementation of this plan and the mid-term review revealed a strong local ownership and determination to achieve the stated objectives despite the setbacks caused by the pandemic. We believe that the full implementation of the MTNDP will put us in good stead to achieving the SDGs and meeting the requirements of the AU Agenda 2063.

We are therefore looking forward to a fruitful outcome that is both ambitious and supportive of the special needs of respective LDCs taking into account their common and differentiated challenges.

**Mr Chairman,**

LDCs in fragile situations with huge debt burdens, weak health systems and other structural vulnerabilities, and the challenge of meeting the social and economic needs of its populations, especially the youth and women, requires support measures to help sail through these challenges. Sierra Leone chairs the g7+ Group of fragile states that promotes peace and security as a necessary condition for growth and sustainable development. We hope to use the UN Observer Status accorded the g7+ to strengthen our advocacy work in favour of building peace and promoting good governance in countries in fragile situations. In this regard, we would like to underscore the need for support measures to help address our vulnerabilities and accelerate the realisation of the SDGs.

**Distinguished delegates,**

As any return to normalcy and post pandemic recovery is predicated on the availability and accessibility of vaccines, we renew our call for a fair and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines by LDCs, declaring it as a global public good, as well as provision of support programmes to ensure universal immunization coverage. We are concerned that majority of the populations in LDCs have been left out so far in the ongoing vaccination drive in the developed world. Our countries will be further left behind in the post pandemic recovery if

this trend continues. We therefore call for urgent action to address this and taking into account that 'No One Is Safe Until Everyone Is Safe'.

We acknowledge the support provided by international partners in addressing the increased financial needs of LDCs as a result of the pandemic. However, the external debt stock and debt service of many of our countries has increased significantly during this period. Therefore, we call for an extension of debt moratorium, additional special drawing rights and ultimate consideration of debt cancellation for LDCs. Furthermore, LDCs need additional resources to cope and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to provide the fiscal space and liquidity through budget support and extended credit amenities to manage the aftermath of the pandemic.

### **Excellencies,**

We acknowledge that access to electricity is a key driver of technological growth and economic recovery. However energy access in many of African LDCs remains below the needs of the population. The energy access rate in Sierra Leone, for instance, is only 22.9% at the end of 2020. We therefore welcome the launch of the Coalition on Sustainable Energy Access for LDCs and call for scaling up of energy investment in LDCs.

AS we applaud the support of the development partners in the fight against COVID-19, we in the same vein want to draw the attention of the international community to the need for increased resource flows to finance the recovery efforts and the achievement of the SDGs. Whilst there have been increased efforts at domestic resource mobilization, such efforts have been hampered by the pandemic. There is therefore a need for our development partners to scale up the percentage of ODA given to the LDCs in order to finance the SDGS and post COVID-19 recovery.

We would also like to call for adequate access to climate financing and technology transfer, especially for LDCs to enhance climate change mitigation and adaptation plan, as well as the need to strengthen global response to climate change by accelerating the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, addressing the impacts of climate change and building capacity, are crucial elements to achieving sustainable development. In this light, we reiterate the need for Member States to adhere to the commitments made in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement on climate Change.

**Mr Chairman,**

We believe that our deliberations in the lead up to the LDC5 Conference should also consider the needs of LDCs, especially in the areas of aid for trade, financing for development, as well as the need for LDCs to reap the full potentials of modern technologies by leveraging the existing mechanisms and addressing the rapidly widening digital gap that threatens to leave LDCs even further behind. In view of this there should be a renewed commitment of the international community to maximize the benefits of migration in LDCs and enhance capacity building in domestic tax resource mobilization as a matter of urgency to attain agreed milestones.

We are optimistic that the LDC 5 conference in Doha in 2022 will present a crucial opportunity to take stock of gaps and challenges in the implementation of the IPoA, map out a renewed commitment that would provide the required assistance to build on the IPoA and create an opportunity to foster sustainable development in LDCs.

In conclusion Mr. Chairman, let me note that the Government of Sierra Leone remains committed to various international initiatives aimed at improving good governance, combating corruption, inclusive development and delivering services for our people. We look forward to a very successful regional review meeting that will translate into concrete actions in the LDC programme of action for the next decade.

**I THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION**