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**United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least
Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small
Island Developing States**

(UN-OHRLLS)

Statement by

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Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island
Developing States**

**at the Opening of the First Joint United Nations Workshop on the
Graduation of São Tomé e Príncipe from the Category of the LDCs**

Friday, 13 September 2019

5 pm

**Palace of Congress, Room 213
São Tomé, São Tomé e Príncipe**

Her Excellency, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Communities,

Excellencies

Resident Coordinator,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the privilege to speak first at this concluding session.

Let me start by expressing our most sincere gratitude to the people and the government of São Tomé e Príncipe for their hospitality. Let me also recognize the excellent engagement in all the discussions, the detailed contributions, ideas and perspectives shared by the Members of the Government and representatives from various parts of Sao Tomean society.

We sincerely hope that through this two-day workshop the UN Inter-Agency Task Force team has managed to provide a clear, factual and accurate description of the impacts that the graduation of São Tomé e Príncipe from the UN List of Least Developed Countries will have on the country's economy.

I can assure you that we have been listening very carefully to your concerns and to your ideas about your vision for the future of this country.

In fact, the needs and priorities for sustainable development of São Tomé e Príncipe expressed by all of you – panelists and participants - are loud and clear.

I am sincerely impressed by the level and quality of the interventions and we leave the country with a much better understanding of its situation, challenges and opportunities thanks to your excellent engagement and participation during these last two days. We thank you very much.

A summary report of discussions held in each of the four sessions is being prepared and will be finalized and shared with all participants – Remember please to provide your email address to our secretariat colleagues!

Also, a dedicated webpage is being created and the summary report and all presentations will be uploaded there.

This first workshop is only a starting point. Now we have to think, all together, about the future, how the UN Inter-Agency Task Force can work in a coordinated and effective manner to assist the Government in turning its vision into reality.

In my capacity as the Chair of the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on LDC Graduation, I would like to share with you the **key elements that should inform our joint way forward – our common roadmap.**

- (1) Setup a **graduation focal point** in the government. This could be also the same senior government official who is the existing focal point for the Istanbul Programme of Action for the LDCs. This is an important role, especially since a new UN CONFERENCE ON LDCs will be held in Qatar in 2021 and the issues of support and incentives to graduation will be discussed.
- (2) **Formulate a smooth transition strategy.**
 - The country, together with the United Nations and relevant partners, including its development and trade partners, should start the elaboration of a smooth transition strategy that takes into consideration what we have learned over these two days with a view to prepare the country for a smooth transition in 2024.
 - This strategy should be fully integrated with your new national development plan and with the new UN planning framework in Sao Tome and Principe.

- The specific elements of the smooth transition strategy can be organized around potential impacts in the three broad areas highlighted in session 1 -
 - (a) development aid and access to finance; we need to include exactly what will change in 2024 after graduation and what actions must be taken by whom. We discussed that extensively in session 2 yesterday. The need to broaden the donor base is also important and this is something we, the UN Task Force, can also advocate for in New York, under the leadership of Sao Tome e Principe and in close collaboration of course with Zahira Virani, the UN Resident Coordinator in São Tomé e Príncipe.
 - (b) international trade, preferential market access and accession to WTO ; here we need to set a timeline for the possible revival of the accession negotiations to become a member of the WTO. We need to also continue discussions with trading partners on the issues related to preferential market access and, most importantly, focus on strengthening the national productive capacities.
 - (c) support for participation in the United Nations system. Here we also create a timeline of changes to come in 2024 and three years later in 2027 and how we can prepare for those changes.

(3) Open channel of communication between STP and the UN Committee of Development Policy.

- We need to create an open a channel of communication and sharing of information between Sao Tome and Principe and the United Nations Committee of Development Policy to enable the regular monitoring of the sustainable development progress made by the country on its way towards graduation and beyond.

(4) Engagement of STP traditional and new development and trading partners.

- The United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Graduation will, in close consultation with the Government and the UN in São Tomé e Príncipe, facilitate the engagement of São Tomé e Príncipe with new and existing partners.
- For instance, the Resident Coordinator could organize a country-meeting on graduation support involving all development partners in the short to medium term for that purpose.
- The UN Secretariat is also evaluating the possibility of establishing a Graduation Support Facility with the goal of assisting graduating countries in obtaining the support requested to address the loss of LDC specific measures. STP could be the pilot country for such new initiative. In addition, we can remain in close contact with you about the UN Secretary-General's Roadmap for financing the 2030 agenda which includes a priority area on developing a package of incentives for graduating countries.

(5) Reporting requirements

The United Nations Task Force on Graduation together with the UN in São Tomé e Príncipe will work to support the reporting requirements of the country by bringing coherence and avoiding duplication in different areas.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

All these elements are key for the successful preparation to graduation. The Task Force is committed preparing such roadmap and sharing it with you for your consideration and implementation.

In an effort to reach out to a broader range of development partners, we also commit to present the findings and conclusions of this workshop to the group of friends of the LDCs in the UN in New York.

São Tomé e Príncipe starts a new chapter today. The United Nations is ready, under your leadership, to accompany you during this journey towards graduation and beyond.

Obrigada