

Remarks of FAO Chief Economist to the Annual meeting of the LLDCs, 23 Sep 2020

Excellencies:

At the outset, I wish to thank His Excellency **Mukhtar Tiluberdi**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Global Chair of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), for convening this important event. I would also wish to thank the Secretary-General and President of the United Nations General Assembly for their inspiring statements

Mr. Chair

The excellent Concept Note and Roadmap for accelerating the Vienna Plan of Action (VPOA) prepared for this meeting rightly recognize the importance of promoting cross-sectoral and multi-party collaboration and investment to accelerate implementation of the VPOA and promote progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In this connection, please allow me to highlight an innovative mechanism – the Hand-in-Hand Initiative – that has been developed by the FAO Director-General specifically to address the challenges faced by the LLDCs (as well as the LDCs and SIDS).

The HIH Initiative is a corporate-wide initiative to reposition FAO's technical, policy and normative capacities in the service of national governments and their diverse development partners in a way that supports better, evidence-based decision-making and mobilizes multi-partner contribution and investment to promote transformative change – that is, change that realizes the diverse ambitions of the 2030 Agenda.

Working always within the framework of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, the Initiative uses advanced analytics and a market-based, agri-food system perspective to identify the most promising territories where there is sufficient agri-food potential to lift people out of poverty and hunger. The initiative then matchmakes with public, private, research and civil society partners to mobilize means of implementation within a common programme investment plan.

Finally, FAO works with the host government to develop dashboards that create transparency for all stakeholders and a mechanism for communication and coordination to sustain and improve collaboration over time, and to ensure that both the business and SDG 1 (poverty) and SDG2 (hunger) objectives of the Initiative are achieved.

Already seven LLDCs have joined the Hand-in-Hand Initiative: Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Lao PDR, Mali, Niger, Tajikistan, and Zimbabwe. We hope that the resources and learning that we are building through this deep partnership initiative can be made available to all LLDCs.

Mr. Chair

I would be remiss if I neglected to refer to the COVID-19 pandemic and its devastating socio-economic impact on LLDCs. FAO is diligently assessing the threat of the virus to food security and nutrition and providing evidence-based policy support directly to our Members, including LLDCs, and UN Country Teams. Similarly, it has convened high-level meetings to raise awareness and encourage global collaboration.

To conclude, Mr Chair, the long-standing partnership between FAO and LLDCs is now further strengthened by the establishment of the Office for Small Island Developing States, Least Developed Countries and Landlocked Developing Countries (OSL) in FAO, as well as the rollout of the Hand-in-Hand Initiative and other important activities emphasized in the Roadmap launched at this High-Level Meeting. We will continue to cultivate this collaboration to ensure a world where no one is left behind.

Thank you.