



Statement

By

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**High Representative
and**

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

*The UN commitment to the Least Developed Countries:
a reality check*

Briefing for MPs on UN processes No. 5

Tuesday, June 15, 09:00-10:00

Honorable Paddy Torsney,
Honorable Members of Parliaments,
HE Ambassador Ligoya, Chair of LDC Group, Permanent Representative
of Malawi to the UN,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
IPU Colleagues

I thank the Honorable Paddy Torsney for the opportunity to brief
Members of the Inter-Parliamentary Union on the theme *United Nations
commitment to the Least Developed Countries: a reality check*.

Honorable Members,

Recognizing the need to step up action, 10-years ago the Istanbul
Programme of Action was adopted. In UNese we call it : IPOA.

Since then, a record number of LDCs have reached the so called
graduation thresholds.

The four LDCs having graduated from the LDC category are the
Maldives, Samoa, Equatorial Guinea, and most recently Vanuatu.

Sixteen LDCs have reached the graduation thresholds at least once.

Four of these LDCs are scheduled to graduate - Angola, Bhutan, Sao
Tome & Principe and the Solomon Islands.

Just a few days ago, ECOSOC endorsed recommendations now for
Bangladesh, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Nepal to graduate
within a 5-year preparatory period.

This represents encouraging progress.

However, the IPoA target itself, which is to enable half the LDCs to
meet the criteria for graduation was not met.

On the plus side, important advances have been made in several key
areas. Here I highlight access to information and communications
technology, sustainable energy, health, education, gender and
governance.

We though must be mindful that progress is uneven among and within countries.

Indeed, critical gaps remain where the LDCs as a group have fallen short of meeting the IPoA targets.

And then came Covid.

The COVID-19 pandemic has added new challenges and has a disproportionate impact on LDCs.

Obviously there is an immediate health crisis to be managed. But that only is the tip of the iceberg.

We already have the first data, we can see how this ongoing pandemic has led to severe socio-economic and capacity disruptions. Just to mention a few, we see declining exports, declining GDP, declining FDI and declining remittances. Already precarious debt situations turn unsustainable.

It means further increasing inequalities through increased poverty including by now even food insecurity.

And climate change has not taken a holiday, quite the opposite, the situation also is worsening.

It is too early to assess the breadth and depth of the pandemic's impact.

However, it seems almost certain that progress made on the IPoA indicators is likely to be reversed.

Our collective heightened vigilance is necessary and we must redouble our efforts as we move forward.

The forthcoming LDC5 Conference in Doha, Qatar must succeed. I take this opportunity to thank the Government of Qatar for its offer to host and support the preparatory process leading to Doha, including the Parliamentary forum as one of the five tracks we are working on for Doha. We must ensure that LDCs recover from the pandemic which implies equitable and timely access to COVID-19 vaccines. But it must be more than band-aid. It must be a commitment to partner with the LDCs to indeed build back better for inclusive and sustainable societies. In short, we must not leave once more the LDCs behind.

The LDCs themselves must undertake steps toward this ambition and they must enhance fiscal space, while the international community must reverse the ongoing decline in ODA to LDCs.

It is also urgent that we find a sustainable, a long-term solution to their debt situations.

There is a lot of unfinished business of the IPoA and we must act NOW.

Eradicating extreme poverty, addressing food security and decent livelihoods in the LDCs stand out as high priorities.

This calls for commensurate governance capacities. The emphasis of the IPoA on a strong governance system is as valid as ever if not more so.

Capacity- building, technology and knowledge transfer are a must and it must include support for climate adaptation capacity, facilitation of access to climate funds and delivery of policies that are disaster risk-informed.

Underpinning all this have to be inclusion, equality and notably the empowerment of women and girls and minorities.

We must partner to fashion and deliver on a new programme of action that can build peaceful, just and inclusive societies. Societies that provide equal access to justice and that are based on the full respect of human rights.

Lastly, with now a record number of LDCs meeting the graduation thresholds, we must step up support for graduating LDCs. This will take full support from development partners to support smooth transitions, and strengthened UN support for graduating LDCs.

Honorable Members,

A very strong start was made during discussions at PrepCom1, held here in New York from 24 to 28 May, under the inspiring guidance of our Co-Chairs Ambassador Fatima of Bangladesh and Ambassador Rae of Canada, and the entire Prep Com Bureau.

The second and final session of the Prep Com will be held from 26 to 30 July 2021, in New York.

The Joint Thematic Event of the General Assembly and ECOSOC on Diversifying the Financing Toolbox to Enhance Investment in LDCs will be organized on 18 June.

The Asia-Pacific Review meeting is still to be scheduled. It will be hosted by the Government of Bangladesh, OHRLLS and ESCAP.

At Doha on 22 January 2022, the Shura Council and the IPU will co-host a dedicated one-day Forum for Parliamentarians to leverage their contribution to sustainable development in support of the priorities of LDCs.

The event is supported by OHRLLS.

The forum will consist of a high-level plenary, and interactive dialogues and thematic discussions on the priority areas relevant to the conference, including the role of parliamentarians.

Parliaments are the voice of people and it is a privilege for OHRLLS to join hands with the Parliamentarians and the Inter-Parliamentary Union in this task.

I urge you to proactively participate at the LDC5 Conference from 23-27 January 2022 and the multiple processes leading to Conference in Doha.

I am convinced that my successor who will take up office on 1 July you will have a strong partner.

Honorable Members,

More than ever before, the LDCs need an ambitious outcome in Doha. We all need that outcome. We cannot leave people behind if we truly aim for sustainability in the years and decades to come.

Together, let us seize the opportunity the LDC5 Conference gives us to recover lost ground on the SDGs, make important strides forward in the Decade for Action, and indeed leave no one behind.

The entire United Nations system remains committed to contribute to the global efforts to address the development challenges confronted by the peoples of the LDCs.

I thank you.