

# **ANNUAL MINISTERIAL MEETING OF LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES (LDCs)**

**Thursday, September 17, 2020**

**09:00-13:00hrs**

**Virtual Meeting**

–

*Statement by H.E. Francisco Duarte Lopes*

*Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations*

Mr. Chair,

Excellencies, dear colleagues,

The world is facing a global challenge.

But the over 1 billion people living in LDCs are the most vulnerable as they suffer most of the consequences of conflicts, poverty, food insecurity, environmental fragility, poor access to energy, sanitation and clean water as well as education.

Furthermore, with weakened financial resources, there is a high risk that the existing inequalities will be aggravated, at all levels.

Against this backdrop, LDCs just cannot afford an all-inclusive approach, comprising public health measures, social security, unemployment benefits and other tax and financial safety nets.

This is simply impossible for countries already under very dire conditions.

The most affected are those who are already most in need, putting at risk the progress achieved over the last decades.

Our commitments under the 2030 Agenda, the Istanbul Declaration and the Programme of Action for LDCs call for each one of us to do everything within our grasp to achieve these common goals.

We all must prevent years of effort to be further endangered by this pandemic and its social and economic effects.

Over the next ten years, and even amidst a cloud of uncertainty, we know that the pandemic will amplify our challenges.

And these difficulties know no borders.

Shared values of solidarity, urgent actions of cooperation and cohesive policies of multilateralism are more important than ever, if we want to succeed.

We must make a joint effort to build back better.

To build a new development model that respects the people and the environment.

A new balance between the need for resources and the way we use them.

A model that ensures synergies between the public and private sectors, and includes civil society.

Such a wide-ranging model – resilient, sustainable and ambitious –, must focus first and foremost on the protection of lives, well-being and livelihoods.

It has to be capable of providing efficient support to the healthcare sector and social infrastructures, while at the same time setting forth the measures necessary for the economic recovery within reasonable time frames.

This means that during this pandemic, the supply of medical goods must go alongside with actions to not only strengthen the healthcare system as a whole, but also to advance current social protection schemes, while at the same time protecting employers and employees.

It is crucial that official development assistance levels are safeguarded, noting that in certain regions of the world, such as in Africa, these levels should be increased.

Among OECD member states, Portugal has the highest share of its bilateral ODA allocated to LDCs. Our main contributions go to multilateral organizations, including regional development banks and the UN.

Since the beginning of this health crisis, my country has been committed to LDCs, standing next to our partner countries and the UN, in the bilateral and multilateral global response effort.

Together, and aware of the obstacles in our way, we will continue this effort.

Thank you.