

Please check against delivery



**United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least
Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and
Small Island Developing States
(UN-OHRLLS)**

Statement by

**Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox, Director, Office for the Least
Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and
Small Island Developing States**

**at the Opening of the First Joint United Nations Workshop on the
Graduation of Sao Tome and Principe from the Category of the
LDCs**

**Thursday, 12 September 2019
9-30 10:00 am
Palace of Congress, Room 213
São Tomé, São Tomé e Príncipe**

His Excellency, Dr. Jorge Bom Jesus, Prime Minister and Head of the Government of São Tomé e Príncipe,

Honorable Ministers and Senior Officials,

Ms. Zahira Virani, Resident Coordinator of the United Nations in São Tomé e Príncipe

Fellow UN colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to be here today at this important meeting, in my capacity as Chair of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Graduation.

Let me start by expressing our gratitude to the Government of São Tomé e Príncipe for your support in organizing this meeting and for your commitment and the warm hospitality extended to all of us.

I would also like to thank the Government of Portugal for its generous contribution and support, and the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office, and the broader UN family in São Tomé e Príncipe for our close collaboration through this process.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

This first workshop on the graduation process and the preparations for the smooth transition of Sao Tome and Principe from the category of the least developed countries marks an important moment for the country, its development partners and the United Nations.

Allow me first to share with you a brief historic background.

The category of least developed countries was established in 1971 in recognition of the structural impediments to development faced by the poorest and most disadvantaged countries in the world.

In 2011 the Istanbul Programme of Action set an ambitious goal for half of the LDCs to meet the criteria for graduation by 2020. Now 12 LDCs are at different stages in the graduation process. Graduation has become an increasingly important issue in the international development agenda.

Angola and Vanuatu will graduate in 2020 and 2021: At the 2018 triennial review Bhutan, São Tomé e Príncipe and Solomon Islands were recommended for graduation. Additionally, five other countries: Bangladesh, the People's Democratic Republic of Laos, Myanmar, Nepal and Timor-Leste met the graduation eligibility for the first time and will be reviewed for a graduation recommendation in 2021.

It is important to note that important the category of the Least Developed Countries is used by the United Nations and it is different from other categories, including the income-based categories estimated by the World Bank. Graduating from the category of LDCs does not mean becoming automatically a Middle-Income Country. According to the World Bank, São Tomé e Príncipe already is a lower middle-income country. However, within the UN, São Tomé e Príncipe will continue being an LDC until its effective graduation date in December 2024.

Graduation does not happen over night. It is a two-part process – first meeting the graduation criteria and then transitioning smoothly out of the category - the latter requiring equal if not more tailored, specific support for graduating countries.

Graduating countries need to be prepared, understand emerging vulnerabilities and challenges to their economies. They need to proactively negotiate with their development and trading partners to ensure that leaving the category of the Least Developed Countries does not disrupt its sustainable development process.

During the preparatory period, graduating countries are invited to prepare a national smooth transition strategy, with the support of the United Nations system and in cooperation with the country's bilateral, regional and multilateral development and trading partners.

It is recommended that the graduating countries establish a consultative mechanism to facilitate the preparation of a smooth transition strategy. The strategy is to be implemented after the effective date of graduation and aims to ensure that the country's sustainable development efforts are not disrupted by any loss of LDC-specific support measures after graduation.

To provide coordinated UN system support to graduating and graduated countries, my Office coordinates the Inter-Agency Task Force on LDC Graduation and Smooth Transition, This Task Force was established in late 2017.

The UN Task Force has been focusing on supporting information exchange on activities related to graduation, raising awareness and, most importantly, on providing a strengthened, coordinated delivery of UN support to graduating countries, such as São Tomé e Príncipe.

Today's meeting is the beginning of a conversation about the future of sustainable development in Sao Tome and Principe. It is an opportunity for the Government, the United Nations system and the development partners to discuss how to best foster sustainable development and ensure that the graduation becomes an opportunity to address the challenges of the country.

Graduation is a key chapter in the path toward realizing a national vision for São Tomé e Príncipe to reach the SDGs.

I can assure you of the strong commitment by the United Nations System, in its entirety, here represented by the UN Resident Coordinator and the UN Country Team, to continue supporting São Tomé e Príncipe throughout the graduation process and beyond

Thank you very much

Muito obrigada