

Financing for Development Forum

Side-event on “Leaving No One Behind: Financing Sustainable Recovery from COVID-19 in LLDCs”, 12 April 2021

Remarks of H.E. Mr. Peter Launsky-Tieffenthal, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs at the Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe and International Affairs

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

- It is my great privilege to participate in this side event on “Leaving No One Behind: Financing Sustainable Recovery from COVID- 19 in LLDCs”. Together we are fighting the COVID-19 Pandemic - a human crisis with unprecedented socio-economic consequences that risk reversing progress achieved so far. And together we have to do everything to enable a sustainable recovery from COVID- 19 and “build **forward** better” in the spirit of “Leaving No One Behind”.
- As a long-standing partner of the LLDCs and a landlocked country ourselves, we understand and feel many of your challenges and we stand ready to share our experience. It is for this reason that we hosted the Second UN conference on landlocked developing countries in Vienna in 2014, that Austria co-chairs the Group of Friends of the LLDCs and that together with Bhutan we co-facilitated the Outcome Document of the Midterm Review of the Vienna Programme of Action, which was adopted in December 2019.
- Based on our national experience as land-locked country, we are convinced that strong regional cooperation and integration, investment in critical infrastructure, trade and private sector investment as well as international support and ODA are effective means to address potential negative effects of lacking direct geographic access to oceans. As we continue on our path of the 2030 Agenda, a **focused cooperation with the 32 LLDCs** is more important than ever to turn landlockedness into **landlinkedness**.
- We welcome the focus of the Roadmap for Accelerated Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, building on the findings of the Midterm Review.

We remain fully committed to continue our partnership and common effort towards the goals set out in the Vienna Programme of Action and to ensure that achievements and progress are not undermined by the impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Addressing the challenges of COVID- 19

- We are well aware that LLDCs face particular challenges and development disadvantages, compounded by the impact of COVID-19.
- Austria, in response to the pandemic has doubled its humanitarian budget and increased its bilateral development cooperation substantially.
- From the outset of the Covid-19 pandemic Austria followed a two pronged approach in its international cooperation. On the one hand we supported the response to the immediate health challenge through targeted humanitarian assistance and changes in our development cooperation programmes to strengthen the health systems of developing countries. At the same time it became apparent that the socio-economic consequences of the pandemic and the measures taken to limit its impact could endanger developmental progress of decades.
- In order to quickly start tackling these challenges Austria finances “Nexus-Programmes” in several target regions of our international cooperation. These programmes are designed to combine the humanitarian response to the crisis with development programmes such as training, job creation and sustainable agriculture. We have started such programmes in sub-Saharan Africa, the Western Balkans and the South Caucasus and are considering expanding the programme to other regions.
- Austria has supported the international response to Covid-19 through increased humanitarian assistance, strengthened development cooperation and substantial contributions to the global efforts to quickly develop tests and vaccines.

COVAX, Team Europe

- The efforts of strengthening a coordinated health response and distributing Covid-19 vaccines in an equitable manner are demonstrated through the “Team Europe”-Approach. “Team Europe” has shown solidarity with partner countries through actions, such as developing the EU Vaccine Sharing Mechanism.
- The “Team Europe” commitments for external response to COVID-19 amount to more than 40 billion EUR so far.
- Austria as a member of “Team Europe” actively engages in building back better or let me call it building forward better. Austria strives to enable the roll out of vaccines in all countries as soon as possible and strongly supports the international cooperation.
- The global initiative COVAX stands for an equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. Austria supports the COVAX AMC (Advanced Market Commitment) initiative with 2.4 Mio. EURO from the Austrian Development Agency.
- Currently, 22 out of 32 LLDCs worldwide have already benefited from the COVAX initiative. Of course, the vaccination distribution process must be accelerated in order to reach everyone soon.
- Austria also contributes 2.7 million EUR to the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund.
- Moreover, AT has supported international research on vaccines with 31 Mio. EUR; 2 Mio. EUR thereof were a financial contribution to CEPI, the vaccine research pillar of COVAX.
- In my view the 17 Sustainable Development Goals under the grand principle of “Leaving No One Behind” should be used as a roadmap for a green and sustainable Covid- 19 recovery and “building **forward** better”.
- Thank you for the opportunity to discuss with you and again, let me reiterate Austria’s full support for and solidarity with the LLDCs.