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**UN-OHRLLS**

**Closing Statement**

**by**

**Rabab Fatima**

**Under-Secretary-General and High Representative  
for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing  
Countries and Small Island Developing States**

**at the**

**International Forum on Landlocked Developing Countries':  
Food Security and the Sustainable Development Goals**

**5 September 2024**

**Tashkent**

**His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Aripov, Prime Minister of Uzbekistan,  
His Excellency Ibrokhim Abdurakhmonov, Minister of  
Agriculture of the Republic of Uzbekistan,  
Mr. Qu Dongyu, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture  
Organization,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,**

**I would like to join others in warmly congratulating the  
Government of Uzbekistan for the successful holding of this  
important forum.**

**Uzbekistan's leadership in addressing the critical issue of food  
security in landlocked developing countries is truly  
commendable.**

**I further take this opportunity to thank and commend my  
colleague, DG Qu Dongyu, for his strong support and  
commitment to the landlocked developing countries.**

**I also thank our high-level speakers, experts and panelists for  
their invaluable contributions to our discussions.**

**And I thank all other participants for sharing their insightful ideas, experiences and perspectives.**

**We have indeed had rich discussions, which provided us with a lot of food for thought and much to reflect upon.**

**Excellencies,**

**As we conclude this timely Forum, it is evident that our discussions have highlighted both the challenges and opportunities facing LLDCs in developing agri-food systems and achieving food security.**

**These critical issues are well captured in the ‘Declaration on the Sustainable Transformation of Agrifood Systems in Landlocked Developing Countries’.**

**Allow me to share a few key takeaways from our deliberations.**

**First, the importance of trade and a supportive multilateral framework for LLDCs cannot be overstated.**

**Access to international markets remains a cornerstone of food security in LLDCs and a pathway to economic growth.**

**Notably, as many as 24 LLDCs are net food importers. In 15 LLDCs, imports account for over a third of all available supplies of the top three food staples – wheat, rice and maize.**

**The impact of WTO accession on agricultural trade facilitation remains critical.**

**The experiences of several LLDCs with WTO accession offer strategic insights for the six remaining LLDCs seeking membership.**

**Second, attracting investments in agriculture is imperative.**

**Agriculture is a vital pillar of LLDCs' economies, yet its contribution to overall value addition has remained modest in the last decade.**

**In 2023, agriculture accounted for 55 percent of employment but just 17 percent of the value-added share of GDP in LLDCs.**

**There is a need to strengthen agribusiness linkages among farmers, manufacturers, and service providers to support value addition.**

**There are also clear opportunities for LLDCs to utilize financial instruments and collaborate with financial institutions to increase value addition in agri-business, especially among the LLDCs that are also LDCs.**

**Tailored investment strategies and strengthened partnerships are key to unlocking the full potential of LLDCs' agricultural sectors.**

**Third, partnerships with the private sector must be a priority.**

**Public-private partnerships can enhance value addition, improve marketability of agricultural products, and contribute to the comparative advantages of LLDCs.**

**In this context, I would like to highlight the upcoming Private Sector Forum of the Third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries.**

**This event presents an excellent opportunity to build on these engagements, share experiences, and forge new partnerships across LLDCs.**

**Fourth, adapting to the challenges of climate change is absolutely crucial.**

**Climate change is exacerbating the risk to agriculture and increasing the share of degraded land in LLDCs, which rose to 15.7 per cent in 2019, up from 11.7 per cent in 2015.**

**Additionally, 11 LLDCs are projected to face high-to-extremely-high water stress and rank among the top 50 most water-stressed countries in the world by 2050.**

**Increased adaptation finance, effective policy frameworks, and collective actions are vital to supporting sustainable agri-food systems in the face of climate change.**

**In this regard, I strongly encourage and support the establishment of the LLDC Group as a negotiating entity under the UNFCCC.**

**Finally, technological innovations are key to driving agricultural progress and alleviating poverty in LLDCs.**

**Studies show that growth in the agriculture sector is two-to-four times more effective in raising incomes among the poorest compared to other sectors.**

**Yet the cumulative effect of worsening climate vulnerabilities, coupled with rapid population growth in some LLDCs, has led to a decline in arable land per capita by 23 per cent and renewable internal freshwater sources per capita by 39 per cent, across the LLDCs on average since 2000.**

**The adoption of modern agricultural techniques, advanced water management practices, and enhanced food value-chains are critical for overcoming challenges and promoting sustainable agricultural development.**

**Excellencies,**

**The extremely productive discussions that we have had here today come at a pivotal time as we build momentum towards the Third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries.**

**It is through partnerships, such as those created here today, that the LLDCs can advance their journey towards a sustainable and prosperous future. This includes partnerships between countries of the global south, as well as triangular cooperation and regional integration initiatives.**

**I commend the spirit of collaboration demonstrated during this Forum, where experiences were shared to collectively build resilience for food security and the achievement of the SDGs.**

**Let me reiterate the full and steadfast commitment of my Office to supporting the sustainable economic development of the LLDCs.**

**In closing, I once again thank FAO for organizing this timely event; and I thank you all for your valuable contributions.**

**I look forward to continuing our strong collaboration and partnership, and to seeing you all in Gaborone in December.**

**I thank you.**