## Summary

**Second Meeting of the Board of Advisers to the President of the General Assembly for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States**

9 February 2022, Trusteeship Chamber, United Nations Headquarters

The President of the General Assembly (PGA), H.E. Abdulla Shahid, convened the second meeting with the Board of Advisers for Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) on 9 February 2022, at the Trusteeship Council Chamber, United Nations Headquarters.

The second meeting of the Board of Advisers focused on the theme 'Financing a Sustainable Recovery and the SDGs in LDCS, LLDCs and SIDS'. The discussion centred around galvanizing key messages and deliverables for the upcoming ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development (FfD Forum2022), adopting advocacy actions to support the prioritisation of the LLS countries for a sustainable recovery and the ways the UN system can strengthen its support towards the most vulnerable countries.

In his remarks, the President welcomed the Board's new members, the Permanent Representative of Malawi, the Acting High Representative of OHRLLS, and the new Executive Director of UNICEF. He stressed that LLS countries have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, hindering their progress on sustainable development goals. He noted that high national debts remain a major obstacle to the recovery efforts of LLS countries, and stressed the need to scale up the financing and investments for a sustainable COVID-19 recovery in these countries. In this context, he noted that the PGA and PECOSOC will jointly convene a high-level debate on debt sustainability in May, to reflect on the measures that can be taken to address debt sustainability. The President also shared that his planned high level event on tourism, could be an important avenue to discuss sustainable recovery in LLS countries.

The Board members discussed the bottlenecks faced by the 91 LLS countries in relation to financing sustainable recovery. The members emphasized the need to ensure equal and universal access to vaccines, address debt challenges, unlock new and smart financing mechanisms for sustainable development in the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS to meet the promises made by the global community.

The Board also outlined the need to close funding gaps and prioritize financing support to LLS countries by adopting a well-functioning multilateral approach for the UN system to address financing challenges better and accelerate their achievement of the SDGs. The discussion also touched on the urgency to consider gender equality and disaster risk when it comes to national budgets allocations, the need to broaden international financial networks, the involvement of both public and private partners to address financing bottlenecks, as well as the need to come up with a fair and just global financial system that supports the needs of developing countries.

A summary of the key points raised during the meeting are as follows:

- The global economy has shown some signs of progress in 2021. But with the the spread of the Omicron variant, the economies of the most vulnerable countries remain vulnerable, and face an increased inequality at the systemic level, especially in accessing finance.

- International response and cooperation must be leveraged to address inflation, vaccine inequality, and gender equality gaps. Short-term actions must focus on health services, access to social services and youth and women empowerment to ensure inclusive and sustainable recovery.

- Longer-term strategies should include a comprehensive approach with a focus on addressing the implications of school closures on education, and the impact of multidimensional inequalities and debt overhang resulting from the pandemic's impact on the developing economies.

- Priority must also be given to enhance technical and financial capacity-building support for LLS. In this context, the international system has to be better geared to support countries for recovery.

- In order to address domestic social spending bottlenecks and chart pathways for prosperity for all, international support for LLS countries can be given by encouraging investments, facilitating trade, and supporting reallocation of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) in these countries.

- Allocate more resources and investments in risk reduction and resilience building by assessing the financial stability of the developing economies in the face of climate change and natural disasters. The importance of having a multi-dimensional vulnerability index was also highlighted

- With the unprecedented implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, shrinking fiscal space and debt burdens are major bottlenecks on the development of LLS countries. Therefore, debt sustainability, debt restructuring, and transparency needs to be prioritized by broadening international financial networks, diversifying sources of finance and involving both public and private partners to address financing bottlenecks. Support for country-led INFF is a crucial offer that the UN system can provide to LLS countries, to help them overcome the bottlenecks for financing sustainable recovery. The upcoming FFD Forum will see the launch of the INFF Facility.

- The implications of COVID-19 on children were also highlighted, given that additional spending focused on the COVID-19 response is often at the expense of spending on other essential services such as education, access to primary vaccination, and social protection.

- As the pandemic has proven over and over again, many of our challenges are interconnected and can only be addressed through stronger international cooperation and reinvigorated multilateralism with the UN at the center of our efforts.

- The UN must play a central role in coordinating a global response to achieve inclusive and sustainable recovery from COVID-19. It must leverage its convening power, including a more impactful reform on the ground by adopting an evidence-based approach and enhanced accountability. The UN must also continue to build partnerships with a wide range of groups, as it did with COVAX.

- Most importantly, the UN must ensure that reforms are implemented. Multilateralism has to be inclusive. LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS have to be placed at the center of the recovery efforts at the UN.

- The digital divide is a factor that determines the impact and there is a need for international interventions to address this divide. Multilateral support to build digital infrastructure and improve digital literacy is essential.

- It is important to focus on implementation of agreed multilateral agreements/frameworks - whether it is the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Sustainable Development, on ODA, climate finance, or COVAX.

The meeting was attended by the following participants:

- H.E. Collen Vixen Kelapile, Permanent Representative of Botswana, President of the Economic and Social Council, Chair of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs)
- H.E. Ms. Agnes Mary Chimbiri Molande, Permanent Representative of Malawi, Chair of the Group of Least Developed Countries (LDCs)
- H.E. Walton Alfonso Webson, Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda, Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States (AIOSIS)
- H.E. Ms. Margo Reminisse Deiye, Permanent Representative of Nauru
- H.E Ms. Doma Tshering, Permanent Representative of Bhutan
- Mr. Mouctar Abakar, Chargè d'Affaires, PM of Chad to the United Nations
- Mr. Achim Steiner, Administrator, United Nations Development Programme-UNDP
- Mr. Ib Petersen, Deputy Executive Director, UNFPA
- Ms. Asa Regner, Deputy Executive Director, UN WOMEN
- Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox, Acting High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS United Nation, – OHRLLS
- Ms. Vidhya Ganesh, Director of UNICEF's Division on Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring
- Ms. Toni-Shae Aqeelah Freckleton, Chief, New York Liaison Office, UNDRR
- Ms. Chantal Line Carpentier, Chief, New York Liaison Office UNCTAD
- Ms. Sofia Borges, Senior Vice President, UN Foundation

*Guests*

- Ms. Maria Francesca Spatolisano, Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Co-ordination and Inter-Agency Affairs, Department for Economic and Social Affairs - DESA
- Ms. Laura Jaitman, Acting Director for Multilateral Affairs Special Representative to the UN, World Bank Group *(virtual participation)*