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

Statement by

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and
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HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE ON ENERGY under the auspices of UN General Assembly

Video-Message

Friday, 24 September 2021

Heads of State and Government,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me begin by thanking the Secretary-General for convening this High-level Dialogue on Energy.

I am particularly pleased that my Office was asked to jointly lead the working group on Energy Access with our friends at UNDP and the World Bank.

As we know, Energy Access is integral to achieving the 2030 Agenda and the goal of net-zero emissions by 2050. For a strong economy, better education, healthcare and yes – environmental progress – increasing the pace of electrification and expansion of clean cooking solutions is an urgent matter.

Excellencies,

For many of us, in different ways, Covid-19 has been a difficult experience and a wake-up call.

Imagine for a moment traversing these last 18 months without access to energy. The pandemic has highlighted the importance of reliable, affordable and sustainable energy systems to deliver public services and the ability to respond resiliently to social and economic challenges.

While major economies are set for extended periods of very low borrowing costs, for LDCS, LLDCs and SIDS the story is very different. They are likely to see their already limited fiscal space even further constrained.

Limited access to finance for energy investments in these countries threatens to slow-down or even reverse progress made towards SDG7..

Excellencies,

Two-thirds of the global population without access to energy live in the LDCs. It is imperative, therefore, for LDCs to accelerate their pace of electrification in the coming decades, to achieve the goal of universal access. To accomplish this, 63 million new customers will need to have been connected each year between 2019–2030, compared with the historic pace of 23 million connections made between 2000–2018.

Against this challenging backdrop, clearly our approach to ensuring universal access to energy requires fresh thinking and fresh impetus.

The recommendations from our Working Group estimates that energy access investments must be raised to US$40 billion per year by 2025. 50 per cent of these flows must be directed to the LDCs if we are to reach the goal of universal access by 2030.

As LDCs currently receive only around 20 per cent of international commitments to developing countries in support of clean energy, we can see that a step change in our approach is required.

the challenges are no doubt daunting, but the opportunities are simply too important to ignore.

Linking energy access plans with energy transition pathways will achieve universal access, create a sustainable power system, while stimulating job creation, green growth and boosting pandemic recovery.

As the report of our Working Group makes clear – energy access is not just about achieving SDG7.

Properly harnessed, this agenda creates jobs, generates wealth, fosters more resilient and diversified economies, cuts poverty, protects the environment, lifts opportunities for women and girls, improves health care, education and learning and drives innovation.

It is the cross-cutting nature of the broad-based gains that can be derived from pursuing this agenda that must drive our access to finance.

The private sector provided 86% of investments in the renewables sector between 2013 and 2018. And yet only 6 per cent of mobilized private finance is being invested in LDCs.

Catalytic development finance therefore remains crucial to reducing country risks, attracting private investors and bringing new markets to maturity.

And so, I urge all partners to stay constructively engaged in the months ahead. The journey to LDC5 is already well underway. At this crucial LDC5 Conference in Doha the international community will adopt the next 10-year plan for action for the LDCs.

However, the new 10-year Doha Programme of Action will only meet the test of time if the recommendations we set out today are taken seriously and adopted by the international community.

The Energy Compacts have a key role to play here. These compacts must give adequate attention to addressing the energy access and clean cooking needs of the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

Our ambition is to meet our commitments contained in the 2030 Agenda and to leave no one behind. Let us make a bold start by powering-up the 759 million people living without access to electricity.