



Remarks by the USG

Ms. Fekitamoeloa Utoikamanu

**High Representative
and
Under-Secretary-General**

**Office of the High Representative
for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and
Small Island Developing States (OHRLS)**

**Remarks as respondent to the HLPF Session:
Mobilizing international solidarity, accelerating action and embarking on new
pathways to realize the 2030 Agenda and respond to COVID-19:
African countries, Least Developed Countries and Landlocked Developing
Countries**

Thursday 9 July 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Thank you, Madam moderator, for giving me the floor.

Madam President,

Excellencies,

Distinguished speakers,

It is a fact that the LDCs, LLDCs and African countries are especially hard hit by COVID-19 and the world-wide recession this pandemic triggers.

It is the poorest, and among those especially women and girls and people with disabilities, suffering the most.

How do we move from acknowledging over and over this sad reality to doing something about it? The question is not if we must go forward, the question is HOW to go forward knowing none of this can be business as usual.

The Groups of LDCs and LLDCs have prepared statements on COVID-19. They outline their special challenges and how to build back better.

I encourage you to consider the requests for support.

The Political Declaration adopted at the Midterm Review of the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs last December flags the need to accelerate implementation.

That means improved transit, transport connectivity, trade facilitation, ICTs and digital connectivity, – to name just a few.

OHRLLS, in close consultation with the UN system and other organizations has prepared a Roadmap in this respect.

The preparations of the Fifth United Nations Conference on the LDCs, which will be held in Doha at the Heads of States and Government level, are obviously impacted by COVID-19.

We had two preparatory regional review meetings scheduled during March and April - for African LDCs in Malawi and for Asia-Pacific LDCs in Bangladesh – . They had to be postponed.

As far as the conference is concerned, Qatar, the host country, proposes to postpone the conference to January 2022. This will allow for a comprehensive preparatory process and for the Conference to provide an opportunity for in-person interaction.

The intergovernmental preparatory process will have to be adjusted accordingly and a General Assembly resolution confirming the new dates is expected to be adopted soon.

The new 10-year programme of action for the LDCs will coincide with the last 10 years of implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Yes, there are obstacles but the preparations are ongoing.

All stakeholders, including parliamentarians, civil society, youth and the private sector as well as academia and of course the entire UN System will be included in the Conference and its preparatory process.

The recent report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for LDCs is clear. Progress has been rather modest in LDCs highlighting the need for accelerated action. It is also clear that building of resilience to withstand future crisis needs to be enhanced.

Let me close with an encouraging note.

In our interactions with various LDCs we learned about domestically driven innovations and initiatives like the development of a \$1 COVID testing kit in Senegal.

Time has come and must showcase much more such strong and compelling stories at the Fifth Conference for LDCs.

This is the time for action.

This is the time to mobilize global support for the peoples of the LDCs.

This is the time for inclusion, to show solidarity.

This is the time to invest in building back better and faster to response to COVID-19 and to accelerate progress towards meeting the SDGs.

I thank you.