

Draft remarks
Dr. Thomas Munthali, Director General for the National Planning
Commission as a ministerial respondent to the 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

Madam Moderator
Honourable panelists
Excellencies, delegates,

I thank the panelists for their insightful presentations. I can't agree more to what the panelists have just alluded that the challenges of LDCs with regard to COVID-19 is unprecedented.

LDCs were not on the right track to achieve SDGs even before COVID-19. Poverty and hunger remain a big challenge and the number of malnourished people had ironically increased in the last few years. Education, research and development, biodiversity, and ecosystems- all are lagging behind.

COVID-19 has dramatically worsened the development challenges of LDCs. Shock waves are coming both from internal and external sources. Domestic production, consumption and employment situation is now worse than what we experienced during the financial crises of 2008. Export earnings of LDCs are primarily based on small and medium manufacturing including garments, few commodities, remittances and tourism, all of which have been severely affected. Remittances have dived down. These factors have caused serious damage to the already weak and vulnerable economies of LDCs.

Lack of access to technologies have crippled our countries to cope with the crises. Millions of our kids are completely deprived from education opportunities for thousands of hours and millions have also lost their jobs, which could have been averted if we had access to high-speed broadband and digital goods and services.

A variety of weak and fragile pre-existing structural conditions made LDCs, LLDCs and African countries more vulnerable than others to the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall public health system in terms of number of hospitals, doctors, nurses and medical equipment is largely insufficient in these countries. The health systems are not been able to take the heavy load of health service needs warranted by COVID-19 pandemic. This has exerted a substantial pressure on the already stretched fiscal space in LDCs at the expense of investments in other priority sectors. These factors will have devastating impacts on the socio-economic indicators of the 2030 Agenda.

Excellencies,

The situation dictates us what needs to be done to avoid an imminent economic and humanitarian emergency in LDCs. Global support is immediately needed at a sufficient magnitude to regain the lost opportunities in LDCs. As we embark on a new era to rebuild our economies, we must not forget to build back better, cleaner and resilient societies.

Investment in green economy and climate resilient infrastructure has a lot of potentials to build back better. Public health system needs to be scaled up to address the current crises and to avert future shocks. Access to digital technologies, broadband connectivity and clean energy is vitally important to ensure desired economic growth in LDCs.

Development partners should fulfil their ODA target to LDCs. It is also important to undertake a new and comprehensive debt cancellation measures for LDCs going beyond the IMF and G-20 packages to overcome the debt distress situation of LDCs. Equally important is to build and diversify the export opportunities of our countries.

These are some of the key priorities that would constitute the basis of the next programme of action for LDCs to be adopted in Doha in 2022. We thank the Government of Qatar for hosting the LDC-5 and look forward to its successful outcome.

I thank you all for your kind attention.