

**Remarks by the Chair of the Least Developed Countries at the ECOSOC Operational
Activities Segment
Tuesday May 19th, 2020
10:00 hrs to 12:00 hrs**

**H.E. Ms. Mona Juul, Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations,
President of ECOSOC;
H. E. Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations;
Excellencies;
Distinguished delegates;**

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the LDCs. The Group aligns its remarks with the statement of the G77 and China delivered by the delegation of Guyana.

At the outset, we deeply appreciate you Madam President for your leadership in steering the activities of the Council in an efficient manner during the challenging times of COVID-19 pandemic. We further commend the Secretary-General for his reports on various items of the Operational Activities for Development.

We thank you for organizing this important segment which will accord us an opportunity to discuss and review the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of UN system operational activities for development (QCPR) as well as to discuss the UN Reform.

Madame President

We meet under very challenging circumstances. As we speak, COVID-19 pandemic is still unfolding in the Least Developed Countries. The curve is still rising.

The pandemic coupled with the lack of knowledge and capacity will wreak havoc in our economies and we are already feeling the effects.

The impact is hitting our countries through different channels. The poorest and the most vulnerable people are affected disproportionately, including women, children, older persons, persons with disabilities, migrants and refugees and informal sector workers.

Manufacturing sectors and industries are at a standstill, commodity price has fallen, global value chains have been disrupted, exports are shockingly dwindling, remittances and migration have dramatically fallen, and tourism industries are devastated.

In the long run, LDC will be hit hardest due to the fragility of our health systems, limited coverage of their social protection systems, limited financial and other resources, vulnerability to external shocks, and excessive dependence on international trade. Collectively, these will cause long-term ripple effects in our economies. Furthermore, the projected global recession will hit the LDCs the hardest and with disproportionate consequences.

We commend the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his strong leadership and welcome the launch of the United Nations COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund. We also appreciate G20 countries, the IMF, World Bank, WHO and other multilateral and bilateral development partners for their swift actions in the form of emergency health support, debt relief and other economic assistance. Yet, these already announced support and assistance efforts are not enough for LDCs to meet the challenges.

We need stronger domestic measures and significantly scaled up international support in addressing the unparalleled social and economic impact of COVID-19. We have already issued a statement and called for “a global stimulus package for LDCs” to be funded and implemented with immediate effect to include the Emergency public health package for LDCs; Support for social protection systems; Education support for students; 0.15 per cent of ODA to LDCs; Full debt cancellation; Lifting trade barriers and scaling up aid for trade; Additional allocation including increased SDR allocation for LDCs and protect migrants of LDCs and promote their remittances.

From medium to long-term, we are calling for rapid supply of vaccines/immunization and antiviral drugs related to COVID-19, when they are available; a stimulus packages to stabilize the agricultural sector and continued and scaled-up international assistance to support export sectors in order to avoid the reversal of development gains.

We urge our development partners, both countries of the North and the South, UNDS, MDBs, IMF, private sector and foundations to act on our calls as early as possible.

Madam President

The QCPR provides the necessary mechanism through which the General Assembly determines the effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and impact of United Nations operation activities for development and provides direction to United Nations Development System work at country level. This means that the QCPR is a very crucial tool and deserves greater attention if we are to achieve the sustainable development goals. It is therefore pleasing to note that the Secretary-General's QCPR Report indicates that UN Reform is on the right track and that more tangible results are expected in the near future.

Various Reports indicate that prior to COVID-19 hunger and poverty continued to rise globally a context that the pandemic is only exacerbating with greater negative impact on LDCs. These phenomena therefore call for a well-coordinated UN development system which will be in apposition to help countries especially the LDCs to effectively and efficiently tackle their challenges in their quest to achieve the 2030 Agenda. It also underscores the importance of an UNDAF and country response that is based on coordination between the UNDS and the Government to ensure that national priorities are the focus.

In this context, we welcome the establishment of a truly empowered and independent RC system. An RC system that is dedicated to coordinating country-level development activities with authority over the activities of UN country teams (UNCTs), backed by enhanced analytical capacities and adequate financial resources is critical. The RC system must ensure that support aligns with

country-specific needs. We call for strengthening the RC leadership and RCO capacities, introducing system-wide evaluation of collective planning and integrated responses, and debuting new regional and global Management and Accountability Framework.

We welcome the increase in the share of expenditure for operational activities for development in the LDCs in 2018, which reached 48 percent or 12.6 billion of total expenditures at the country level. We draw your attention that in 2012, the system contributed 51 per cent.

We call on to the UNDS continue to prioritize allocations to the LDCs by developing operational guidelines, while reaffirming that LDCs need enhanced support to overcome structural challenges that they face in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We request the UNDS to provide assistance to graduating countries in the formulation and implementation of their national transition strategies and to consider country-specific support for graduated countries for a fixed period of time and in a predictable manner.

We welcome the Secretary Generals' recommendations to mandate OHRLLS and the Inter Agency Taskforce to develop a common guideline to ensure LDCs are prioritized in all programming and budgeting, and that it supports countries smooth transition from the LDC category.

We request all member states and other relevant stakeholders to provide financial and in-kind assistance to the LDC Technology Bank, operational since 2018, to enable it to fulfil its mandate.

While development partners, the UN Agencies as well as all other relevant stakeholders are called to support the LDCs, we will continue to put in place policies to address our challenges and help in achieving the sustainable development.

We welcome the transition and continuation of the Reform to the Multi-Country Offices (MCOs), taking into account the needs of LDCs who are SIDs and SIDs in general. The MCOs have a crucial role to play and the reform presents an opportunity to ensure greater UN visibility through increased programmatic action on the ground with greater impacts. In the hopes that this reform will bring greater coordination, enhance partnership and allow new ones to flourish for the advancement of the 2030 Agenda, to better address COVID 19 and to help all SIDs in pursuit of adaptation and resilience in the face of the unique context in the face of the continuing threat of climate change.

To conclude, the advent of COVID 19 has shown us the importance of multilateralism and cooperation and the crucial role a repositioned UN has played in coordinating and working to address the challenges this pandemic has brought. COVID-19 therefore has now more than ever before necessitated the need for a stronger and well-coordinated UNDS. Member States, UN Agencies through Resident Coordinators, country teams, specialized agencies, regional entities and the Secretariat need to come together to address COVID-19 challenges whose impact is already being felt in economic, social as well as environment sectors. A system-wide approach will efficiently and effectively confront the pandemic and put us on the track to achieving the SDGs and the objectives of the Istanbul Programme of Action.

We look forward to a continued progress of the vibrant United Nations Development System which will provide the much-needed support to LDCs in the days ahead.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION
