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United Nations Economic and Social Council

TAKING ACTION TO IMPROVE LIVES

Statement by H.E. Ms. Inga Rhonda King, President of ECOSOC

Statement to the Annual Ministerial Meeting of Least Developed Countries

26 September 2018

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is my pleasure to address this annual meeting of Ministers from Least Developed Countries, and to welcome you all to New York for the 73rd session of the General Assembly.

On behalf of ECOSOC, I want to express my gratitude for your strong engagement in this year's High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development under the auspices of ECOSOC in July 2018 and in the work of the Council.

The 2030 Agenda has provided us with an ambitious roadmap that could lift LDCs out of poverty and help realize the vision of the Istanbul Programme of Action. And the HLPF has established itself as the core platform to keep the SDGs on the top of the international agenda.

The 2018 HLPF focused on the theme of "transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies", and for the first time included a session dedicated to the principle of leaving no one behind, to reaffirm the centrality of this principle to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

We estimate that approximately 2,200 people participated in the HLPF, including more than 125 Ministers and Vice-Ministers.



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The interest in the HLPF illustrates the strong commitment by Member States, the UN system and all stakeholders to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and to engage each other as partners.

During the Ministerial meetings, 46 countries — including 10 LDCs — presented their Voluntary National Reviews. Togo presented their VNR for the third year in a row — the only country so far to have presented three times.

The road to achieving the SDGs is particularly arduous for the LDCs, which is why they deserve the special attention of the international community. Some are being *left* behind while others are being *pushed* further behind by forces of globalization, technological advance, climate change, environmental degradation, austerity policies, and many forms of discrimination – and the risks and burdens are inequitably borne by our poorest and most marginalized communities.

This year's HLPF session reminded us that LDCs continue to be most at risk of being left behind.

The commitment to leaving no one behind demands that all member States focus on individual people and communities who are the most vulnerable and marginalized, and those who are discriminated against.

It demands continuous focus on the LDCs.

Technological leapfrogging is a necessary and critical way to catch up.

International cooperation should be coherent and well-coordinated to address the specific needs of the most vulnerable countries.

Structural change is necessary and transformation of deeply rooted issues, an imperative.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,



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We have already begun to look ahead and strategize in anticipation of the HLPF Summit on the SDGs in September 2019, which will follow the HLPF under the auspices of ECOSOC in July. A high-level dialogue on Financing for Development will also be held the day before the Summit in September.

It will be an important year. It is essential that it culminates in a reaffirmation of the international commitment to the SDGs at the September 2019 Summit.

For the July HLPF, we expect 51 countries to present their VNRs, including 10 LDCs — nine from the Africa region plus Timor-Leste.

The theme of the HLPF in July 2019 will be “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”.

The SDGs under review will include SDG 4 on quality education; SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth; SDG 10 on reducing inequalities; and SDG 13 on climate change; and SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions.

These are all major issues for LDCs, and the HLPF stands to benefit greatly from your contributions.

However, there will be sensitive political differences to navigate, and we hope to begin laying the groundwork early to support a consensual discussion that can make a difference for the work needed to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

I urge Ministers from a range of sectors to participate in the July HLPF.

I also call on you to ensure that your Head of State or Government comes to the September Summit prepared to adopt a declaration by consensus, reaffirming the new commitments and initiatives.



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In closing, I would also like to urge you to join forces with me to strengthen ECOSOC. As the only Charter body entirely dedicated to development, it is your home.

Its Humanitarian Affairs Segment and its Operational Activities Segment address key issues for the LDCs. This year, we will focus on the implementation of the decisions on the repositioning of the UN development system and the improvement of operational activities.

We will also use the Integration Segment to mobilize the contributions of specialized agencies and subsidiary bodies to ECOSOC and the HLPF. The High-level Segment will look at the long-term trends and scenarios.

I encourage you to contribute your best ideas to improve the ECOSOC and participate fully.

Join me in ensuring that the HLPF and ECOSOC will generate positive momentum toward the growth and sustainable development necessary within your countries to enable progress toward graduation from LDC status.

We wholeheartedly encourage your continued engagement and collaboration in the work of the HLPF and ECOSOC, including in the preparations, discussions, meetings and events that surround it.

I am optimistic that we will succeed in working together to achieve our shared aims, and I am looking forward to working closely with you as we move ahead through this year and into 2019.

Thank you.



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