



**Ensuring that no one is left behind: (How do we protect the poorest and most vulnerable from the crisis and empower them to realize the SDGs?)**

**Statement**

By

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**Tuesday, 6 July 2021** (12:00 – 13:00 New York time/19:00 – 20:00 Istanbul time).

**Chair:**

- **H.E. Ms. Pascale Baeriswyl (Switzerland)**, Vice President of ECOSOC

**Panelists/Resource Persons:**

- **Ms. Michelle Bachelet Jeria**, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
- **Ms. Jane Coffin**, Senior Vice President of Internet Society
- **Mr. Fabio Veras**, Senior research coordinator at the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG) and the Institute of Applied Economic Research (IPEA) researcher

**Lead discussants:**

- **Mr. Saad Alfarargi**, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to development
- **Mr. Antonio Vitorino**, Director-General of International Organization for Migration (IOM)
- **Ms. Beena Pallical**, Executive Director at the Asia Dalit Rights Forum (Communities Discriminated by Work and Descent Stakeholder Group)

**Respondent**

- **H.E. Ms. Sarah Adwoa Safo**, Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection of Ghana

**Honourable Ministers and Excellencies****Moderator:**

- **Ms. Jane Barratt**, Secretary General, International Federation on Ageing (IFA)

The unprecedented socio-economic effects of the COVID19 pandemic has had enormous negative consequences on all countries especially the most vulnerable. The LDCs, including other marginalized countries prior to the crisis were already unlikely to achieve the SDGs, hence the phrase, “**leaving no one behind**”. The

pandemic had a negative impact on the economic growth of LDCs that were already vulnerable to external factors, such as a drop global trade, lower commodity prices and a sharp decline in tourism activities. The lockdown and other preventive measures also weighed heavily on the economy. The countercyclical policies demonstrated that they insufficient to offset the economic shock due to COVID19. The LDCs and other vulnerable countries and communities also do not have safety nets that developed countries were able to weather the storm during the lockdowns.

### **Moderator,**

Allow me to address some for the guiding questions starting with the lessons from the pandemic. Firstly, the lockdowns across the LDCs resulted in the shift in the provision of some of the basic human rights such as education and health as well as impacting the economic and development trajectories due to lack of economic activities. WTO has indicated a 10.3 per cent decline in exports of merchandise trade in 2020 compared to 2019 and a 10.5 per cent decline in imports. It will also be recalled that many of the LDCs are commodity dependent or their economies are dependent few sectors, such as tourism. The crisis has highlighted the importance of building LDCs' trade infrastructure and strengthening their capacities as well as supporting micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in order to create jobs that will be essential to support economic recovery.

Secondly, the pandemic also highlighted the interconnectedness of the socio-economic policies and their impact when not integrated. The post-COVID-19 will require LDCs and other vulnerable to integrate Science, Technology and Innovation in their national policies. For example, telecommuting, telehealth, online education,

eCommerce, and government services will require review of the current policies to respond to the COVID19 and other pandemics.

Thirdly, affordable access to new technologies is needed for all, access to the internet should not be a privilege for affluent people. The ITU has indicated that only 19% of LDCs have access to the internet, the digital divide also showed the level of inequalities within and amongst countries especially the LDCs and most vulnerable. There are 3.7 billion people still offline, there is a need to address the target 9.C that calls on reducing the cost of the internet access for the LDCs.

Fourthly, the level of inequality is widening due to COVID-19. To enable the LDCs to progress toward the achievement of the SDGs as well as ensuring sustainable recovery that will enable the furthest behind to catch up, build back better, reduce poverty and create employment as well as preparing for future pandemic, they must leverage the power of science and technology, enhance human resources capacities and build robust institutions coupled with policies needed to develop LDCs' productive capacities through investment, research and development, and structural transformation.

Fifthly, climate change is affecting natural habitats and ecosystems by altering environmental factors, some which are not a consequence of the LDCs and the vulnerable but are being the most affected. Agriculture continues to be the economic driver for many LDCs and vulnerable countries however, the increasing impact of climate change is threatening the livelihoods of such communities.

In closing moderator, the upcoming LDC5 presents an opportunity for a coordinated multilateral response to help LDCs leverage digital technologies, finance SMEs and address market failures that prevent LDCs from being left behind through enhancing their STI capacity. The Technology Bank with more resources can support the LDCs to leveraging the power of science, technology and innovation to fight multidimensional vulnerabilities and to achieve the SDGs.

I thank you.