

Restoring the conditions for SDG progress in African countries, Least Developed Countries and Landlocked Developing Countries

Thursday, 8 July 2021, 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM (10:00PM Doha Time)

Thank you, Mr. Courtenay Rattray for giving me the floor. It is an honor to be part of this panel among the esteemed resource persons.

We have 10 years ahead of us only to deliver on the commitment to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. By now, it is clear that the coronavirus has taken a toll not only on the health systems of LDCs and LLDCs but it has also derailed some of the progress they have made towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

For instance, poverty rates continue to increase, and the spillover effect of the pandemic on the healthcare systems is projected to have long-term negative effects.

That said, I would like to briefly shed light on key areas where we can come in meaningfully as a donor agency.:

1. Focusing on promoting a sustainable, inclusive, and resilient recovery whilst addressing the root causes of vulnerability is of utmost importance:

We have learned from COVID-19 and previous pandemics, that, if we are not vigilant, another crisis might be just around the corner. Hence, investing in risk management, preparedness and resilience building is fundamental to ensure that countries and communities are able to cope better with future shocks.

This is also core to our efforts at Qatar Fund. During the pandemic for instance,

Hence, while the Qatar Fund has provided sizeable intervention and rapid response to over 70 countries to prevent the spread and mitigate the impacts of COVID-19, we have also accorded special attention to strengthening emergency health system preparedness in several countries such as Sudan and Jordan, where we supported emergency health strengthening projects and embedding resilience building at the systemic, community and individual levels.

On the same token, our response to economic, natural, and environmental shocks and crises focus on long-term recovery and resilience building is built on moving beyond reactive approaches towards an anticipatory risk management approach to climate change. For instance, the fund is administering a \$100 million pledge by the State of Qatar for climate change adaptation and mitigation, with a special focus on improving the ability of LDCs and SIDs to prepare for, respond to and recover from climate related shocks. as stipulated in the Istanbul Declaration and Programme of Action for the LDCs for the Decade 2011-2020.

2. No doubt, increasing international finance for restoring the conditions for SDG progress in African countries, LDCs and LLDCs is and will be needed, but we need to be mindful that it is not only about “more” finance, but also about “better” finance, meaning more effective and innovative financing.

As we all know, official development assistance is simply not enough. Aid is an important, but limited resource for development – On the same token, traditional forms of financing for development are shrinking with increased budgetary pressure on public aid providers. Hence, the donor community needs to boost efforts and tap into the potential of new, innovative partnerships that adopt new, innovative financing mechanisms to help fill these financing gaps.

One successful model is the Lives and Livelihood Fund, an innovative blended financing facility with a budget of \$2.5 billion that the Qatar Fund is a founding member of. The Fund was co-created by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and others, with a joint vision to raise some of the poorest LDCs out of poverty. It provides access to affordable financing for social development projects, by pooling grant resources and soft loans from regional and international donors to offer highly concessional funding opportunities.

Looking ahead at the Fifth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC5) to be hosted by the State of Qatar, we trust that the new 10-year programme of action to be adopted during the conference will be a forward-looking programme that adopts a holistic framework for LDCs to pursue sustainable development and support

countries prepare for the challenges of the future – one that puts the LDCs at the forefront of the global development agenda.

Thank you very much, and we look forward to welcoming you all to Doha next year for this conference.

The moderator will pass the floor back to the panelists/resource persons for concluding remarks of one minute each. The speakers should identify one or two key messages or recommendations for the future

Putting forward some recommendations for reflections, I would like to highlight several key points:

One – it is important to note that for donors – there isn't a one-size-fits-all solution to increase mobilization and impact of financing recovery for SDG progress in LDCs & LLDCs– but there are key lessons learnt:

1. Focus on resilience
2. keep local communities on board
3. Tap into new Partnerships

The local community has the knowledge, understand the problem and know which problems are most pressing- therefore putting them at the core of action - enhancing their skills, knowledge and providing a platform for them to stimulate innovative ideas is the starting point to ensure that the local community assumes ownership of initiatives that are built on their vision, unique challenges and needs. We have adopted a similar approach through a partnership with UNDP whereby we have created the biggest learning Network known as the Accelerator Labs Network – functioning in more than 70 countries where we support startups and scaling up of innovative solutions addressing global challenges.

Aid is an important, but limited resource for development. There is great potential in engaging in multi-stakeholder partnerships involving governments, civil society, donor countries, the private sector, and other actors to produce better development results.

To conclude, investing in resilient infrastructure, integrating a bottom-up approach and tapping into renewed partnerships are fundamental ingredients to consider when mobilizing additional international support and actions to restore the conditions for SDG progress in Africa, LDCs and LLDCs.

