



**Keynote statement by Ms. Rabab Fatima  
Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least  
Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and  
Small Island Developing States**

**High-level Political Forum**

**Session on: “African countries, Least Developed Countries and  
Landlocked Developing Countries. Turning the tide, regaining  
lost ground and embarking on the road to the SDGs”**

**Thursday, 13 July 2023, 4:15 PM – 6:00 PM,**

**Conference Room 4**

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

**Her Excellency Ambassador Lachezara Stoeva, President of the  
Economic and Social Council,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,**

**At the outset, I would like to thank Ambassador Stoeva for the  
kind invitation to address this important event.**

**I thank ECOSOC for having this dedicated session on the African  
countries, the LDCs and the LLDCs, focusing on how we can  
enhance our support to these countries in their efforts to regain  
lost ground, and embark on a sustainable track to overcome the  
current crises and achieve the SDGs.**

**Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, these countries were  
lagging behind - the social and economic consequences of the  
pandemic have only aggravated their already-difficult situation.**

**The poverty and food security situations have been among the  
most worrisome.**

**Under-nourishment has increased across the board in sub-  
Saharan Africa, LDCs and LLDCs as compared to pre-COVID-19-**

**pandemic levels; while severe food insecurity has worsened since 2019.**

**In 2020 alone, 32 million people in LDCs were pushed into extreme poverty.**

**Unfortunately, we are also seeing no progress, and in some cases even backsliding, on the SDGs, including those under review at this HLPF.**

**Over the last three years, progress has been limited on key indicators on water and sanitation in Africa, LDCs and LLDCs.**

**Access to electricity is also a major issue, impacting much of sub-Saharan Africa, most of which are LDCs, LLDCs or both. In fact, 52% of the population of the LDCs lack access to any kind of electricity.**

**In order to recover lost ground, adequate financing will be critical.**

**Trillions will be needed to redress this complex situation, from both public and private sources.**

**And against a backdrop of shrinking fiscal space, the debt situation has worsened in many of these countries, with some defaulting for the first time.**

**For instance, in 2020 and 2021, African countries paid more than twice the amount in debt service than nearly \$130 billion they received in ODA.**

**But then, debt is not the only issue.**

**Major investors are often hesitant to engage in many of these countries owing to a host of factors such as high perceived risk, small size of projects, high overhead fixed costs, lack of data and functioning markets, and weak infrastructure.**

**In 2022, Foreign Direct Investment in the LDCs declined by 16% compared to 2021. FDI declined in most African LLDCs, and fell overall by 44% for the continent as a whole.**

**Excellencies,**

**Distinguished Delegates,**

**Though the situation is dire, we can still be cautiously optimistic.**

**I would like to offer three ways in which we can make some headway.**

**First, we must make full use of the Programmes of Action which have been tailored to the LDCs and LLDCs, which include a large majority of the African countries, as well as the Agenda 2063.**

**The Doha Programme of Action for the LDCs (or DPoA) was negotiated by Member States throughout the pandemic and adopted in March 2022. It offers a roadmap for achieving the SDGs tailored to the specific challenges facing the LDCs.**

**I take this opportunity to thank the host Government of Qatar for its unwavering support for the LDCs.**

**The Programme of Action identifies 6 priority areas for action, each with specific goals and targets. It also identifies 5 concrete deliverables, which could have major transformative potential in the short-, medium- and long-term, namely:**

- an online university**
- an Investment Support Centre**

- **a Food Stockholding Mechanism**
- **a Resilience Building especially on climate change; and**
- **the Sustainable Graduation Support Facility.**

**I invite all Member States to support implementation of the DPoA in full as well as making these deliverables a reality.**

**My Office has also begun preparations in earnest for the upcoming Third UN Conference on the LLDCs, which will be held in Africa for the first time, in Kigali, in June 2024.**

**We have already held the African regional review meeting for the LLDC Conference in Gaborone, Botswana in May 2023, which identified priority areas for the African LLDCs for the next decade.**

**My second point is that we MUST effectively tackle the climate crisis.**

**COP28 must deliver commitments on financing, especially an increase in the amounts for climate change adaptation.**

**We must follow-up promptly on the landmark agreement on loss and damage from COP27 by operationalizing the new fund as soon as possible.**

**And my third and final point - it is imperative to find a comprehensive solution to the issue of finance - especially the matter of debt, which I outlined previously.**

**As the UN Secretary General reminded us, and I quote, “The global financial architecture was created for a world that no longer exists. It cannot address the challenges faced today by developing countries....[And] it has failed countries at their moment of greatest need.”**

**I am encouraged by the growing support for reforms to our global financial architecture, and I hope this will ultimately lead to concrete outcomes for the most indebted nations.**

**Recovering lost ground on the SDGs will require deploying our full arsenal of domestic and international policies, actions, and resources.**

**We have the tools at our disposal, but political will and action will be paramount.**

**I thank you for your attention.**