



United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least
Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and
Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS)

Statement by Ms. Rabab Fatima
Under-Secretary-General and High Representative of OHRLLS
&
Secretary-General of the Fifth United Nations Conference on
LDCs

at the Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the
Establishment of Least Developed Countries

10:15am-12:00pm 5 March 2023

Qatar Convention Center (QNCC)

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

It is an honour and privilege to welcome you to the commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the establishment of the category of Least Developed Countries.

On this occasion, I recall with deep appreciation the individuals and organizations, who have demonstrated steadfast commitment to, and solidarity with the LDCs over the last 50 years.

We are gathered here today with renewed determination, but driven by the same vision and values, to finish the work that they had started.

To level the playing field, and to give every person in every LDC a fair chance to succeed in life.

It is worth reflecting briefly on the Group's forward journey in partnership with the international community.

And to put the LDCs on a track to

Over the years, the number of countries in the group increased, reaching its peak at 52 in 1991.

The Istanbul Program of Action for the decade of 2011-22 had an ambitious target to graduate half of the LDCs by 2020.

Although the target was not fulfilled, significant progress has been achieved.

Four LDCs graduated in that period.

And sixteen more are now in the pipeline of graduation.

The Doha Programme of Action sets a new target to enable additional 15 countries to meet the graduation criteria by the end of this decade.

Progress in some other areas also took place over the past 50 years.

In 1980, the average GDP growth rate in LDCs was 3.1 per cent, which reached 7.4 per cent in 2005. That, however, fell

to 1.9 per cent in 2021 due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

From \$284 in 1980, the GDP per capita of the Group reached \$1,150 in 2021.

And the total share of export increased from 0.52 per cent in 1990 to around 1 per cent now.

We must constantly remember that each one of these data represents real lives and livelihoods. Hopes, and dreams and opportunities.

It should be noted however, that although progress was made, it remained uneven and asymmetric among different countries within the group.

Many LDCs, especially those in Africa, continue to struggle with a set of systemic challenges.

The inequality between the LDCs and the rest of the world has further widened.

The rapid technological innovations and unfavorable global economic conditions have made the situation worse.

A serious injustice also persists related to the greatest crisis of our times – the ongoing climate emergency.

Over the last 50 years, 69% of worldwide deaths caused by climate-induced disasters occurred in the LDCs.

And yet the LDCs account for only about 1.1% of the global emissions.

There is perhaps no clearer indicator that, historically, the rules of international development are stacked unfairly against the LDCs.

Added to this, the COVID-19 pandemic,

Excellencies,

Despite all these challenges, and a turbulent 50-year history, we arrive in Doha with hope. Solidarity will have its day.

Addressing the challenges of the LDCs is not only a moral imperative, but an economic and political one.

And – crucially - we have the means and tools to do it.

transformative journey towards rapid economic growth and sustainable development.

Excellencies,

The history of the LDCs is not just one of difficulty. It is also a history of human endeavor through adversity. Struggle, and success, against the odds.

To that end, the Conference has brought together partners from all walks of life, including the youth leaders.

Excellencies,

Resource mobilization, for the LDCs, has always been a daunting task. To address this, the DPOA has put forward ambitious targets and practical solutions.

For example:

The target of doubling LDCs' share of export will generate an additional \$235 billion.

Doubling the aid for trade will channel an additional \$20 billion dollars.

Meeting 0.20 per cent of GNI by the DAC countries will increase the ODA by another \$60 billion.

And robust debt relief measures could release around another \$35 billion.

The combined difference of these steps alone would be truly transformative.

This Conference provides us a great opportunity to make these aims achievable.

We have brought together nearly 5000 representatives from across the world - from Governments, the private sector, CSOs, parliamentarians, youth, and the media.

Collectively, you have the power, knowledge, and the necessary means to change the course for the LDCs.

Let us all seize the moment and start on that journey, now, here in Doha.

A journey from potential to prosperity.

I thank you all.