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**United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least
Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small
Island Developing States**

(UN-OHRLLS)

Statement by

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Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing
States**

**At the High-Level Briefing on Aviation Contributions to Sustainable
Development in Countries in Special Situations**

**A side event to the United Nations High Level Political Forum on
Sustainable Development**

19 July 2017, 8:15 am - 9:30 am

Conferenced Room 11, UN HQ

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to address this side event on the contribution of aviation for the sustainable development of the most vulnerable countries, the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction recognize the important role of sustainable transport in achieving sustainable development. Sustainable transport is crucial for the achievement of most of the SDGs including eradicating poverty, providing health and education, facilitating trade and economic transformation and building resilience. Sustainable transport is really an enabling and cross-cutting issue for all countries and especially for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, which are way behind others in the overall level of their national development and prosperity.

Air transport is an important mode of cargo as well as passenger transport. It has the ability to connect countries and people, even the most remote, to global networks. It plays a vital role in facilitating economic growth and harnessing the potential benefits of globalization. The connections created by air transport represent an important infrastructure that generates additional benefits through enabling foreign investment and other spill-over impacts on an economy.

Air transport is in particular critical to sustainable development in the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS. Air transport is especially important for the tourism sector which plays an important role in building up economies, providing employment and generating business opportunities. It also facilitates the trade of goods that are of high value or that are time-sensitive, such as perishable agricultural products, documents, pharmaceuticals, fashion garments or electronics consumer goods. If

tapped effectively, it can be an important contributor to structural economic transformation in these countries.

Modern aviation infrastructure can also help vulnerable countries in enhancing their resilience and improving their capacity to respond to natural disasters, public health emergencies and other calamities.

Air transport is particularly significant for the LLDCs because it is a mode of transport that provides them with direct access to international markets without having to pass through transit countries. It therefore provides an important link that helps them overcome their geographical disadvantage. It can be an important contributor to new opportunities in the LLDCs and in stimulating diversification and value addition of their exports.

Air transport is also very important for improving the connectivity of the SIDS given their geographical location and isolation from the other countries. Their vulnerabilities are further exacerbated by the growing impacts of climate change and investing in air transport for the SIDS is critical to help them in fostering tourism growth and overall sustainable development.

For the LDCs, building up their aviation infrastructure, and modernising existing one, is a necessary step to modernise their economies, increase their participation in global trade and support activities that can contribute to their sustainable development, such as tourism.

The Istanbul Programme of Action for the LDCs, the Vienna Programme of Action for the LLDCs and the SAMOA Pathway for the SIDS, all underscore the important role of air transport in the sustainable development of the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

As the world moves on with the implementation of the 2030 agenda, the SDGs can only be successful if we pay special attention to the vulnerable countries – LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS in the aviation sector.

Despite the potential that aviation offers, the most vulnerable countries face major challenges in providing adequate air transportation. The proportion of air passenger volumes of the LDCs and LLDCs represents just 0.8 per cent of world total each, while SIDS represent 1.4 per cent. In comparison, the share of LDCs and LLDCs in global population is 13% and 6.5% respectively and under 1% for SIDS. Similarly, LDCs' and LLDCs' freight volumes represent just 1 per cent of world totals. This indicates the low usage of air transport for passenger travel and freight services in these countries, in particular in LDCs and LLDCs.

Some of the barriers faced by the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS to developing their air transport industry include high prices for air transport, limited domestic competition, and the high scale of investment that is needed for infrastructure development, maintenance and replacement of aged fleets, and upgrading of airports and terminals. In particular, these countries have difficulties securing the necessary investments and partnerships. In addition, creating a resilient aviation infrastructure and developing the skills and capacities needed to maintain it and safely operate it requires a substantial increase in capacity building and transfer of know-how.

The LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS therefore require support for the hard physical infrastructure, as well as the soft infrastructure which includes the implementation of legal and regulatory frameworks, policies and institutions.

I look forward to hearing from the distinguished panellists and the Member States, on your challenges but also your successful experiences. Some of the most vulnerable countries, such as Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, or Zambia are making great

strides in building up their airlines and air transport facilities. Other vulnerable countries can learn from their experiences.

As the international community, we need to work more closely together and build strong effective partnerships to support the development of the air transport industry in the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS. Given the nature of the industry and the high infrastructure costs, promoting aviation in the most vulnerable countries will require facilitation of public private partnerships.

Countries in special situations cannot achieve sustainable transport related objectives and by extension, the Sustainable Development Goals, without dedicated support and mechanisms at the global and regional levels. There is need for enhanced and strengthened global partnerships, both north-south and south-south, and with other stakeholders, to complement their national efforts and regional collaboration. This will help ensure that no one is left behind particularly in these vulnerable countries.

I thank you for your kind attention.