

Check against delivery

**Virtual LDCs/SIDS Trust Fund Workshop for the Asia region**

**“Engaging with the UN Human Rights Council, during and after COVID  
19 through the LDCs/SIDS Trust Fund: achievements, challenges and  
lessons learned”**

**Malé**

**24-25 November 2021 & 1 December 2021**

**Opening remarks**

**By**

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**Director**

**Human Rights Council and Treaty Mechanisms Division**

*Your Excellency, Mr President of the United Nations General Assembly,  
Your Excellency Mr. Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of  
the Maldives,*

*Your Excellency, Madam President of the Human Rights Council,*

*Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen in your respective ranks and titles,*

*Dear former beneficiaries of the LDCs/SIDS Trust Fund from Asia, Africa,  
the Pacific and the Caribbean regions,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is an honour for me to participate today in the fourth and last Virtual Workshop of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Trust Fund for the Asia region.

On behalf of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and on my own behalf, as Director of the Human Rights Council and Treaty Mechanisms Division, which is responsible for managing the LDCs/SIDS Fund, I would like to extend a warm welcome to you all, and to thank in particular the Republic of Maldives, our host country, for its support in organizing this important workshop.

At the outset, I wish to highlight the role played by the Republic of the Maldives which, when it was a member of the Human Rights Council (HRC) from June 2011 to December 2016, drew our attention to the specific situation of LDCs and SIDS and took the lead to ensure their fuller participation - as provided for in Council resolution 19/26 that established the Trust Fund for Technical Assistance to Support the Participation of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Work of the HRC.

This workshop is organized in accordance with Council resolution 34/40 adopted in 2017, which requests: 1) the Fund to organize regional workshops before its tenth anniversary in March 2022, and 2) OHCHR to prepare a report, in consultation with the beneficiaries of the Fund, and present it to the forty-ninth (49th) session of the Council.

Previously, three seminars were held in the Caribbean, Pacific and Africa regions in 2018, 2019 and 2021, respectively. With a view to ensure that the Human Rights Council is closer to the field, the Trust Fund also organized two workshops in Guyana and in the Republic of Fiji, with the participation of the sitting Presidents. We deeply regret, due to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic, not to have the chance to enjoy the beauty of the Republic of the Maldives and the hospitality of its people.

### **Distinguished participants,**

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced OHCHR to find creative solutions to ensure business continuity for all human rights mechanisms, including the Human Rights Council by adopting new working methods and embracing new technologies.

At OHCHR we are extremely proud that the Council was the first intergovernmental body to resume meetings after the interruption of proceedings caused in March 2020 by the pandemic. Since then, the Council and its mechanisms have been able to carry out the mandate entrusted by the General Assembly thanks to the tireless commitment of the Council's Presidents and Bureaus and the dedication of my colleagues in the HRC Secretariat under the leadership of Mr. Eric Tistoune.

2021 was an exceptionally busy year for the HRC, one of the busiest since its establishment. It was not only able to hold its three regular sessions in accordance with its programme of work, but also to respond to emerging and urgent crises, through the convening of four special sessions.

Let me take this opportunity to commend the stewardship of Ambassador Nazhat Shameem Khan, President of the Council, and the hard work of the four Vice-Presidents.

### **Excellencies,**

Building national capacity of government officials in the field of human rights is the main objective of the Trust Fund. The pandemic has prevented us from supporting delegations' travels between June 2020 and June 2021. We were delighted that 16 government officials (10 women, 6 men), the second largest cohort since the Fund is operational, were able to participate in the 48<sup>th</sup> session of the HRC, last September.

The Trust Fund has been a game changer for the majority of LDCs/SIDS. Since its establishment it has supported 172 delegates and fellows. For 95% of the beneficiary delegates, it enabled their first time participation in a regular session of the Human Rights Council.

The Fund also organized several online inductions courses on the rules and procedures of the Council prior to its regular sessions to continue supporting as best as it can LDCs/SIDS's engagement with the UN human rights world body.

The Trust Fund also developed the first online training tool on the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms for LDCs/SIDS government officials working in the field of human rights. To date around 600 persons from all regions have taken this course.

### **Excellencies,**

The Fund, which is funded only through voluntary contributions, has expanded significantly its donor base, enabling a broader variety of activities. 31 countries have been supporting the Trust Fund to date, compared to only 3 in 2015. Allow me to seize this opportunity to thank all of those who support and place confidence in the Fund's programmes.

### **Distinguished participants,**

2022 will be a landmark year for the Trust Fund.

The historic adoption by the Human Rights Council of decision 46/115, which enjoyed the support of 160 sponsors, is a recognition of the work that has been done, but also a call for us all to do better.

This decision calls for the organisation of a High- Level Panel on Universality on the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Trust Fund; and, the participation of Member States that do not have a permanent resident mission in Geneva to achieve universal participation of all Members States of the United Nations at the 49<sup>th</sup> session of the Council next March.

At the same session, and pursuant to resolution 34/40, OHCHR will present a report providing for an evaluation of the activities of the Trust Fund in meeting its training and capacity-building mandate, and -

reflecting the recommendations made by the participants in the Declarations Towards 2022 at the regional workshops.

We consider that it is essential to conduct such an evaluation if we want to do better. The delegates who have benefited from these programmes should be consulted on their experience in Geneva and take-aways.

The Fund's programmes should indeed provide interested member states with the necessary know-how to implement the recommendations emanating from the Council and its mechanisms, in particular the Universal Periodic Review.

OHCHR will continue to extend its support to build the capacity of LDCs/SIDS and ensure that their human rights challenges and experiences are part of the debates of the Council. I take this opportunity to express my appreciation to Ms. Fatou Camara Houel, Coordinator of the Fund for her contribution to consolidate and expand the work of the Fund.

### **Distinguished participants,**

It is our hope that this Workshop and its outcome document "Malé Declaration Towards 2022", will include concrete action points to further strengthen the Trust Fund's support to Member States.

Let us make sure, together, that No One is Left Behind in the work of human rights mechanisms and that we Build Back Better in terms of implementation of their outcomes.

Wishing you successful deliberations, I thank you for your attention.