**OPENING REMARKS BY**

**MRS BRENDA BVALAN ON BEHALF OF THE CHARGE D AFFAIRS,**

**MALAWI PERMANENENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

**DURING THE SIDE EVENT ON THE SIDE LINES OF 51st SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

**UNDER THE TOPIC: COMMEMORATION OF THE DOHA PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES**

**Moderator**

**Fellow panellists**

**Distinguished delegates**

Let me at the outset express my sincere gratitude to Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for organizing this important event. Often times we tend to forget that development is a human right and as States and other stakeholders, we need to take an active role in making sure that societies are not deprived of such. Development is one of the most urgent of human rights priorities for people living in Least Developed Countries as it covers all the basic needs to human life. The Programmes of Action for LDCs are a deliberate move by the UN to ensure the fair distribution of the benefits of development to the LDCs, it is in line with the Declaration on the Right to Development.

LDCs face serious structural impediments to sustainable development. Some of the key challenges for the enjoyment of human rights in LDCs stem from energy poverty, export marginalization, soaring debt and climate vulnerability.

Half of the population in LDCs does not have access to consistent energy. 1.1 billion people in the world are in LDCs.

LDC export share in global trade have stood at 1% for over a decade. Under the IPoA the target was to grow the exports to 2% by 2021.

LDCs dependence on export of raw commodities leaves them vulnerable to global market fluctuations.

Another critical challenge is soaring debt. LDC debt has triples over the past decade. Although Official Development Assistance has for a long time smoothen LDC financial distress it is not sustainable. In 2021 it reached a record high of 12.5%, this was compounded by the COVID 19 pandemic.

SMES which form majority in LDCs were the most adversely affected, leading to closure of businesses as governments lacked the financial stimuli to cushion them from the impact of the pandemic.

LDCs are the most affected by the climate crisis although they are the least responsible for causing it by producing a mere 1.5% of the global CO2 emissions. For instance, my country Malawi has for the past 5 years been affected by floods which dispersed communities to camps where they face more challenges in terms of to accessing health, sanitation, nutrition, security, and education services and needs. In this process, these people are being deprived of their rights to access all the necessary basics I have just listed above.

**Moderator,**

**Distinguished delegates,**

**I wish to highlight on the Progress on implementation of the Programme of Actions for Least Developed Countries (LDC) in minimizing the above listed challenges and lessons learned**

The overarching goal of the IPoA was to overcome the structural challenges faced by the LDCs in order to eradicate poverty, achieve internationally agreed development goals and enable graduation from the LDC category.

Major advances were made in several key areas, such as access to information and communications technology, sustainable energy, health, primary education, gender and governance.

The overall progress of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the decade 2011 – 2020 has been mixed and uneven. Commendable efforts have been made by all LDCs over the last decade with significant progress made across the 8 priority areas. Since the establishment of the LDC category in 1971 by the United Nations, only 5 countries have graduated from the category, and currently 12 LDCs are in different stages of the graduation process.

As a group, the LDCs recorded fluctuating economic growth rates over the IPoA decade. Collectively, we were unable to attain the IPoA target of 7%. Although at one time in 2014, 14 LDCs grew at 7% or more during the decade, this economic expansion was not able to translate into meaningful poverty reduction.

There has been an improvement in human and social indicators especially health and education. Several LDCs have raised public expenditure on higher education to over 1% of GDP during the IPoA implementation period.

Over the IPoA decade, expenditure on health increased in the LDCs from 4.189% of GDP in 2011 to 4.253% of GDP in 2017.

Mobilizing sufficient financing remains a major challenge in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Despite signs of progress, investments that are critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals remain underfunded in LDCs.

Aggregate growth was collectively highest in Asian LDCs, followed by Africa and Haiti, but lowest in the island LDCs.

With the exception of Ethiopia, the manufacturing sector in African LDCs was mainly stagnant throughout the period of IPoA implementation. The service sector grew from 47.05% to 49.07% in African LDCs, with exports from the countries in Africa accounting for more than half of the total commercial services exports for the LDCs, which were mainly in transport and tourism.

Asian and Pacific LDCs improved most in building productive capacity to achieve high and sustainable growth and structural transformation, with increasing contribution of manufacturing value added to GDP from 15.46% in 2011 to 17.12% in 2016. Efforts towards universal access to electricity improved in the Asian Pacific LDCs as urban access electricity rates reached above 50 per cent.

I wish to provide a glimpse of a few specific projects which have registered success in IPoA decade with examples:

* Tourism and Expanding Aviation Infrastructure to Increase Economic Growth in Guinea and Tuvalu.
* Connecting main corridors via road, rail and sea to improve access to markets in countries in Djibouti, Togo & Burkina Faso.
* Diversifying energy sources to promote renewable energy generation in Bhutan, Solomon Islands and Ethiopia.
* Providing Universal Access to Mobile Broadband and Telecommunication Services in Sudan, Sao Tome and Principe.
* Implementing Various Reforms to improve the business environment and Encourage Private Sector Investment in Zambia and Nepal.
* Promoting Agribusiness Amongst the Youth and Women to Empower and Encourage Income Generation Opportunities in Malawi and Togo.
* Investing in Value Addition and Diversifying Commodities to Strengthen the Resilience of the National Economy from Shocks in Afghanistan.

**Moderator,**

**Distinguished delegates**

You may all be aware of the devastating effects the COVID19 pandemic has had on LDCs. LDCs have slid back to where they were before the IPoA. This has led to many LDCs not meeting many of the objectives in the Programme of action and Agenda 2030.

**Moderator,**

**Distinguished delegates**

**The Question is? How can the Doha Programme of Action rectify this problem?**

The Doha Programme of Action for the decade 2022–2031 is a new generation of renewed and strengthened commitments by the least developed countries and their development partner.

The DPoA is our best opportunity for charting a recovery path for the world’s most vulnerable countries. It is is our only hope to achieving the right to development that LDCs so much crave.

It contains measures for eradicating our people’s poverty, hunger, and malnutrition, making internet access universal, diversifying our economies, increasing our exports and trade, and for setting a benchmark for ODA. It includes the establishment of an online university, an international investment support centre and food stockholding for enabling LDCs to build back better.

In view of this, on behalf of the LDCs, I wish to urge the UN, Member States, development partners, civil societies and all stakeholders to fully commit themselves in delivering their deliverables for the LDCs in the DPoA and participate in the Doha Conference in March 2023. This is the only way that the people in the LDCs will enjoy their right to development.

**Thank you for your attention**.