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UN-OHRLLS

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

Opening Statement by Ms. Rabab Fatima
Under-Secretary-General and High Representative of OHRLLS
&
Special Advisor for SIDS4

At the ECESA Plus Principals Meeting at the fourth International Conference on SIDS
Tuesday, 28 May 2024, 2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m

Chef de Cabinet Mr. Courtenay Rattray,

USG Li Junhua,

Dear Colleagues,

I thank you USG Li for convening us today here in St. John's.

The strong presence of senior UN leadership here for this Conference, sends a strong message of high priority accorded by the UN family to the pressing needs of the SIDS.

The Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS is an ambitious roadmap to bring about transformative changes in the SIDS.

The challenge facing us now is ensuring its effective implementation.

Too often, we see ambitious agreements are negotiated at global level, but they face challenges when it comes to implementation on the ground.

So, what role is there for us? What concrete commitments can we make?

First and foremost, action at the national level is of paramount importance.

Clearly, the primary responsibility for the implementation of ABAS rests with the SIDS governments. They must mainstream it in their national development plans.

But they cannot do it alone.

My Office plans to develop an ABAS toolkit that will facilitate the mainstreaming of the new programme of action in national plans and strategies.

This morning, we launched the new engagement strategy at a meeting with the National Focal Points. The engagement strategy will support the NFPs in fulfilling their critical roles in the effective implementation of the ABAS over the next decade.

We also look forward to working with [DESA and] the entire UN system to support SIDS in developing a monitoring and reporting framework that will ensure effective implementation of the ABAS.

To this end, my Office has a plan to ensure a coherent approach to developing this framework, with the aim of achieving tangible results at national, regional, and global levels.

This involves the strategic use of our SIDS National Focal Points (NFPs) Network, engaging SIDS RCs, Regional Commissions, and other regional and international organizations.

Secondly, there is a critical role for the UN system to reflect the ABAS in its own work programmes.

As part of this, it is important to ensure that the key ABAS commitments and deliverables are integrated in our respective strategic frameworks and programmes in line with our mandates.

For that we would need to get the support and endorsement of our respective intergovernmental processes, including action by our governing bodies and executive boards.

There is an especially important role for the Resident Coordinators, Multi-Country Offices, and the UN Country Teams, to translate ABAS into actions on the ground.

To support this, my Office will work with our SIDS RC Network to ensure that the ABAS is given due prominence in the design of sustainable development cooperation frameworks.

I am glad to hear that the RCs from the three regions of the SIDS will also be here for the full week.

Third, a well-coordinated UN system that provides coherent support to the SIDS is critically important to taking forward this new ambitious agenda.

We will continue to work with you through the Inter Agency Consultative Group on SIDS, that we co-chair with DESA, to ensure coordinated support for ABAS implementation, and the rollout of the key deliverables of the ABAS, including on the proposed SIDS Centre of Excellence.

We must also step up our efforts at the regional level, including support on the system of regional reviews.

I look forward to working closely with all of you to better respond to the needs of the SIDS and support their efforts to chart a sustainable and resilient future.

Thank you.