

**Statement by Ms. Elsa Haile,
Director of the International Organizations
Division Ministry of Foreign Affairs
During the Annual LDC Ministerial Meeting**



17 September 2020, New York

Mr. Chair,

I wish to thank H.E. Mr. Eisenhower Mkaka M.P., Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Malawi for convening this annual meeting. Let me warmly greet DSG Ms. Amina Mohamed and Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa Utoikamanu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the LDCs. Let me also congratulate H.E. Mr. Volkan Bozkir, President of the 75th session of the General Assembly and President-elect of the ECOSOC, His Excellency Mr. Munir Akram.

I would also like to take this opportunity to extend Eritrea's wishes of good health to all and our deepest condolences to the families who have suffered losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Chair,

This year has presented humanity with an unforeseen and unprecedented challenge.

In every corner of the world, countries are trying to balance between containing the spread of the virus to keep their citizens safe and restoring economic normalcy. A balance that is often difficult to achieve and maintain.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on developing countries cannot be overemphasized. External shocks, especially a sharp decline in commodity prices, disruption of the global supply chain, and trade, a decline in foreign direct investment, and tourism have all the potential to wipe out the modest social and economic progress witnessed in the developing countries.

Since the emergence of this global pandemic, Eritrea pursued a primarily preventive strategy through the pursuit of Non-Pharmaceutical measures (NPH) while also ensuring the continuation of its major national development projects. The core aspect of this policy is collaborative citizen participation. To date, because of the judicious policy, Eritrea has been able to contain a major outbreak and prevent loss of life due to COVID. Moreover, within the new lines of health and security requirements, the Government has stepped up the implementation of major infrastructural programs and has exempted critical economic areas from the partial lockdown.

We are confident of the ability and resilience of our people to emerge from this crisis stronger. We will spare no efforts to regain the momentum of achieving an economically prosperous, and socially harmonious nation that fulfills the aspirations and expectations of its citizens.

Mr. Chair,

As the effects of COVID-19 continue to unfold, it is clear that this pandemic will have long-term impacts on our countries. While it needs international solidarity to recover, it is most important as LDCs to strengthen our cooperation in all spheres and share lessons from each other.

The next round of Program of Action for LDCs affords us the opportunity to learn from our past and chart a meaningful international framework of cooperation for LDCs and among LDCs.

Although this pandemic has prevented us from convening our conference next year, we believe that this time can be used to diligently work on and refine our common commitments for the LDCs until we meet to adopt our new program of action as recently agreed to take place in 2022.

There are many difficult questions that we need to be asking ourselves ahead of the preparations for LDC V and the adoption of yet another action agenda in order to ensure that no other decade passes without eradicating poverty or ensuring tangible economic progress in our countries. The review should be less about diagnosing a problem and negotiating new goals. The lofty targets that we set for ourselves in the various international development agreements, including the Istanbul Program of Action, are still relevant and remain unachieved. The next review should be concise and action-oriented. It should be about achieving a genuine Global Compact to address the international economic models, norms, and institutions that are often rigged against the billions living in the developing world.

Mr. Chair, in conclusion,

COVID-19 has affected every aspect of our livelihood. No country, big or small, rich or poor, can tackle this pandemic and its consequences alone.

Most of the economic and social challenges that we are witnessing in many parts of the world have been with us for decades. They are only amplified by the pandemic because we failed to properly address them.

COVID-19 affords us an opportunity to rethink international development discourse and emerge stronger in the crisis. If we are to emerge stronger, there is a need for meaningful international solidarity anchored on enlightened self-interest and a shared future.

I thank you