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**UN-OHRLLS**

**Statement**

**by**

**Rabab Fatima**

**Under-Secretary-General and High Representative**

**for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States**

**at the**

**3rd Preparatory Committee for the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4)**

**Agenda Item: International Trade as an Engine for Development**

**12 February 2025**

**3.00pm – 6.00pm**

**Excellencies,**

**I thank you for the opportunity to provide inputs to this PrepCom session on international trade as an engine for development.**

**Trade is a powerful tool for development—yet LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS remain severely marginalized in international trade.**

**Despite collectively representing 22 per cent of the world’s population, exports from LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS accounted for just 1.1 per cent, 1.2 per cent, and 2.3 per cent of world trade in 2023.**

**Commitments on trade feature prominently in each of the dedicated Programmes of Action for these vulnerable countries—The DPoA and the POA for LLDCs both set targets for doubling the exports of these countries, while the ABAS calls for accelerated trade and investment in SIDS.**

**Multilateral trading system**

**Most of the countries that are not WTO members are LDCs, LLDCs or SIDS. I welcome support for accession to the WTO in the Zero Draft (Para 43.a), and emphasize that technical assistance and capacity building is important not just in that process, but also to support the fulfilment of associated accession-related commitments.**

**I strongly welcome the commitment for strengthened special and differential treatment provisions (Para 43.d) and enhanced Aid for Trade for these vulnerable countries (Para 43.k).**

**I emphasize that the new POA for LLDCs underlines the interest of the LLDCs in a dedicated work programme under the auspices of the WTO to address their special needs.**

**Trade capacities**

**Building trade capacities is crucial to unlocking the economic potential of LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS.**

**Fully implementing the Trade Facilitation Agreement is key (Para 44.a) —yet the rate of implementation is just 53 per cent in LDCs, 71 per cent in LDCs, and 73 per cent SIDS, as of February 2025, far below the global average of 82 per cent.**

**Investment in infrastructure, digital trade, and trade facilitation measures is also critical to enhance participation in regional and global value chains.**

**Boosting trade in LDCs**

**It is vital that all WTO commitments on trade support for the LDCs are fully implemented (Para 45.a).**

**This includes strengthening preferential market access for LDCs with simplified rules of origin and doubling Aid for Trade to LDCs by 2031, in line with the DPoA target (Para 45.e).**

**It also must involve extending the special and differential treatment when LDCs graduate, so that they are not punished for development successes (Para 45.a).**

**Excellencies,**

**Trade is one of the most powerful tools for development, yet it underperforms for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.**

**The sustainable development of these countries and the achievement of the SDGs depends critically on revitalizing trade as an engine for development.**

**I thank you.**