Expert Group Meeting on Improving Access to Finance for Graduating LDCs
New York, 11-12 November 2019, Conference Room E

Opening Remarks by Mr. Liu Zhenmin
Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs

Excellencies,
Distinguished participants,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to join you today to speak on the important topic of finance for graduating LDCs.

After a long period of stagnation, a positive change is recently unfolding in the Least Developed Countries graduation scenario.

In 2018, a total of 12 countries met the criteria for exiting from the LDC group. They are now at various stages in the graduation process.

Graduation from the category is a testament to a country's long-term socio-economic progress. However, notwithstanding its positive development, we should not forget that the LDCs as a group, including the graduating ones, continue to remain structurally vulnerable.

Indeed, the relative improvement in their situation does not mean that they are ready to lose international support.

The LDCs category – currently consisting of 47 countries – hosts more than 30 per cent of the global poor with income less than 1.90 US dollar per capita per day. A large number of the LDCs are geographically handicapped: 17 of the 47 are land-locked developing countries, while nine are small island developing states. Moreover, an overwhelming number of LDCs suffer from the negative consequences of climate change. And more than half are either in conflict or post-conflict countries.

As a number of LDCs will move out of the group, there is a growing concern whether their transition will be smooth and sustainable.

Graduating countries remain dependent on external public and private financial resources for sustaining investment and developmental activities.

Hence, I welcome this timely meeting to further study the challenges of access to finance for graduating LDCs. And to explore the necessary areas of capacity building for accessing financial resources. This is also in line with the Secretary-General's Roadmap for Financing the 2030 Agenda, which urges the international community to develop incentives to further the development progress of the graduating LDCs.

I encourage you to discuss ways for the UN system and international partners to better support graduating countries. We also bear in mind the work of the Committee for Development Policy and the upcoming new Programme of Action on the LDCs.

I am confident that this meeting will effectively support the UN inter-governmental decision-making process and beyond.

Let us generate a much-needed political momentum for improved access to finance for the graduating LDCs.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts and recommendations on this important topic.

I wish you a fruitful and successful meeting!

Thank you.