Mr. Moderator,

I would like to note with appreciation, that Ambassador Kickert of Austria, and our colleague from UNDP both made reference to support measures extended to LLDCs that are graduating from LDC status.

Here I think it is worthwhile to note that of the 32 LLDCs, 17 are LDCs, and 13 of these are in Africa. That means that in due time, 13 LLDCs from Africa would eventually grapple with policies to ensure that their graduation from least developed status is smooth, sustainable, and irreversible.

I wanted to underscore that from Bhutan's national experience and observations, that countries who are graduating often are doing so having just met the thresholds for graduating, often meeting the minimum of 2/3 criteria. In these circumstances, most countries on the graduation track remain vulnerable, and often, it is due to high economic vulnerability, directly linked to structural transformation and other challenges directly linked priority area 5 of the VPOA.

This vulnerability is in fact heightened further in the context of the impact of climate change, which for most LLDCs could threaten to reverse hard earned development gains.

I therefore thank Austria and UNDP for their appreciation of that fragility, and urge other development partners and international partners to also bear that perspective in mind, when considering the issue of means of implementation for LLDCs in the region.

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