STATEMENT (Pre-recorded - 3 minutes) BY H.E. LYONPO (DR.) TANDI DORJI, MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, KINGDOM OF BHUTAN, TO THE SPECIAL BODY OF LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND PACIFIC ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES, 28 APRIL 2021

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I bring you warm greetings from the Kingdom of Bhutan.

2. I thank Her Excellency the Executive Secretary of UN ESCAP for inviting me to speak at this important forum.

3. More than a year into the global pandemic, we are faced with the reality that, in the Asia-Pacific region alone, almost 90 million people have been pushed back into extreme poverty. The socio-economic disruptions caused by the pandemic are even greater for those of us from the LDCs, LLDCs and Pacific Island Developing countries.

4. Bhutan is also experiencing the adverse impacts brought about by the pandemic. Our economy is severely disrupted and the GDP is projected to fall to -6.1%.

5. Despite these challenges and the significant strain on our already limited resources, the government under the leadership of His Majesty the King has ensured that the COVID-19 situation is under control, whilst livelihoods are protected through welfare and employment schemes. I am also happy to share that Bhutan’s entire eligible population has received their first dose of vaccination recently. With this, we see a ray of hope for recovery and restoration to normal life.

Excellencies

6. Bhutan remains committed to graduate from the LDC category by December 2023. We believe we owe it to ourselves and to our international partners who have supported us through many decades of our socio-economic development.

7. We are working towards a smooth and sustainable graduation despite the fact that hard-earned gains have been severely impeded by the pandemic and that Bhutan has not been able to achieve the threshold for the critical Economic Vulnerability Index.

8. Our current 12th FYP will address last mile challenges in all sectors and ensure that Bhutan’s graduation is sustainable and irreversible. Besides the regular development programs, several dedicated flagship programs are being implemented to address high priority national issues that will contribute to diversification and economic growth.

9. As we look towards recovery from the pandemic and embark on the preparations for LDC V, we must reflect on how well we have fared across the 8 priority areas of the Istanbul Programme of Action. We particularly need to look at how the LDCs, LLDCs
and Pacific Island Developing countries can be better prepared to absorb such shocks in the future.

10. There is also a need to review the smooth transition strategy to ensure that countries graduating from the LDC category do not fall back. Graduating countries must be supported rather than penalized through the withdrawal of international support measures related to trade, development cooperation and financing.

11. Lastly, I call upon this august group to commit to deepening our partnerships to end the crisis and to build back better from the pandemic.

Thank you and Tashi Delek!