

**Statement by Mr. Mukhisa Kituyi  
Secretary-General of UNCTAD**

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Today we face a somber international environment. The world economy is slowing. A lingering trade war is stripping terms like “industrial policy” and “technology transfer” of their development meaning and instead weaponizing them ahead of what could become a longer term technological cold war. Trust in multilateral solutions is at an all-time low, and negotiators in Geneva are being vilified – not entirely without reason – as peons of a globalist elite, out of touch with everyday people, focused only on development solutions that appeal to billionaire plutocrats.

The negative consequences of this scenario are most worrisome to the weakest members of the international community, that is the least developed countries. They are most dependent on a healthy global economy, international solidarity and fidelity to international commitments.

Yet as shown in our publication to be launched this afternoon, *Sustainable Development Trends in the Least Developed Countries 2019*, 40 per cent of LDCs registered lower growth rates in 2018 than in 2017 and eight LDCs grew by less than 2.5 % last year. This leaves them way below the internationally agreed target of 7% annual growth and by far the furthest behind in achieving the SDGs.

Unfortunately, in our rhetoric to go from billions to trillions in pursuit of the SDGs, it is the LDCs who are being most marginalized from global attention. The importance that we in the United Nations’ system have placed on the role of private sector solutions to development challenges has largely skipped over the realities faced by most LDCs. At places like Davos and elsewhere, blended finance, public-private partnership and impact investment are on many lips, yet these solutions barely feature on the radar screen of the least developed countries and their governments.

It was in this context that we developed the analysis behind *The Least Developed Countries Report 2018*, which you will discuss today. Subtitled *Entrepreneurship for Structural Transformation: Beyond Business as Usual*, this Report looks at the crucial role of entrepreneurs in LDCs to embark on a path of sustained growth and structural transformation.

The new LDC Report directly addresses the particularities of entrepreneurship in LDCs. It questions the conventional wisdom about entrepreneurship in poor countries, that targets MSME development, offering small solutions to big problems. It instead focuses on the need for dynamic entrepreneurship to enable structural change in LDCs, adding new value to the discussion of private sector solutions by highlighting the need for coherence between entrepreneurship strategies and policies geared towards developing productive capacities and structural transformation. The report looks at how entrepreneurship promotion must work with industrial policy, rural development and also STI policies.

The publication of this report takes place at a time when solidarity with the LDCs has reached a nadir. These countries are still striving to implement the Istanbul Programme of Action adopted in 2011. At the same time, preparations will soon begin for LDC V, expected to take place in 2021 and to adopt a new decennial Plan of Action for the LDCs. We hope these deliberations will take into account the important insights that come from our LDC Report and address the changing international environment for LDCs since 2011. We look forward to continuing to work with all our Member States to this end.