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**Keynote address  
by**

**Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu**

**High Representative  
And  
Under-Secretary-General  
for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked  
Developing Countries  
and Small Island Developing States**

**Global SG7 Conference  
*A Global Preparatory Meeting of the Review of SDG7 at the  
2018 UN High-level Political Forum***

***Keynote Address at the Opening Session***

Venue: ESCAP Hall

Bangkok, Thailand  
22 February 2018  
9 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

- H.E. Marie Chatardová, President of UN Economic and Social Council
- H.E. Siri Jirapongphan, Minister of Energy, Thailand
- Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs
- Shamshad Akhtar, Executive Secretary Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
- H.E. Marianne Hagen, State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway
- Excellencies, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen

At the outset, I wish to express my gratitude to the Government of Thailand, ESCAP and DESA for hosting and organizing this so timely and critical meeting.

Thank you for the opportunity to briefly share some food for thought, action and discussion with you.

I am here with you as a voice for 91 vulnerable countries and their often left-behind people of over one billion whom OHRLLS serves.

We all appreciate being in such a well-lit meeting environment, which is air conditioned, and in which we easily can recharge our new lifelines called iPhones - this makes us feel globally connected or alternatively overwhelmed by the many messages to deal with!

That is our story - the story of the “happy few “.

We are here because, individually and collectively, we feel a responsibility to act because we cannot accept that the promise contained in SDG 7 as a key enabler for inclusive and sustainable development remains just that:

a promise.

Each year around 3.5 million premature deaths can still be attributed to household air pollution resulting from the traditional use of solid fuels, 1.2 billion people continue to lack access to electricity, and 2.7 billion lack access to clean cooking.

These are just a few of the macro figures.

Consider this also:

- without power in health clinics, women often must take a candle to the facility to give birth - some 800 women die every day during pregnancy and childbirth!
- women - and very often children especially girls - in rural areas spend 2 to 8 hours gathering fuel for lighting and cooking daily over inefficient and highly polluting stoves
- energy poverty is expensive - it is estimated that some US\$37 billion is spent annually on kerosene for lighting and cooking

Agenda 2030 is about our collective vision to leave no one behind.

But how should we do this, and given that we are already three years into Agenda 2030, I wish to add my perspective on how to accelerate what we do!

I have three key action elements I wish to share for your consideration:

## **One - Capacity Support**

SDG 7 is a key enabler for moving Agenda 2030 from vision to impact. In Agenda 2030, we are not talking about energy or water or food for the sake of it.

If we want healthy children, educated girls, inclusive and productive societies, if we want to effectively address climate change, we must look at SDG 7 as a key means for realising inclusive and sustainable development and communicate this clearly.

The links between energy access and gender equality, energy access and health and energy access for productive uses are very well studied and documented.

Let us move on from diagnostics to action.

What we now need urgently is action and especially for the 1.1 billion people of the countries, OHRLLS is called to serve.

This must go beyond communication. We must accelerate effective capacity building support to countries for policy design and implementation of SDG 7, including for project design and implementation, and invest in the exchange, - including the critical South-South cooperation - about best practices.

## **Two - Access to Finance and Partnerships**

We know of the considerable financing needs to realise SDG 7.

The International Energy Agency in its 2017 Energy Access Outlook estimates that achieving energy for all by 2030 and that is the provision of electricity and

clean cooking for all, would require US\$786 billion in cumulative investment in the period to 2030. This would be equal to 3.4 per cent of total energy sector investment over the period.

These needs cannot solely be met by domestic or global public resources. SDG 7 implementation needs public-private partnerships.

Again, capacity support regarding legal frameworks, capacity support to identify, negotiate and manage such partnerships is critical.

At the same time and given the complex process to access SDG 7 related finance, we must look into streamlined access, implementation and monitoring procedures to ease the considerable administrative burdens without compromising on accountability and transparency.

### **Three - It takes a village**

If you have seen the global map of night-time luminosity, what is striking is the dark of the northern African Sahara, the jungles of south-central Africa, and large areas of the Amazon basin.

All these areas are largely void of light.

You can imagine rural families going to sleep in total darkness, women and girls worried about security.

Indeed, our access to energy policy and planning processes must recognise more explicitly the spatial dimension of energy access.

Energy planning needs to take into account the geographical characteristics of resources and the spatial dimension of social and economic drivers of energy demand if we want to find optimal and sustainable access solutions.

Energy suppliers are often faced with the issue of building cost-effective distribution networks in the last miles of rural areas.

We must foster information exchange on the participatory planning process and innovative projects and above all go local.

Projects like training local groups of women to retail energy products in remote areas, building networks of women distribution agents for lower cost access and pay as you go solar home systems and cookstove solutions in remote regions.

As someone once wisely said - all development is local and I add

- especially sustainable development solutions!

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

You and I, we could not imagine what life without electricity, without our washing machine, without scanners in hospitals, without our notepads and mobile phones, would look like. Almost everything you and I do depends on energy access.

Our children have the privilege to access e-learning. I am sure many of us here sometimes struggle to tell our children to spend less time on their mobile devices!

So, our responsibility is to work together, forge the partnerships it will take to find ways so that every girl and every boy, every woman and every man are included in that tremendous opportunity space access to energy for all affords in our common hope for inclusive, equitable and sustainable life paths.

Thank you.