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## Statement by Mr. Duarte Pacheco, IPU President

### Parliamentary Forum at the 5<sup>th</sup> UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries

Doha, 4 March 2023

Speaker Al-Ghanim,  
Under-Secretary General Fatima,  
Colleagues and Friends.

Welcome to the Parliamentary Forum at the 5<sup>th</sup> UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries

I want to begin by thanking the State of Qatar, the Shura Council, and you, Mr. Speaker, for the incredible effort that went into hosting this major UN conference as well as this forum.

Doha has become an important destination for international conferences for a very good reason: you put your mind and heart to it, as well as your considerable resources, and you always deliver.

I remember fondly the IPU Assembly that was held here in 2019.

This city, and this country, is evolving rapidly, and it is a joy to see you grow.

Speaking of growth, it remains an open question of economics: What is the role of growth in development, and how should “development” be defined?

The least one can say, is that development always comes down to the realization of fundamental human rights. Development is about social justice, equal opportunity for all people, and respect of our finite planet.

Most important, development is about happiness and human well-being. It is not merely about material production and consumption, which are just the means to an end, and not an end in itself.

Development should not be a zero-sum game, where the development of some countries can only come at the expense of other countries.

Dear friends,

In 1971, the category of Least Developed Countries was created and 24 countries were identified as LDCs.

Today, four decades since the first Programme of Action for the LDCs, only six countries have graduated from the category and many more have been added, bringing the total of LDCs to 46.

To be sure, it's not as if nothing has happened.

LDCs as a whole have made steady progress towards development, particularly over the last twenty-five years. And a number of them are finally approaching graduation.

But the ability of LDCs to effectively and sustainably go up the development ladder remains constrained by internal challenges such as conflict, political instability, weak institutions, and a low value added, extractive economy. Externally, the LDCs must contend with deep imbalances in the global economic, financial and trade system.

In recent years, the situation has been exacerbated by climate change, the Covid-19 pandemic, and the ongoing food, energy, and financial crises.

Despite pledges to *leave no one behind*, the LDCs are at risk of falling by the wayside of the international development agenda.

We must resist this with all our strength.

If it is true that our future hangs on the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals, which are off track globally; it is also true that advancing the LDCs can make a big difference to the implementation of the SDGs.

In short, the way to the SDGs must go through the LDCs.

At the same time, because of their unique vulnerabilities, the LDCs cannot advance without the support and solidarity of the rest of the world.

Countries that are better off and have more clout on the international scene must help change the rules of the game and provide more assistance so that the LDCs can get a fair shot at their development prospects.

The new Doha Programme of Action (DPOA) for the LDCs captures this tension very well. It is a programme specifically for the LDCs, to be sure, but one whose implementation depends on the contribution of all countries to sustainable development worldwide.

Colleagues,

Our task as parliamentarians is to help implement both agendas – DPOA and SDGs – at the same time, and with the same level of commitment.

The IPU stands ready to help with this.

Over the years, we have put together a complete toolbox to assist parliaments in their essential functions – representation, legislation and oversight.

We are working with the UN and other partners to provide policy guidance to parliaments so that they are more effective at holding governments accountable for their development commitments including, now, the DPOA.

Today's forum marks yet another milestone on the long journey toward sustainable development.

Together, one step at a time, we will get there.

Thank you.