Organisation Internationale pour les Pays les Moins Avancés (OIPMA)
International Organisation for the Least Developed Countries (IOLDCs)

<u>Written Statement</u>

**Substantial challenges with the implementation of the
Sustainable Development Goals in the Least Developed Countries**

1. OIPMA recalls paragraph 17 of the Annex of Resolution A/RES/75/290 B, adopted by the General Assembly on 25 June 2021, specifically that *"the high-level political forum shall dedicate adequate time to review progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda in countries in special situations, especially with regard to the Sustainable Development Goals under review and their interlinkages, particularly in African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and countries in conflict and post-conflict situations. The dedicated thematic sessions for countries in special situations in previous high-level political forums must be maintained and the circumstances and challenges of countries in special situations should also be addressed throughout the high-level political forum thematic reviews. Specific challenges facing middle-income countries should also be considered".*

2. The 2030 Agenda emphasizes that there can be no sustainable development without peace, and no peace without sustainable development. Through SDG 16, the Agenda sets out targets to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies. Increasing investments in peace, dialogue, and reconciliation as a foundation for achieving sustainable development is critical to catalyze transitions to more stable social and economic dynamics. These efforts should build on endeavours to develop inclusive and responsive governance models that put an end to discrimination and marginalization while reducing inequality.

3. In this regard, conflict affected Least Developed Countries (LDCs) face substantial challenges, including extremism, the spread of terrorism, corruption and climate change, each of which hinder progress towards attaining the SDGs. These problems also impede coordination efforts, for example in Yemen, Afganistan, the Horn of Africa and the Sahel region where conflict and lack of access remain a challenge negatively affecting the implementation of SDGs 4, 5, 14,15 and17.

<u>Afghanistan</u>
4. Since the Taliban regained control of Afghanistan in August 2021, the country has seen worsening poverty rates, and a comprehensive dissolution of women's rights. According to a survey, 94% of Afghans rate their lives poorly enough to be considered "suffering" - this percentage was not only a record high for the country, but also the highest seen in any country since 2005.

5. From food affordability to respect for women's rights, there is an estimated 36 million Afghan people with seeming little hope for their future. Female respondents to the survey rated their circumstances as "dire", while three in four Afghans cannot afford food for their families. In addition, the gender gap widened with 82% of women struggling to buy food versus 69% of men.

Yemen

6. Despite ongoing humanitarian assistance, 17.4 million Yemenis are experiencing food insecurity; this number is projected to increase to 19 million by December 2022. Yemen has been a major arena which transnational political Islam contends to govern. This variant of Islam in a governing position potentially presents two critical ramifications that fuel and sustain conflict.

7. Firstly, the Global Terrorism Index for 2020 highlighted that conflict is the main driver of terrorist activity in the ten countries most affected by terrorism, a category that includes the Republic of Yemen, where the Huthis are considered the deadliest terrorist group for the fourth year in a row. 75% of deaths are caused by terrorism, and 67% of total terrorist attacks are primarily driven by the increase in violence. Secondly, the Islah party (the Muslim Brotherhood), whose leaders are allied with al Qaeda and ISIS ideologies, wish to create an Islamic caliphate in the South.

8. Moreover, one key challenge relates to the latest developments which indicated that the war has switched to a North / South conflict, where the two conflict parties (the Huthis and the Muslim brotherhood) have a common interest in keeping the South under their control under the pretext of unification.

Horn of Africa

9. The people of the Horn of Africa, mainly Ethiopia and Somalia, are suffering what is described as the most severe drought in a generation. According to the United Nations, between 15 to 16 million people are already facing life threatening consequences of the drought, a number expected to rise further.

10. These vulnerable communities continue to experience the effects of major climate extremes, with increasingly recurrent floods and droughts. They are left at the mercy of irregular weather patterns, unable to recover from one shock before being hit by the next one.

11. As of May 2018, 2.7 million people cannot meet their daily food requirements today and require urgent humanitarian assistance, with more than half a million on the brink of famine. Another 2.7 million Somalis need livelihood support to keep from sliding into crisis. An estimated 300,000 children under the age of 5 are malnourished, including 48,000 who are severely malnourished and face a high risk of disease and death.

12. Besides facing the severe consequences of the drought, Somalia is a completely collapsed state, where terrorists may be able to operate in a safe haven beyond the reach of rule of law. It possesses a long, unpatrolled coastline and hundreds of unmonitored airstrips, facilitating untracked movement of foreign jihadists and illicit business transactions.

The Sahel region

13. In the Sahel region, terrorist groups are present across borders and repeatedly target communities and national institutions through coordinated attacks, taking advantage of porous and extensive borders.

14. Boko Haram has links to the Islamic State and other extremist groups, and remains a major security challenge for the countries of the Sahel region where the conflict in the North East has triggered a devastating humanitarian crisis affecting more than 7 million people.

Conclusion

15. In order to achieve SDGs in countries affected by conflict, OIPMA calls for the international community to adopt a Human Rights-based approach through the humanitarian and development pillars, which should offer a point of convergence to move beyond the siloed approaches that have constrained efforts to advance sustainable development in conflict affected environments. Human security is anchored around five fundamental principles that set the criteria for effective action toward enhancing human capabilities.

16. Furthermore, efforts should be enhanced, when possible and appropriate, to integrate peacebuilding architecture and activities into ongoing humanitarian and development initiatives to ensure conflict sensitivity and better identify opportunities for peace dividends. These should always respect humanitarian principles.

17. Localizing SDG achievement efforts are critical for ensuring a whole-of-society approach, preventing vulnerable groups from being left behind and strengthening national and local-level coordination.

18. To pave the way for the implementation of the SDGs in conflict affected LDCs, OIPMA recommends the following:

    i. Governments, United Nations agencies, civil society, the private sector, academia, and communities at large need to collaborate across societal sectors towards common objectives, necessitating strong and coherent partnerships to decreasing instability, eliminate extremism, eradicate terrorism and mitigate the problems caused by recent financial crisis, political turmoil and changing climate conditions.

ii.   The HLPF and the forthcoming summit on sustainable development which will be held in 2024 should give priority to resolve the obstacles and constraints and to break them down into three main challenges: instability, implementation, governance, and to carry out a plan of action to eliminate and eradicate the root causes of those obstacles and constraints.

iii.   Member States' should reaffirm their commitment to the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and a balanced and integrated implementation of its four pillars, as adopted in its Resolution 60/288, and at its sixth review, recognizing the need to redouble efforts for equal attention paid to, and implementation of, all the pillars of the strategy.