



**Statement
by**

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and
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at the

Opening Session
of the

**High-level Meeting on the Role of International, Regional
and Sub-regional Organizations in the Implementation of
the Almaty Programme of Action
(29-31 March 2005)**

**Almaty, Kazakhstan
29 March 2005**

Foreign Minister Tokaev,
Deputy Prime Minister Lengsavad,
Transport Minister Nagmanov,
Vice Foreign Minister Ramirez Lezcano,
Distinguished colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to come back to this beautiful city of Almaty, more so because it is in this very city that the landmark UN Programme of Action for landlocked developing countries was born. On behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and on my own behalf, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the People and the Government of Kazakhstan for the hospitality graciously extended to us once again. I wish to assure you, that your commitment and generosity in ensuring the continuity of the Almaty process is widely recognized within the United Nations system. It is remarkable to see the economic progress achieved in Kazakhstan as mentioned in the forward-looking state of the nation address by the President, His Excellency Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev.

My sincere thanks and deep appreciation go to the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the Lao PDR, Chairman of the Group of LLDCs whose continued leadership has been a major factor for the rise of the issue pertaining landlocked developing countries to the high level on the international development agenda. I also would like to commend the Foreign Minister of Paraguay, Madame Leila Rashid, represented here by the Deputy Foreign Minister Ruben Ramirez Lezcano, for her commitment and guidance for advocating the cause of landlocked developing countries at international trade talks as the Coordinator of the Group on trade related matters.

Landlocked developing countries continue to face difficult transit problems that reduce their competitiveness in the world market. It diminishes export profits, and inflates the prices of imported inputs for manufacturing. By making trade expensive, high transport costs can't help but have an enormous impact on the overall economic development of LLDCs.

The Almaty Conference was indeed a landmark event in the search for forging a global partnership to tackle in a focused, but comprehensive manner, the marginalization of landlocked developing countries from the international trading system, stemming from their lack of territorial access to the sea and remoteness from world markets. The Almaty Programme of Action was widely acclaimed as a well-focused and balanced document, implementation of which is considered to be both feasible and measurable. I do not want to dwell on the programme because all of you are familiar with the document and are involved in its implementation. To refresh your memory a short presentation, which was prepared by my Office, is being circulated.

The Almaty Programme's recognition of the vital link between transport, international trade and economic growth - and its determination to confront the

challenges of landlockedness - makes it truly a milestone initiative. The Secretary-General attaches a particular attention to its timely implementation.

Bilateral, regional and sub-regional cooperation comes to the fore as the most crucial means for the implementation of the Almaty Programme and the relevant regional and sub-regional organizations, especially those that are engaged in operational activities on the ground - and I see so many of you here today - are important stakeholders. Therefore, the Almaty Programme of Action, and subsequently, the UN General Assembly emphasized the importance of the role played by international, regional and sub-regional organizations. The General Assembly requested the relevant international, regional and sub-regional organizations to mainstream the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action into their relevant programme of work. Your presence here clearly shows the continued interest and commitment that your organizations have undertaken in making significant, concrete advances in the implementation of the five priorities laid down in the Almaty Programme of Action. I thank you for your active participation in and support for this important high-level meeting.

Our joint endeavour is indeed crucial. These efforts began with the preparation of the road map towards the implementation of the Almaty Programme to provide guidance and well-coordinated and coherent follow-up activities. The roadmap was endorsed at the inter-agency meeting convened in early February 2004 in New York that many of you attended. It identified areas that would require immediate action. These include the identification of major “missing links” in Africa, Asia and Latin America; the creation of sub-regional priority projects to develop infrastructure and facilitate trade; establishment of national trade facilitation boards; coherent and coordinated technical assistance; resources mobilization; and promotion of the accession to international conventions on transit and transport.

Our gathering under one roof today presents a unique opportunity for the international, regional and sub-regional organizations to undertake a serious dialogue aimed at strengthening our coordinated and coherent action to facilitate landlocked and transit developing countries in their efforts to establish efficient transit transport systems. It will also strengthen partnerships that exist between your organizations.

We all look forward to presentations by the experts and senior officials, attending this Meeting, whose everyday job is to deal with regional and sub-regional transport infrastructure and trade facilitation. We expect to hear from you about the strategies being designed or implemented, in your respective sub-regions, for the establishment of efficient transit systems, and about your priority projects and deliverables related to infrastructure development and trade facilitation. Many of your organizations offer technical assistance in trade facilitation and transport in accordance with your respective areas of competence and expertise. In the Roadmap, we recognized the need for greater coordination and coherence in this regard. In the same vein, the General Assembly, in its resolution 59/245, requested you to provided well coordinated and coherent technical assistance. During the course of the meeting, we will have an ample opportunity exchange of our view on this issue.

A brainstorming session will be dedicated on the last day to discuss indicators to measure progress in transport infrastructure development and trade facilitation measures. The development of indicators is extremely important to monitor the progress in establishing efficient transit transport system. I am aware that a large amount of work has been done and there are interesting proposals on the table in this regard. The indicators should be few in numbers and simple in application. In this respect, I believe that the time/cost methodology developed by the UN-ESCAP is very useful and would serve as a good starting point for our consultations. I hope that, at the end of the Meeting, we would be able to indicate a set of indicators that could be broadly acceptable.

There is no doubt in my mind that the outcome of this Meeting will give a strong impetus to the Almaty implementation process. And this brings to the second reason why this meeting is so relevant. 2005 is a decisive year for the United Nations as we prepare for the September summit to review the progress in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Outcome of this Meeting will be duly reported to the General Assembly as a major contribution towards implementing Goal number eight of the MDGs. Because we are trying to address the special needs of landlocked developing countries in a very pragmatic and focused way. It is especially relevant as the MDG project report, which will be launched for Central Asia this afternoon in Almaty in our meeting, stressed that “the MDG based strategies in landlocked developing countries should focus on recommendations, which are included in the roadmap for implementing the Almaty Programme of Action”.

I believe, given the excellent arrangements and the commitment of all stakeholders, this High-level Meeting will further strengthen partnerships aimed at empowering the landlocked and transit developing countries in their collaboration to accelerate their integration into the international trading system through reducing trade transaction costs.

I thank you very much.