



Statement

By

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for the
Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing
Countries and Small Island Developing States**

At the

**Sixth Annual Ministerial Meeting of Landlocked
Developing Countries**

United Nations Headquarters

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Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Somsavad Lengsavad
Foreign Minister Leila Rachid,
Distinguished Ministers,
Dear colleagues – Vice President of the World Bank
and Assistant Administrator of UNDP,

It is indeed my great pleasure to address the Sixth Annual Ministerial Meeting of Land Locked Developing Countries, which is being held on the sidelines of the historic Sixtieth Session of the General Assembly. Annual ministerial meeting of landlocked developing countries has become an important mechanism to reflect on the accomplishments in the endeavors of landlocked developing countries to overcome challenges characteristic to this group of countries and to chart out their concerted actions. The United Nations is deeply grateful to the Government of Lao PDR, and to you Mr. Deputy Prime Minister, for the commitment and leadership in promoting the interest of landlocked developing countries, as Chairman of the Group. Our deep appreciation to Ambassador Alounkeo Kittikhoun, your representative to the United Nations, who keeps the flag of LLDCs high.

Mr. Chairman,

In their quest to raise the level of development in their countries, landlocked developing countries continue to face with numerous obstacles and challenges. Recent studies indicate that a landlocked country, due to its geographical constraints, experiences a 0.7% slower economic growth rate than other countries. Despite the gains that the international trading system has brought, the landlocked developing countries remain marginalized. 9 of the 31 landlocked developing countries are not members of the WTO. Landlocked developing countries' share of world trade remains miniscule, accounting for only 0.57 per cent of the total exports and 0.64 per cent of the total imports of world merchandise in 2003. Geographical realities coupled with a lack of critical transport infrastructure and additional border crossings entailing complex procedures continue to pose more significant impediments to trade for landlocked developing countries than tariffs. There is little doubt that without real solutions to the disadvantages that beset the landlocked developing countries, these states will continue to be driven to the outer fringes of the global economy.

However, as clearly articulated in the Almaty Programme of Action, there are options available to landlocked developing countries wishing to improve their ability to partake in the international trading system. Since your last meeting in 2004 there has been significant progress in the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and the roadmap for its implementation. This year saw a number of major events that lent credence to the collective will of the landlocked developing countries, in finding a lasting solution to their common problems. The Trade Ministers meeting in Asuncion, Paraguay brought together trade ministers and senior officials from landlocked developing countries around the world who spoke with a unified voice calling for greater participation of landlocked developing countries in international trade. This unity of purpose will greatly augment LLDCs ability to participate in the World Trade

Organization as well as ensure that landlocked developing countries are no longer marginalized in the global economy. The relevant UN and other international organizations also took active part in this meeting.

At the opening of that meeting I read out a message from the United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, which stressed the commitment of the United Nations to assist LLDCs in overcoming the numerous obstacles to development. Ministerial Meeting resulted in adoption of the Asuncion Platform for Doha Development Agenda, in which the trade ministers articulated their common position to pursue during the upcoming WTO Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong, China and thereafter. In the Asuncion Platform, landlocked developing countries developed their common position in priority areas of trade talks, including trade facilitation, small and vulnerable economies, and market access for agricultural and non-agricultural goods, as well as accession issues and technical assistance. It is encouraging as the Asuncion meeting has signaled a move by LLDCs to form, for the first time, a unified, coherent, and organized group in international trade negotiations. Now trade negotiators of landlocked developing countries must work in cohesion with each other to uphold and safeguard an open and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system, from which they can accelerate their participation, and benefits, in the global economy. In this regard, I would like to once again commend the Government of Paraguay and Foreign Minister Leila Rachid for the leadership and coordination of the Group on trade and development matters and for the excellent hosting of the Meeting of trade ministers.

To further strengthen global partnerships, the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States organized the High-Level Meeting on the Role of International, Regional and Sub-regional Organizations for the Implementation of the Almaty Programme in March 2005 in Almaty with the support of the Government of Kazakhstan. The Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan and senior officials from about 30 major international organizations participated in the High-level Meeting. The High-Level Meeting adopted a Joint Communiqué. It was very heart warming to see these various entities pledge their support of the full and effective implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action by assisting LLDCs to establish and maintain an efficient transport system; by extending technical assistance as well as developing criteria for financing. The need for common indicators to monitor progress towards an efficient transport system was also called for by the various international, regional, and sub regional organizations committed to the full implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action.

Substantial strides have been made toward helping LLDCs find answers to their problems at the regional and subregional levels. This initiative has been actively pursued by the regional integration organizations such as SADC, COMESA, East African Community, and ECOWAS. Many Southern African countries, such as Botswana and Lesotho, have benefited from strong regional cooperation, attempts at transport policy integration, as well as strengthening of regional infrastructure. Similarly, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Turkey are currently engaged in negotiations to further develop rail links,

enabling any country in the Caspian region to transport cargo and passengers from Baku to Europe through Turkey.

Mr. Chairman,

The guidance for our future activities are clearly defined the Roadmap for the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, the Asuncion Platform for Doha Development Agenda, Joint Communiqué adopted at the High-Level Meeting on the Role of International, Regional and Subregional Organizations, and the General Assembly resolution 59/245. I especially would like to emphasize importance of the outcome of the World Summit on Millennium Development Goals, where the world leaders “reaffirmed their commitment to urgently address the special needs of landlocked developing countries through the full and effective implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action”. This is a very important commitment. It mandates the UN system organizations and other relevant international organizations to give priority attention to landlocked developing countries. I am confident that distinguished ministers will stress the need for increased global assistance to landlocked developing countries your statements at the plenary to add your strong voice to the global call.

The Office of the High Representative is committed to helping landlocked developing countries rise above their geographical impediments through their increased participation in global trade, and in their on going fight against poverty, as we forge ahead to achieve our Millennium Development Goals.

I thank you very much