



Briefing on the status of preparations for the Comprehensive Ten Year Review Conference on the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action

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**to the 12th Meeting of LLDC Ministers, New York
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Excellency, Mr. Thongloun Sisoulith, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Chairman of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries

*Excellencies Ministers,
Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I would like to sincerely thank you for this opportunity to update on the status of preparations for the ten-year review conference since our last meeting in September 2012.

You may recall that in our last meeting, I briefed you on the activities that my Office had already undertaken as part of the preparatory process of the comprehensive global 10-year review conference to be held in 2014 as mandated by the General Assembly's resolution 66/214. The resolution also mandated that the preparations should include regional, global as well as thematic reviews.

Today I will devote much of the time on activities undertaken since September 2012 and the road ahead.

Preparations for the conference are now well underway. As you are already aware of, the preparatory process for the Conference is being undertaken in three main tracks: the Intergovernmental Track; the UN Inter-Agency Track; and the Private Sector Track.

The inter-governmental Track started with the General Assembly's adoption of the Resolution 66/214 which provides basic guidance and last year's resolution that was adopted by the Second Committee.

LLDCs have been requested to submit national reports on the implementation of the Almaty Programme that will directly feed into sub-regional and regional level reviews. In this regard, after our repeated plea, I wish to report that it is still only 14 countries which have submitted national reports. I would like, once again to urge your respective countries to prepare and submit national reports on the implementation of the Almaty Programme.

Consultations have been undertaken at regional levels with United Nations Regional Commissions.

In March 2013, my Office, with the collaboration of the UNESCAP and UNECE and the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, organized, in Vientiane, the Euro-Asia Regional Review meeting, which adopted the Vientiane Consensus, presenting an assessment of the implementation of the Almaty Programme in the region and providing proposals for the next development decade. The meeting adopted the Vientiane Consensus.

In July 2013, with ECA and the Government of Ethiopia, the Regional Review meeting for Africa region was successfully organized, in Addis Ababa, with the participation of a number of sub-regional organisations and representatives from African landlocked and transit developing States.

We are expecting soon the organization of the Regional Review meeting for Latin America.

In this context, I would like to thank the Government of Laos and Ethiopia for hosting these two important events.

I have briefed United Nations Member countries, in New York (April 2013) and Geneva (July 2013), on progress on the preparatory process and I have received quite substantive inputs.

The UN Inter Agency Track consists of activities led by the UN Inter Agency Consultative Group, which comprises key UN system, international development and financial institutions and other regional organizations that have been closely engaged in the implementation of the Almaty Programme since its inception in 2003. They also hold regular consultative meetings with regard to the preparation of the Conference.

The Group held its first consultative meeting in February 2012, the second in December 2012 and the third meeting in June 2013. The Group agreed on organising thematic pre-conference events that will enrich the inter-governmental debates, in areas such as infrastructure development, climate change, desertification and land degradation, commodity dependence, enhancing productive capacities and south-south and triangular cooperation, and addressing vulnerabilities of landlocked developing countries.

In March 2013, my Office organized a Brainstorming Meeting on the Priorities of a New Development Agenda for the Landlocked Developing Countries. The aim of the two-day meeting was to discuss the key development challenges and needs of the Landlocked Developing Countries and identify the priorities of a new development agenda for the LLDCs.

In order to achieve more sustained economic growth, the meeting proposed that it is important that LLDCs transform their economic structures by promoting competitive industries and export structures that produce higher value-added products. Robust and prudent national efforts and vision were also deemed indispensable. The meeting underscored the importance of the service industry, the role of the private sector and the growing importance of regional and South-South cooperation to complement North-South cooperation.

The meeting also highlighted some of the major challenges that were experienced in implementing the APoA. These include lack of implementation of good legal frameworks that had been established at all levels - international, regional, sub-regional and bi-lateral. Relevant policies, regulations and procedures were still not yet harmonized. The meeting noted that human capacity building was not adequate in many areas including customs, trade negotiations, etc. Similarly, financial resources were not adequate to enable the LLDCs to effectively implement the Almaty Programme.

The deliberations suggested that the objective of development in LLDCs in the new decade should be driven by productive capacity development in order to effectively address poverty on a sustainable basis.

The meeting suggested that the new development agenda for the LLDCs must not be designed simply as a sectoral programme but must concretely address LLDCs' challenges in a more holistic manner, with measurable targets and indicators. While the new programme should focus on addressing social and economic development, poverty reduction and sustainable development, it must retain international trade, transport and transit issues at its core and emphasize industrial development.

In June 2013, my Office jointly organized with the World Bank, an important event in Washington D.C. on Transport Development and Trade Facilitation. The meeting highlighted the progress that has been made to connect and integrate LLDCs into international markets. On transport development, participants noted the improvements made in expanding and upgrading the road and rail networks and air transport, upgrading of ports and establishment of dry ports. On trade facilitation, the meeting highlighted the advances that have been made in reforming and enhancing customs services; increased use of ICTs at borders; establishment of supportive legal instruments; harmonization of and improvements in logistics services. Success stories on trade facilitation initiatives were shared such as: use of single windows and one-stop border controls.

The meeting noted that LLDCs were not yet fully integrated into global trade and much remained to be done to continue helping them bridge the gap.

Participants were deeply concerned that value addition from manufacturing and agriculture in LLDCs has declined over the review period. Export concentrations ratios for LLDCs increased substantially since 2003 from about 0.2 to 0.38 showing the increased lack of diversification of exports. Furthermore, while supportive international legal instruments were available, there was limited effective accession and implementation. In addition, lack of consistency and transparency in bilateral agreements was reducing efficiency and increasing the cost of international road transport services.

On what needs to be done, participants made suggestions on priorities for further integration of LLDCs into the global markets. Some of the suggestions include improved transport asset creation and maintenance; deeper regional integration; enhanced operational performance of services; capacity enhancement of public agencies and other stakeholders; enhanced partnerships for financing. Participants also stressed that many of original aims of Almaty Programme still remain valid, particularly on 'soft' components such as regulatory reform and transit systems.

The Private Sector Track has also been launched, in close collaboration with relevant partners. The aim of the private sector track is to ensure that they are fully engaged in the preparatory process and are active in identifying concrete, action-oriented proposals addressing LLDC-specific problems and challenges in the area of trade and transport facilitation, investment and enterprise development.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Ten-Year Review Conference of the Almaty Programme is a major undertaking of the entire United Nations system and the international community. I wish to call for your continued active engagement in the preparatory process of the conference.

Let me also emphasize that as we prepare to review the Almaty Programme of Action, and develop a new, more comprehensive, common action-oriented framework for the next decade, we need to critically consider all the unique challenges that these countries face that are linked to their geography. While the transport sector is definitely important for improving trade and the greater integration of LLDCs into the international market, there is need to address trade issues in a more coherent and holistic manner ensuring that broader aspects of development are also addressed. For example, efforts to improve the transit transport infrastructure and trade facilitation need to be accompanied by efforts to build productive capacity, promote value addition, diversification, technology transfer, information and communication technologies (ICT), and improved market access. We need to work for a results-oriented new partnership framework embedded in a broader vision for LLDCs' sustainable development and economic growth for the next decade.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, I wish to solicit your continued support for the successful preparation and organization of the Ten-Year Review Conference on LLDCs. The 12th Meeting of Ministers of LLDCs, here in New York, provides us a good opportunity to strategize on how to enhance the assistance to these geographically disadvantaged countries to enable them to adequately harness the benefits of trade for their development. The process of formulation of the post 2015 development agenda and the SDGs is currently ongoing and it is important that the key development priorities of the LLDCs are also fully taken into account. I will strongly advocate that the special needs of this group of vulnerable countries are well reflected in the new development agenda.

Excellencies,

Allow me at this point to talk about two ongoing projects that my Office is supporting. They have been frequently reflected in the past three resolutions of the General Assembly. The

first initiative is the International Think Tank for the LLDCs which is one of the tangible achievements that the LLDC group has commenced. The Think Tank will provide numerous potential benefits to LLDCs - some of which include: developing high quality research results, identifying best practices on issues concerning LLDCs and widely disseminating them amongst all; improving the analytical capability of the LLDCs; formulation of joint platform or common positions for concerted actions of the LLDCs at international fora; and enhanced cooperation between national officials of LLDCs through exchange of information and experience. I wish to call on all of the Governments of the LLDCs that have not yet done so, to accede to or ratify the multilateral agreement on the establishment of the International Think Tank. I would like to seize this opportunity to commend dedication of the Government of Mongolia, for hosting the interim Secretariat, appointing the Interim Director and providing basic financial support. I hope member countries will follow and make this important initiative operational as soon as possible.

The second initiative involves the support that my Office in close cooperation with the Economic Commission for Africa, the African Union Commission and the World Bank is providing towards assisting the elaboration of the intergovernmental agreement on the Trans-African Highway. Evidence gained from the successful implementation of the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks is clear. The formalization of the networks through related intergovernmental agreements helps immensely to promote the development of transport infrastructure in a coordinated manner by attracting stronger commitments of Member States; increased financing from international banks and bilateral donors, enhanced collaboration with the private sector and thus improving connectivity in the region. The elaboration and conclusion of the Inter-governmental Agreement on the Trans African Highway will similarly bring great benefits to African countries in particular African LLDCs.

My Office will continue to provide substantive support to activities and initiatives of the Chair and any assistance that your Group might require.

I would also like to urge the LLDCs to be proactive in pursuing the agenda in all global and regional platforms. This would ensure visibility of the issues and concerns, which will have a direct bearing on the successful outcome of the Conference.

Thank you