



UN-OHRLLS

United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed  
Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing  
States (UN-OHRLLS)

Statement

by

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for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing  
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at Meeting of the LLDC Group in Geneva

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Salle XXVI

Palais des Nations

**Ambassador Juan Esteban Aguirre Martinez, Permanent Representative of Paraguay to the United Nations in Geneva, and LLDC Group Coordinator on Trade and Development**

Excellencies,

I would like to sincerely thank you for this opportunity to update you on the status of preparations for the ten-year review conference on the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, also known as the Second UN Conference on LLDCs.

The year 2013 has been an especially busy year for the LLDC Group, as well as for my Office. The preparatory process for the Conference gathered momentum in all three of its tracks, the Intergovernmental Track; the Inter-Agency Track; and the Private Sector Track. Since my last briefing to you we have achieved a great deal in terms of the preparations for the Conference and had extensive consultations, in all different fora, on the special needs of the LLDCs and their priorities for the next decade.

It is my pleasure to inform you that the Government of Austria has offered to host the Conference in Vienna. It is envisioned that the Conference would take place on 3 to 5 November 2014. While the preparations have been moving along very well, there is still a long way to go before November 2014.

As you may know, the UN Secretary-General has appointed me the Secretary General of the Conference and my office has been designated as the UN System-wide focal point for the Conference preparations. Let me

now give you an overview of where we stand now in the preparatory process and what we have achieved in 2013.

With regards to the intergovernmental track, LLDCs have been requested to prepare national reports on the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action. To date, my office has received national reports from 18 countries. I would like to, once again urge you to influence your respective capitals to prepare and submit national reports on the implementation of the Almaty Programme in time for the findings to feed into the substantive preparations of the outcome document of the Conference.

At the regional level, last year all the three regional reviews have been organized by the UN regional commissions in close collaboration with my office. The Euro-Asian regional review meeting took place in Vientiane, Lao PDR on 5-7 March 2013, the Africa regional review meeting took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 16-18 July and the Latin American regional review meeting was held on 18-19 November in Asuncion, Paraguay. The regional meetings presented an assessment of the implementation of the Almaty Programme in the regions and provided valuable proposals for the next development decade.

With regards to the inter-agency track, the fourth meeting of the Inter-Agency Consultative Group, which comprises key UN system, international development and financial institutions, regional and other organizations, took place yesterday here in Geneva. The meeting consulted on the substantive and organizational preparations for the Conference, including the modalities for the Conference, key elements for the new Programme of Action that have emerged from the pre-conference activities, and consultations on the initial list and preparations of side events at the

Conference. One last meeting of the inter-agency group will take place in New York closer to the time of the Conference.

UN-OHRLLS and other UN system and other international organizations have during 2012 and 2013 successfully organized fourteen pre-conference events. These events held in several capitals have focused on key developmental issues of crucial importance to LLDCs, including for example international trade, trade facilitation, aid for trade, road and rail financing, the role of services, transport development, impacts of climate change, desertification, land degradation and drought, ICT development and connectivity, priorities for the development agenda of LLDCs and others.

I do not want to list every single meeting, but a list of the pre-conference events should have been circulated to you. All these pre-conference thematic events provided very important recommendations on the key needs and priorities of LLDCs in the respective areas. You can find the outcomes of all the pre-conference events on our website, [www.unohrlls.org](http://www.unohrlls.org)

There are still a number of pre-conference events planned in the coming months. There will be an event on enhancing productive capacities in LLDCs, organized in collaboration with UNCTAD and UNIDO in Vienna towards the end of April. A pre-conference event on enhancing international support to LLDCs is envisioned in collaboration with UNDP, and a pre-conference event on assessing vulnerability of LLDCs to external shocks is to be held. In addition, the UNCTAD World Investment Forum in October 2014 will include a dedicated session to LLDCs. My office will also be assisting the Government of Mongolia in organizing a high-level meeting in Mongolia on the outcome of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and its implications for the LLDCs.

The Private Sector Track has also been launched. The aim of the private sector track is to ensure that the private sector is fully engaged in the preparatory process and are active in identifying concrete, action-oriented proposals addressing their challenges in the area of trade and transport facilitation, investment and enterprise development. My office in collaboration with the International Chamber of Commerce have set up a private sector steering committee, and have been leading regular discussions amongst its members on the private sector contribution to the substantive preparations for the Conference.

All these efforts undertaken along the three preparatory tracks, the findings and recommendations, will feed into the substantive preparations for the Conference and its preparatory committees.

Excellencies,

Let me now give you an insight into the upcoming inter-governmental preparations and modalities for the Conference itself.

In its resolution 68/225, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to prepare a note on the organizational aspects of the conference, including the venue and specific dates for the Conference and the two sessions of the intergovernmental preparatory committee, and submit to the Assembly. I will now highlight the key elements proposed in this Secretary-General's note A/68/708.

As I mentioned, the Government of Austria has made an offer to host the Conference. Based on consultations with the potential host country and

relevant departments of the United Nations Secretariat, it was proposed that the Conference be held from 3 to 5 November 2014.

The Conference will be preceded by two sessions of the intergovernmental preparatory committee for the Conference, each for duration of 2 days, proposed to be held on 12 and 13 June 2014, and 11 and 12 September 2014, both at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. In order to conduct the sessions of the intergovernmental preparatory committee and informal consultations, a bureau with equitable geographical representation will be established. The intergovernmental process of the Conference itself will consist of the Committee of the Whole and plenary meetings. In order to start consultations on the key elements for the outcome document of the Conference, my office is organizing a retreat in New York for key negotiators within the next few months.

It is envisioned that a high-level private sector business and investment forum will be organized during the Conference. The outcome is expected to be a set of recommendations, including concrete, action oriented measures and innovative solutions in the areas of trade and transport facilitation, investment and enterprise development in LLDCs that will feed into the overall outcomes of the Conference.

In addition, a number of high-level interactive thematic round tables and side events would be organized at the side lines of the Conference to facilitate exchange of views and build consensus on special needs and priorities of landlocked developing countries. We have started to discuss the themes of these events in the inter-agency consultative group meeting yesterday.

The General Assembly is expected to adopt a resolution on the organizational aspects of the Conference within the next few weeks.

Excellencies,

I hope that this briefing gives you an idea of where we are and where we are heading in terms of organisational aspects of the conference. Let me also highlight that the Conference itself is a very important international event, taking place only every ten years, and will be a very high level ministerial event. The Secretary-General places the LLDCs high on his agenda and is expected to attend the Conference. I would like to request all Member States to be actively engaged and extend full support to OHRLLS in organizing and participating in all activities related to the Conference and in actively negotiating the new programme of action for the LLDCs. I invite all of your Governments to attend the preparatory committee sessions and to participate in the Conference at the highest level possible.

We need to work together for a new results-oriented partnership framework embedded in a broader vision for LLDCs' sustainable development and economic growth for the next decade. A recent study published by my OHRLLS entitled 'The Development Economics of Landlockedness' revealed that landlockedness impacts both economic and non-economic dimensions of development. It estimated that development of LLDCs is on average 20% lower than what it would have been were the countries not landlocked.

The pre-conference activities highlighted that while improved trade and transport remain crucial for greater integration of LLDCs into the international market, there is a need to address LLDCs issues in a more coherent and holistic manner, ensuring that broader aspects of development

are also addressed. Efforts to improve the transit transport infrastructure and trade facilitation need to be accompanied by efforts to build productive capacity, promote value addition, industrialization and diversification of economies, as well technology transfer, and increased use of information and communication technologies, increased regional cooperation, and resilience building to withstand external shocks including the effects of climate change.

From my side, I will continue to advocate for the LLDC interests, including by mobilizing resources for the Trust Fund to ensure effective participation of LLDCs in the Conference, intensifying advocacy efforts on the Conference and further mobilizing and coordinating the active involvement of the organizations of the United Nations system. We have to work together to ensure that the Conference is a success. I will continue to push the LLDC agenda in the post-2015 Development Agenda. My office stands ready to continue to support the LLDC Group in the lead up to and during the Conference this year.

Before concluding, I would also like to stress that in all the meetings that we have had in the preparatory process including the one we held yesterday, there are certain things that are slowly coming up as deliverables for the conference and I would really like to hear from you on them. These deliverables are based on the regional meetings, the national reports and pre-conference events and are around some of the key areas that are important for LLDCs.

Trade is one of the major issues for all of us. We see a direct and positive relationship between trade and economic development but it is not automatic. There has to be an effort and international support for that. There

is need to have a holistic approach for promoting trade in LLDCs including increasing market access, trade facilitation, addressing supply side constraints, value addition and diversification.

Similarly there is the transit issue. We are very glad to see that the trade facilitation agreement of the WTO has contributed a little bit now to really make some progress towards the facilitation of trade including in transit areas. Of course there is a long way to go to see that all the things promised in the agreement are implemented. There is also need for regional development banks and the World Bank to make progress in investing into improving trade facilitation, aid for trade issues, infrastructure development and increasing productive capacities. In our meetings with the World Bank and regional development banks we have insisted that there is need for coherence in the investment areas that they are focusing on in the LLDCs if we are talking about making good use of the system that we have at the international level. We hope that there will be some concrete deliverables that will come up from the conference that can result in transit really being facilitated on the ground. We are looking at the number of days that it will require to get the goods from the sea ports to reach the LLDCs. This is the outcome that is important not just the mechanisms.

The third issue is infrastructure – both the soft and hard. If we do not have trade, transit and infrastructure working together, we will not have a better result for the LLDCs. I therefore hope that we will have strong support from the development partners both in the LLDCs and in transit countries to invest more in the infrastructure and in the facilitation of transit and I hope that the conference will sensitize the international community to invest more in all these areas. Financing modalities are very important for improved

infrastructure, transit facilitation and increased overall supply-side capacity of the LLDCs.

Fourth issue is sub-regional or regional integration. Whether it is integrating in the value chain, or promotion of value addition or competitiveness building - all these require a strong element of regional integration. This came out of all the 3 regional reviews held in Laos, Ethiopia, and Paraguay. LLDCs are small markets and do not attract investment on their own. Regional integration is very important for them. We have to look closely at the areas of regional integration that the international community can support in order to improve the integration of LLDCs. This is an issue that we hope will come out clearly from the conference.

Finally resilience building is another important issue. We have seen many reports and empirical evidence that shows clearly the vulnerability of the LLDCs to the global economy even though their growth is very low. On one hand we have marginalization of the LLDCs in the global market or investment, but on the other hand we have them heavily dependent on external financing meaning that the downside from international risk is very high. Thus whereas the LLDCs are contributing less to the international global regimes, they are disproportionately affected by the changes in the global arena.

These dynamics have to be looked at by all and make sure that there is resilience. There are mechanisms that can take into account the particular vulnerabilities of the LLDCs. This is where we really want your strong advice. How can we change the trading regimes and the financing regime? How can we make them responsive to the financing needs of the LLDCs? We would like to know whether it is building resilience or increasing

investment or promoting the fundamental productive capacities whether it is agricultural, services or industry. There is also need for balance between the three sectors because if it is disproportional, the impact from the international volatility is also very high. And of course how can we make sure that technology transfer and ICT contribute to that. This is what we are also looking for at the conference.

Finally all of this has to have relevance for the people on the ground. Economic growth and development has to be reflected in the LLDCs. All these are means to an end and the end is poverty eradication and sustainable development. If that is not reflected it means that the progress that we will make will not be sustainable. Especially now that we are looking at the sustainable development agenda, we would really like to see that this conference be held in Austria makes a substantive contribution to the Post 2015 development agenda. This is the right time. It looks like the stars have now aligned. (1) We have the WTO trade facilitation agreement. (2) We have the post 2015 development agenda coming up. (3) The LLDC conference is in the middle. We really have an opportunity to make an impact into the post 2015 development agenda.

In the post 2015 development agenda we are giving emphasis on the human and social development, economic growth, dynamism and competitiveness, and environmental sustainability. The central pillar which is about economic growth, inclusive and sustainable economic growth is something where we need to include proper reflection of the jobs and of LLDCs challenges. We are trying to make sure it reflects the needs of the LLDCs and other vulnerable countries. Human development will include education, gender empowerment and health. There will be a substantive chunk of economic growth issues that will be reflected in the Post 2015 development agenda.

Like energy issues are coming up very strong, the nexus between water and food security is also coming up. The focus on agriculture and industrialization is coming up. But we need to find out how we can really accurately capture these into the goals and indicators. How can we do that? There are a lot of ideas coming up. People are saying maybe we can use the rate of productivity. Other suggestions include infrastructure development, enterprise development, diversification of the products, share of international trade and commodity dependency. There are ways in which we are still trying to find out how best to capture the needs of the vulnerable countries.

Because you are here, I hope that since you work on these issues you can also look into it and come up with input to the Post 2015 development agenda. There are many resources available including the report of the High level panel on the Post 2015 Development Agenda, the report of the Secretary General “*A Life of Dignity for All*”, and the summary report of the Open Working Group on the SDGs. If we make all of our work on the LLDC conference more relevant to the global processes, the likelihood of getting the attention and the necessary international support through ODA, trade, investment and innovative financing is much higher. That’s why we do hope that in your deliberations here and in your contributions to the whole process of the LLDC conference, the Post 2015 development agenda and the implementation of the WTO trade facilitation agreement will find a very strong coherence.

Thank you very much for giving me this floor.