High-Level Meeting on the Follow-up to the Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries

Livingstone, Zambia

2nd - 4th June 2015

Concept Note

Context of the meeting

The Zambian Government together with the United Nations Office of the High Representative for Least Developing Countries, Landlocked developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) and development partners will from 2nd to 4th June 2015 hold a three day follow-up meeting to The Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) that was held in Vienna, Austria in November 2014. The meeting will follow up on the outcome of the conference, the Vienna Programme of Action for the LLDCs for the Decade 2014 – 2024 (VPoA), which was adopted by all member states during the Conference.

The Conference held in Vienna brought together high-level officials from 129 UN Member States, including Heads of State and Government, Ministers, other officials, private sector representatives, academia and civil society representatives as well as representatives from the UN system and other international organizations to reaffirm the global commitment to addressing the special development needs of and the challenges faced by the LLDCs.

The United Nations General Assembly on 12 December 2014 further decided to endorse the Vienna Programme of Action for the LLDCs for the Decade 2014-2024 and the Vienna Declaration in resolution 69/137. The Vienna Programme of Action is a holistic and results-oriented programme succeeding the Almaty Programme of Action (APoA) as the development blueprint for LLDCs for the next decade. It comprises of an overarching goal, six specific goals as well as time bound specific objectives in six priority areas. The six priority areas are: 1) fundamental transit policy issues, 2) infrastructure development and maintenance, 3) international trade and trade facilitation, 4) regional integration and cooperation, 5) structural economic transformation and 6) means of implementation. The priority areas include 21 specific objectives and 87 actions to be undertaken by LLDCs, transit developing countries and development partners to help ensure the achievement of the goals of the Vienna Programme of Action.
The overarching goal of the VPoA is to address the special development needs and challenges of LLDCs in a more coherent manner and thus contribute to an enhanced level of sustainable and inclusive growth and eradication of poverty for the more than 450 million people in the 32 LLDCs. The VPoA reflects a deeper understanding of the challenges that LLDCs face and calls for enhancing international trade performance, trade facilitation, productive capacities, economic diversification and value-addition, enhanced regional integration and cooperation, and collaboration with vibrant private sector based on expanded partnerships.

The VPoA has six specific goals namely: (a) to promote unfettered, efficient and cost-effective access to and from the sea by all means of transport, on the basis of the freedom of transit, and other related measures, in accordance with applicable rules of international law; (b) to reduce trade transaction costs and transport costs and improve international trade services through simplification and standardization of rules and regulations, so as to increase the competitiveness of exports of LLDCs and reduce the costs of imports, thereby contributing to the promotion of rapid and inclusive economic development; (c) to develop adequate transit transport infrastructure networks and complete missing links connecting LLDCs; (d) to effectively implement bilateral, regional and international legal instruments and strengthen regional integration; (e) to promote growth and increased participation in global trade, through structural transformation related to enhanced productive capacity development, value addition, diversification and reduction of dependency on commodities; and (f) to enhance and strengthen international support for LLDCs to enable them to meet challenges arising from landlockedness in order to eradicate poverty and promote sustainable development.

While the APoA focused principally on fundamental transit policy issues, infrastructure development and maintenance and international trade, the VPoA has not only reinforced and expanded these areas, it has also included three new priorities, namely regional integration and cooperation, structural economic transformation and means of implementation.

The adoption of the Vienna Programme of Action is reflective of the solidarity, understanding and spirit of cooperation and collaboration among all stakeholders in supporting LLDCs to achieve sustainable development. The VPoA demonstrates the renewed and strengthened partnerships between LLDCs, their transit neighbours and their development partners, while also calling for strengthened partnerships within the context of South-South and triangular cooperation and partnerships with private sector.

The successful implementation of this expanded Programme of Action will require not only renewed and strengthened partnerships between LLDCs, transit countries and development partners, but also enhanced support and partnership efforts with relevant international and regional organizations, between private and public sectors and stronger and widened North-South and South-South cooperation.

The priority area on means of implementation recognizes the efforts made by LLDCs to mobilize domestic resources and its importance for the effective implementation of the VPoA. At the same time, ODA continues to be a major source of external financing for many LLDCs. Given the low level of integration with the global community, Aid for Trade in particular also plays a key role in supporting the development of trade-related infrastructure, formulation of trade policies, implementation of trade facilitation measures and capacity-building. Targeted financial and technical support from development partners, as well as capacity building support from UN system and other international organizations will be critical for the successful implementation of the specific actions of the VPoA, complementing LLDCs’
own efforts. In addition, South-South and triangular cooperation, as a complement to North-South cooperation, and the private sector, including through foreign direct investment, also have particular roles to play in contributing to the development of LLDCs.

In terms of implementation, follow-up and monitoring, the VPoA calls for actions at national, subregional, regional and global levels reinforced through mutual accountability at all levels and all actors. The monitoring and review process envisages the involvement of all relevant stakeholders, including the private sector, at all levels.

At the national level, Governments are invited to mainstream the VPoA into their national and sectoral development strategies for its effective implementation. At the subregional and regional level, monitoring and review is envisaged through existing intergovernmental processes, while inviting regional and subregional organizations, including regional economic communities, regional development banks and UN regional Commissions to mainstream the implementation of the VPoA into their relevant programmes. Similarly, at the global level, the governing bodies of organizations within the United Nations system are invited to mainstream the implementation of the Programme into their programme of work, and to conduct sectoral and thematic reviews, as appropriate.

With the adoption of such a comprehensive and results-oriented Programme of Action, the new and challenging phase ahead is one of ensuring that the deliverables in favour of LLDCs lead to concrete actions. LLDCs concerns and their special needs deserve special attention in the post-2015 development agenda and should be adequately integrated into the goals, targets and indicators. The Vienna Programme of Action and its implementation can provide important recommendations into the final outcomes of this process, as well as other global process such as the financing for development process.

In this context, the Government of Zambia as the Chair of the Group of LLDCs has offered to host a high-level meeting on the follow-up to the Second UN Conference on LLDCs in Livingstone, Zambia on 2nd to 4th June 2015. The meeting will be organized by the Government of Zambia and UN-OHRLLS, in partnership with other stakeholders.

**Objectives of the meeting**

A clear strategic direction and consistent and coherent engagements are necessary in order to strengthen partnerships. We also need to consolidate the active involvement of all stakeholders and their sense of ownership, drawing from what we have achieved during the Conference process, in order to ensure that the specific goals and objectives of the Vienna Programme of Action are effectively translated into actions and results. A roadmap for the implementation of the VPoA is needed for the purpose of guiding the LLDCs, transit developing countries and their development partners as well as other stakeholders on a path of a coordinated and effective implementation of the VPoA.

In addition, it is necessary to conceptualize the way forward in terms of monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the VPoA. In this regard, the VPoA requests OHRLLS to develop, in collaboration with other relevant stakeholders, indicators for measuring the progress on its implementation in LLDCs.

It is in this broad context that the meeting is being organized. The meeting is expected to provide a platform for sharing of best practices, experiences and initiatives, come up with concrete recommendations on the follow-up actions on the implementation of the VPoA and a shared
framework/system of indicators for monitoring the VPoA. This will be the first major meeting since the adoption of the Vienna Programme of Action in November 2014. Since it is being organized shortly before the Financing for Development Conference in July 2015 and the UN Summit in September 2015 which will adopt the post-2015 development agenda, the meeting will also aim to establish linkages with these global processes.

The specific objectives of the meeting are to:

- Review and identify opportunities and bottlenecks in LLDCs in terms of implementation in the priority areas of the VPoA
- Provide a platform for sharing of best practices, experiences and initiatives at the national, regional and global levels in the priority areas of the VPoA
- Discuss and conceptualize the way forward in implementing the VPoA, including the implementation strategy, tools and indicators for measuring the progress in implementation of the VPoA
- Strengthen and forge partnerships and ownership of the VPoA at both regional and national levels

**Format**

The meeting will be held over the period of three days in Livingstone, Zambia from 2\textsuperscript{nd} to 4\textsuperscript{th} June 2015. It will consist of a number of sessions focusing on the priority areas of the Vienna Programme of Action and on the way forward in their implementation. Each session will feature a number of panellists from the UN system and other international organizations, representatives from governments, as well as the private sector, followed by interactive discussion. The presentations or statements will focus either on reviewing the current situation in LLDCs or showcasing best practices, experiences and strategies for effective implementation.

**Participants**

The meeting will bring together ministerial and other senior representatives from:

- Landlocked developing countries
- Transit developing countries
- Development partners, including donor countries
- UN system departments, agencies, funds and programmes
- International organisations
- Regional and sub-regional organizations
- Regional economic communities
- International financial institutions
- Private sector and NGOs

Information Note to Participants will be issued later to indicate other administrative and logistical arrangements.