

As delivered



Statement

by

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at

**Briefing to UN Member States in Geneva on the outcome of the Second
United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries**

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Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you today to this briefing on the outcome of the Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries, which took place from 3 to 5 November last year in Vienna, Austria.

As you may know, the international community gathered for the first time in 2003 in Almaty to address the special needs and challenges of the Landlocked Developing Countries. That Conference adopted the Almaty Programme of Action which was the first of its kind, directed specifically at addressing the special needs of LLDCs that arise from their lack of territorial access to the sea and their remoteness and costly isolation from the world markets.

The Second UN Conference on LLDCs took place last November in Vienna, with the kind support and cooperation of the Government of Austria. The Conference had the following four objectives. First, to undertake a comprehensive appraisal of the implementation of the Almaty programme of Action. Second, to review the current and emerging challenges and identify effective policies, partnerships and opportunities. Third, to reaffirm global commitment to addressing the special development needs faced by LLDCs and finally, to formulate and adopt a renewed development partnership framework in favour of LLDCs for the next decade.

The preparatory process was undertaken in an inclusive manner under three tracks, namely the intergovernmental, inter-agency and private sector. Under

the intergovernmental track, LLDCs prepared national reports on the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and three regional review meetings were held for the Euro-Asia, Africa and the Latin America regions. In addition, two inter-governmental preparatory committee meetings discussed the outline and content of the outcome document. Under the inter-agency track, consultative meetings were held on the substantive and organizational preparations for the Conference and 18 substantive pre-conference events were successfully organized, with a focus on major issues crucial to landlocked developing countries. As regards the private sector track, a Steering Committee was established which held regular consultations to build a common position. All of these activities provided the necessary inputs to the outcome document.

The Ambassador of Zambia, as the Chair of the LLDCs, ably supported by the LLDC Bureau members and other LLDCs, including by Paraguay on trade and development issues, led the negotiations on behalf of the G-77 and China. The negotiations on the outcome document were co-chaired by Ambassadors of Lao PDR and Sweden.

The Conference was an important milestone for the international community, in terms of the number and level of participation, substantive multi-stakeholder discussions as well as its forward looking outcome document. It was attended by more than 1,000 participants, amongst them high-level officials from 129 UN Member States, including Heads of State and Governments, Ministers and other officials, UN system and other organizations, including many Principals, as well as participants from the private sector, academia and civil society.

The Conference was opened by the Foreign Minister of Austria and addressed by UN Secretary General, President of Austria, President of the General Assembly, Chair of the LLDC Group: Minister from Zambia as the Chair of LLDCs, EU Commissioner for Development, UNDP Administrator, Director General of WTO, and Secretary General of WCO, among others. Aside from the general debate, four high-level thematic round tables brought together Heads of State and Government, ministers and other senior officials, heads of agencies and senior experts from various international and regional institutions and representatives from the private sector to engage in multi-stakeholder discussions on themes of particular importance to LLDCs. These round tables focused on the structural transformation of LLDCs economies, regional integration and transit cooperation, the priorities of LLDCs in the post-2015 development agenda, and international trade and investment for the development of LLDCs. Furthermore, the 18 side events organized by Member States and UN system and other international organizations were very useful to delve deeper into the challenges that LLDCs face, as well as best practices, experiences and collaborative approaches towards addressing those challenges.

A one-day Business and Investment Forum was organized by my office together with International Chamber of Commerce and UN Global Compact and the Government of Austria. The Forum featured four thematic sessions and a high-level joint luncheon of business leaders and Ministers which shed light on the key issues surrounding LLDCs and on the positive contribution of the business community in implementing a new programme of action.

Overall, the Conference came out with a successful and ambitious outcome document, the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs for the decade 2014-

2024. It was endorsed by the General Assembly in December last year, as resolution and we have presented a copy of it, in your folders. Let me now highlight a few of the salient features of this new Programme.

First of all, this new programme is a holistic development agenda that seeks to achieve rapid, inclusive and sustained economic growth along with poverty reduction for more than 450 million people. Drawing upon the lessons learned, gaps and experiences from the Millennium Development Goals, the Almaty Programme of Action and other global development frameworks, the Vienna Programme reflects the desire of the global community to tackle challenges that LLDCs face in a more comprehensive manner and paves the way for making use of all the available opportunities. The document calls for turning LLDCs into land-linked countries with proactive sustained and supportive collaborations among LLDCs, transit countries and development partners.

The Vienna Programme of Action is an action-oriented plan with 6 specific goals and 21 time-bound results-oriented objectives in the 6 priority areas. The priority areas are fundamental transit policy issues, infrastructure development and maintenance, international trade and trade facilitation, regional integration and cooperation, structural economic transformation, and means of implementation. The specific objectives under these priority areas are to be achieved through specific actions by LLDCs, transit countries and development partners.

Therefore, the Vienna Programme is a more holistic development plan for the LLDCs. Furthermore, the priority on infrastructure development and maintenance has been expanded to encompass energy and ICT infrastructure,

which are critical growth enablers in any modern economy. The international trade and trade facilitation is also substantially enhanced with a view to diversifying exports from landlocked developing countries and increasing their value addition and linking to regional and global value chain, while also highlighting the importance of the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation for LLDCs.

The Programme of Action contains three new priorities. First, the structural economic transformation priority reflects the need to increase economic diversification, value addition and private sector development. Second, regional integration and cooperation aims at strengthening regional trade, infrastructure networks and harmonization of policies. Third, means of implementation spells out the necessary assistance to ensure effective implementation of the Programme, in the form of targeted financial, technical and capacity-building support, ODA, Aid for Trade, South-South Cooperation and private investment.

As you can see, the Vienna Programme of Action is based on renewed and strengthened partnerships between LLDCs, transit countries and development partners, as well as with UN system and other international organizations, private sector, and North-South and South-South and triangular Cooperation. It will be crucially important that such partnerships are fully explored and all stakeholders remain engaged in the follow-up to and implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action.

In particular, partnerships between landlocked developing countries and transit countries are critical for development. At the same time, given the enormity of the development challenges faced by landlocked developing countries,

partnerships with and the support of development partners are indispensable in the full implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. This can come in many forms, financial or technical and capacity-building assistance.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

The implementation of the Programme is now the imminent task ahead of us. The Vienna Programme of Action already contains implementation, follow-up and monitoring measures at the national, subregional, regional and global levels. A critical element of implementation is mainstreaming of the Programme. At the national levels, it is important that your Governments mainstream the Vienna Programme into the national and sectoral development strategies. The UN Secretary-General has sent out a letter to all Member States encouraging them to take all the necessary actions to mainstream the Vienna Programme of Action and my office is working together with UN offices on the ground to follow-up with them.

I would like to reiterate the request of the Secretary-General and call on all of you, LLDCs, transit countries and development partners, to be actively engaged in the follow-up and implementation of the Programme. The Vienna Programme is reflective of the solidarity and spirit of cooperation and collaboration among all stakeholders in supporting LLDCs to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development. Thus, the role of transit countries and development partners in terms of making all the necessary efforts to mainstream the Programme is also critical for its successful implementation. By doing that, we will all be creating a win-win solution for all.

At the regional and global levels, the Vienna Programme of Action calls on regional and subregional organizations and the governing bodies of organizations in the United Nations system to mainstream the Vienna Programme of Action into their programmes of work. I would like to inform you that the Economic Commission for Africa already took an important step last month, when a resolution was adopted during the joint ECA and African Union Commission Conference of Ministers on evaluation and mainstreaming. The resolution also called for the regional and subregional organizations to do the same while encouraging the private sector to contribute to the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. We are working with other regional economic commissions, UNECE, UNESCAP and ECLAC, to do the same within their respective governing bodies.

From my side, I would like to assure you that I will continue to advocate for the LLDC interests and as per the mandate of the Vienna programme of Action, my Office will ensure coordinated follow-up to and effective monitoring of and reporting on the implementation of the Programme. One of the concrete activities that the Programme requests is that my office develops, in collaboration with other relevant stakeholders, relevant indicators for measuring progress in implementing this programme in LLDCs. I am pleased to inform you that my office has already begun an exploratory exercise on how such indicators would look like, and we have had detailed consultations yesterday with experts from UN system and other international organizations on this topic. After completing our consultations, the recommendations will be presented to the Member States for their consideration and adoption. Developing a set of reliable indicators will ensure that we know exactly where we are in terms of putting the programme into action, which will trigger

necessary policy interventions. This will also lead to an on-going process of identifying challenges and incorporating lessons learnt into future actions.

Before concluding, I would like to inform all of you that the Government of Zambia, as the Chair of the Group of LLDCs, in collaboration with my office, is hosting a high-level meeting on the follow-up to and implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action in Livingstone, Zambia from 2-4 June this year. The meeting will discuss the ways and means of implementing the Vienna Programme of Action and serve as a platform for sharing of experiences, best practices and initiatives at the national, regional and global levels. As the first meeting since the Conference, its aim is to prepare and conceptualize the way forward in implementing the Programme.

A roadmap for implementation of the Programme will be presented during the meeting, showcasing the different vehicles and machineries, and related activities by all the stakeholders that should be used in order to ensure effective implementation. High-level representatives from not only LLDCs, but also transit and donor countries will share their practical experiences and initiatives for concretely implementing the Vienna Programme in its various priorities.

You have in front of you the concept note for the meeting and a preliminary programme. I would like to hereby urge you to ensure Ministerial level participation in the meeting. In my consultations, many of the UN agencies have already expressed their commitment to take part at a high level.

On a final note, while the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action is crucial, successful implementation will also depend on how the LLDC

agenda can be fully integrated into and made coherent with other global and regional processes, including the post-2015 development agenda and Financing for Development processes. The two processes are now reaching a critical stage and I am confident that the LLDC issues will be taken into account all the relevant goals and targets and indicators. Comprehensive, integrated and universal agenda for post-2015 demands that no one is left behind and particularly those that are vulnerable like the LLDCs.

On a similar note, as the WTO members have adopted a Protocol of Agreement to insert the Trade Facilitation Agreement agreed in Bali in 2013 into the WTO framework, the important provisions of the Agreement can also bring concrete benefits to LLDCs by way of easing cumbersome border and customs procedures, lowering transit and transaction costs, increasing transparency, predictability and expediting movement, release and clearance of goods across borders. A ground-breaking element of the Agreement is that it includes provisions for delivery of assistance and support for capacity building to developing countries, including LLDCs, towards implementing the Agreement. The effective and timely implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement is therefore very important for the timely and effective implementation of the Vienna Programme and for the attainment of its goals and objectives.

I hope that a strong coherence can be ensured between the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and all the global processes and frameworks like the post-2015 development agenda and the SDGs, the financing for development, the WTO Nairobi Ministerial meeting and the climate change conference in Paris this year.

Thank you very much for your kind attention. I would now like to open the floor for any comments or questions.