



PRESS RELEASE

At UN-backed meeting, landlocked developing countries call for greater action on efforts toward sustainable development

Livingstone, June 4 - Ministers and senior Government officials on Thursday rallied the international community in a Call to Action, capping off a three-day meeting in Livingstone, Zambia, which aimed to accelerate the implementation of an ambitious action-plan that would put the world's 32 landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) on a steady path to sustainable, inclusive and economic development.

The United Nations-backed gathering is the first Ministerial meeting held since the adoption of the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs (VPoA) in 2014 – a 10-year blueprint for the development of LLDCs which underscores the commitment of the global community to support LLDCs in dealing with challenges related to landlockedness, remoteness and geographical disadvantages.

Speaking at the close of the meeting, Zambia's Minister of Transport, Works, Supply and Communications and Chair of the Group of LLDCs, Mr. Yamfwa Mukanga, told more than 200 delegates, 'As the post-2015 UN Development Agenda is about to be adopted, the international community at large should ensure that the challenges of LLDCs are taken on board and that solutions are found.' He added that the Call to Action was clear and therefore 'the means of implementation are cardinal'.

The Livingstone Call to Action urges Member States to pursue several concrete measures to catalyse the implementation of the six priorities areas outlined in the VPoA. These include steps to enhance structural economic transformation in the LLDCs, improve their share of international trade by easing trade facilitation and tackling fundamental transit policy issues. Delegates proposed strategic interventions to improve infrastructure development, bolster

regional integration and cooperation as well as specific ways to implement, mainstream and monitor the VPoA .

‘The Livingstone meeting was critical in highlighting the importance of the effective implementation of the VPoA in partnership with transit countries and development partners. Enhanced and strengthened multi-stakeholder partnership will be indispensable for turning landlocked countries into landlinked countries. This is what came out strongly in the high level meeting,’ said High Representative for Least Developed Countries, LLDCs and Small Island |Developing States, Mr. Gyan |Chandra Acharya.

The Call to Action underscores the critical need for the development of productive sectors in the LLDCs noting that inclusive industrialisation, access to energy and finance, agro-business development together with concrete programmes for rural upliftment will be critical to bring about structural transformation in LLDCs. Within the ambit of structural transformation, LLDCs committed themselves to strengthening industrial clusters, which would ensure the expansion of exports and economic diversification. While recognizing the need for greater investment in research and development to improve technical capacity, LLDCs called for international assistance to kick-start innovation and stimulate emerging technology firms.

Given that their share of international trade in 2014 stood at 1.2 per cent, the document highlights actions to improve international trade, trade facilitation, and transit policy issues suggesting that developed and developing countries consider establishing a preferential access scheme specifically for exports from LLDCs, with tariff concessions and without non-tariff barriers. Delegates further urged LLDCs and transit developing countries to domestically ratify the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement as soon as possible, in order to ensure its coming into force by the time of the WTO’s 10th Ministerial Conference in Nairobi in December 2015. A further recommendation was that developed and developing countries work towards the conclusion of the Doha Development Agenda which would create new market access opportunities for the LLDCs and eliminate trade distorting practices that affect their exports.

In order to address the serious infrastructure gap in the LLDCs, delegates appealed to the international community to at least double their annual investments for infrastructure development in the LLDCs from all sources, including official development assistance (ODA), North-South, South-South cooperation and public private partnerships. New and additional funding from development banks will be especially instrumental in efforts to reach

this goal. The LLDCs were encouraged to develop and imbed infrastructure investment plans in their national development strategies and strengthen the domestic enabling environment.

As part of discussions to identify means of implementing the VPoA, the document calls on donors to honour their ODA commitments and ensure that the distribution of ODA is based on country-specific priorities and needs of the recipient countries, with particular consideration for LLDCs where the need is greatest. It adds that donors should ensure that a larger share of Aid for Trade is directed towards LLDCs, given their particular infrastructure and trade-related needs. Moreover, international development banks should support regional investments in infrastructure projects on transport, energy and ICT in order to support deeper regional and sub-regional integration, as well as deepening of regional markets and enhance competitiveness of LLDCs.

In order to ensure that the momentum of the Vienna process is maintained, the document urges Member States to mainstream the VPoA into their sectoral and national plans, suggesting that integration at the national level and support at the regional level would be critical. Monitoring progress in the implementation of the VPoA was seen as key and it was suggested that based on a selection of relevant indicators, Member States and other partners should report on the progress on a regular basis towards attaining the objectives set out in the VPoA.

The Livingstone Call to Action concludes by encouraging LLDCs to redouble their concerted efforts to integrate the implementation of the VPoA into the Post-2015 Development Agenda, financing for development, climate change, and global trade talks so that their interests are fully reflected in the follow-up to these global processes.