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High Level Forum of Landlocked Developing Countries

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Overview of the Vienna Programme of Action for the Decade 2014-2024 for Landlocked Developing Countries

by

H.E. Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya

Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States,

*Excellency Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia,
Chairman of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries,*

Excellencies Heads of State or Government,

Excellency Mogens Lykketoff, President of the United Nations General Assembly

Excellencies Ministers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank you for this opportunity to provide an overview of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the decade 2014-2024.

Let me begin by expressing my appreciation to His Excellency President Lungu, and the Government of Zambia for a very strong leadership to the LLDC. I would particularly like to recall your strong leadership in organising a very successful High level meeting on the follow up to VPOA last June in Livingston, Zambia. I also appreciate the strong leadership shown by Ambassador Kasese-Bota here in New York.

I would like to state that the present High Level Forum is very timely as it takes place here after the Vienna Conference and also just after the world leaders have adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Excellencies,

The Vienna Programme of Action is a comprehensive plan of action for the next decade to address special challenges and needs of landlocked developing countries, a holistic and result-oriented programme in a more coherent manner to achieve sustainable development and poverty reduction. The programme is articulated in six priority areas: Transit Policy, International Trade and Trade

Facilitation, Regional Integration, Structural Economic Transformation, Means of Implementation.

The Vienna Programme of Action is about renewed partnerships. Partnerships between landlocked developing countries, transit countries and partnerships between them and development partners, to address the special development needs and challenges arising from landlockedness, remoteness and geographic constraints in a more coherent manner. It is fundamental to ensure sustainable and inclusive growth and eradication of poverty in LLDCs.

This will make a crucial and positive impact on the livelihoods of millions of the poor people in landlocked developing countries, turning them into land-linked countries. By ensuring success for LLDCs, we will be changing the lives of around 450 million people.

Let me begin with the first priority.

Unhindered and efficient access to and from the sea on the basis of the freedom of transit and applicable international law still remains a challenge to many landlocked developing countries. Therefore, effective and meaningful collaboration of the transit countries is fundamental to ensure such access in an effective manner as provided for in the Vienna Program of Action. Reduction of transit time and procedures and harmonisation of rules will be crucial to ensure effective implementation of relevant international, regional and bilateral agreements on transit transport and trade facilitation. The high importance given to this issue is corroborated by the fact that this has been considered as a major priority for LLDCs by the international community during the Vienna program of action.

The second priority is infrastructure development.

There is a long way to go to promote adequate and effective infrastructure linking LLDCs with transit countries and other regions. Infrastructure development is also crucial for their successful integration into the global markets. However investment needs for transport and ICT infrastructure development are high and capacity is limited. Infrastructure development and its smooth functioning through appropriate and facilitatory regulatory measures play a key role in promoting competitiveness and reducing the cost of development of the LLDCs.

I wish to recognize support that the World Bank and regional development Banks are providing through financial and technical assistance. World Bank's support for bilateral and regional transit arrangements, the management and monitoring of cross border corridors and infrastructure development are well appreciated.

I would also like to welcome the focus on infrastructure development by the world Bank's Global Infrastructure facility(GIF), Asia Pacific project Preparation Facility of the Asian development bank, the Africa50 Infrastructure Fund of the African Development Bank, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the New Development Bank.

It is a great opportunity for landlocked developing countries to access those available facilities and develop their infrastructures, including regional transport infrastructure networks, with investment in both hardware and software, in collaboration with their transit neighbors.

My Office will collaborate with the World Bank and regional development Banks to realizing those objectives. Similarly, we are working with organizations like IRU in facilitating the smooth functioning of the road transport and transit, which are the primary issues of interest to LLDCs.

I also recognize the important place that the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development has accorded to infrastructure development, in particular under Goal 9.1 of the Agenda. As a result, Addis Ababa Action Agenda agreed to establish a global infrastructure forum, building on existing multilateral collaboration mechanisms led by the multilateral development banks with the participation of all stakeholders including the United Nations.

Similarly, Energy infrastructure and access to affordable, reliable and renewable energy are also critically important for landlocked developing countries, to effectively participate in the global value chains. ICTS play a very important role in mitigating the effects of landlockedness effectively. In this regard, I also commend the initiative of the Government of Kazakhstan to host in 2017 in Astana, a special global expo under the theme, Future Energy.

The third priority is trade. Trade can make enormous contribution to growth, development and prosperity. It has helped to lift millions out of poverty worldwide and spread the benefits of higher living standards. Aid for trade should also be provided to LLDCs on an additional, predictable and sustainable basis. WTO Trade facilitation agreement will open up new opportunities for all, including LLDCs by reducing the cost of doing business and enhancing competitiveness. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Botswana and Niger who have ratified the Trade Facilitation Agreement. I encourage other landlocked developing countries to do so.

The fourth priority of regional integration holds a great potential by promoting complementarity, and linking markets and making the market size bigger. There is a need to do more in this area by enhancing synergy and complementarity that takes into account the interests of all but particularly those that are at the lower scale of development.

The fifth priority is structural economic transformation. This is what LLDCs are really looking for in terms of their longer term aspirations. In a highly competitive world and globalized market, structural transformation and moving up the value chain are key to sustainable progress. There is a strong linkage between this priority and the 4 priorities outlined above.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The fulfilment of all these priorities requires a strong means of implementation that is the final priority. Building up domestic resource base, ODA, climate finance, aid for trade, trade integration, FDI and south-south cooperation will play an indispensable role in bringing about a transformative change that we are all seeking. LLDCs should be given due priority in providing all round support in their efforts for sustainable development through all these means. Agenda 2030 finds a strong coherence with VPOA and as such I hope that we will ensure synergy between the LLDC specific agenda and the global agenda in the days ahead.

I would also like to recognize the importance of early operationalization of International Think Tank in Mongolia. This would give a strong collective platform to do in-depth study and share experiences and perspectives among the LLDCs.

Finally, I would like to assure you of my office`s continued support to activities and initiatives of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries for the effective implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action with partnerships of all, governments, business sector and civil society.

Thank you.