Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen:

On behalf of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, please allow me to express my sincere appreciation to the Republic of Zambia for its successful leadership of the Group of landlocked Developing Countries.

The significant theme of this forum - *Linking LLDCs to Global Opportunities* substantially coincides with the final document of the Sustainable Development Summit adopted just yesterday by the world leaders under the title of *transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development*.

The 32 landlocked developing countries, which half of them are LDCs are facing multiple development challenges associated with their lack of territorial access to the seaports, remoteness, and isolation from world markets, limited technological and technical capacities.

For Afghanistan that is both an LDC and LLDC, the geographical characteristics of being mountains, the existence of insurgency and inadequate investment in railroads are the other major impediments to connecting regional and global markets.

The Vienna PoA is the blueprint for LLDCs, in order to address their special development needs and priorities for the decade 2014-2024. Afghanistan affirms its commitment to implement this holistic and results-oriented Program of action for LLDCs.

All 6-priority areas of the VPoA are extremely important in the case of Afghanistan, in particular the structural transformation. After concluding the security and political transformation in 2014, the Afghan National Unity Government is now focusing on the third phase of transformation
decade (2015-2024), which is the economic transformation from an aid dependent economy towards self-reliance.

In the outcome document of the 2014 London Conference on Afghanistan – Realizing Self Reliance, regional integration and in particular focusing on transit have been identified as the short-term means for economic growth and development in the country.

Three weeks ago, Afghanistan successfully hosted the Sixth Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA VI) in Kabul, under the overarching theme of “the Silk road through Afghanistan”. More than 250 participants from around 70 countries and international organizations attended in RECCA VI. The conference marked the largest international gathering in Afghanistan since the establishment of our NUG focusing on bankable economic projects mainly on transit and regional connectivity, such as the multi-model inland ports, energy PPP, the Lapis Lazuli Route and the Five Nations railway projects have been discussed as new regional initiatives in the final document of the conference.

Mr Chairman,

Afghanistan has already started measures to mainstream Vienna PoA into national and sectoral development strategies for its effective implementation through meetings of focal points for every sectors and relevant Ministries/institutions. This method have given us more

More than 3000 KM roads of regional importance, of which 2700 KM are ring roads, have been built. Nearly 5000 KM of highways and 10000 KM of provincial roads have also been built. Establishment of the Afghan Railway Authority that designed the national plan to build 5186 KM of railroads is a significant achievement for Afghan newly established railway network. 106 KM of railroads have been built in northern part of Afghanistan and feasibility studies for 1269 KM more railways have been completed.

Unlike other sectors, Infrastructure sector sustained the largest part of the International development assistance after security sector. This is because as of yet, almost 6.723 billion USD have been invested into infrastructure development between the years 2002 – 2014. In energy connectivity, Afghanistan is a cross-road between South and Central Asian countries. The central Asian countries are having surplus energy and looking for new markets to explore, on the other hand South Asian countries, particularly India and Pakistan is still suffering from energy deficiency. The only short and cost effective transit way to connect and bridge the gaps between the two parts of Asia is through Afghanistan. The CASA 1000 electricity transmission line and the TAPI gas pipeline projects have now came into implementation phase (name countries)

In air transportation, the Hamid Karzai International Airport and Maulana Jalaluddin Balkhy International Airports have been rehabilitated. Afghanistan has signed MoU on civil aviation with Germany, Russia, England, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Iran, India, China, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan.
In ICT connectivity, totally 3600 Km OFC backbone including OFC ring has been completed in 20 provinces throughout the country. At regional level, Afghanistan is connected through OFC with five neighbouring countries (Pakistan, Iran, Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan). Afghanistan has planned to be connected with China in the near future.

To reduce poverty in landlocked developing countries, ensuring access to affordable energy, water resource management and facilities are also very crucial, both in rural and urban areas. The Sustainable Energy for All initiative is very useful and should be really inclusive and supported within the frameworks of global partnerships for development.

Mr. Chairman,

Specific recognition of LLDCs in Multilateral Trading System is crucial for achieving the objectives of the group more effectively. While, the Multilateral Trading System recognized the LDCs, no such recognition exits so far in the case of LLDCs.

For enhancing global partnership for development that is genuine and sustainable in the interest of LLDCs, we need to establish a strong binding and result-oriented partnership between LLDCs, transit developing countries and multilateral donor organizations.

Afghanistan is the first few countries, which accede and also ratified the Intergovernmental Agreement for establishment the International Think Tank for LLDCs. We hope more LLDCs join this agreement in the near future so that the center becomes fully operational.

We call for more investing in transit transport infrastructure development and completing the missing links in areas of railroads and road systems. We thank the generous and sustainable financial support of IFIs to LLDCs and welcome the establishment and mobilization and contribution of the other investment banks, such as new investment banks like the New Development Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank; sovereign wealth funds, including Gulf state sovereign wealth funds that have capital they need to move; and new funding modalities in this regard.

Afghanistan has substantial trade deficit and therefore, we emphasize on the importance of enhancing productive capacities and export diversity for export promotion. As an acceding country to the WTO, we hope that the multilateral trading system should respect and reinforce the policy space of acceding LLDCs in integrating the regional and global markets.

Afghanistan supports the complementarity between SDGs and Vienna PoA and emphasize the need for completing the unfinished business of the MDGs meanwhile to embark into SDGs implementation phase.

I thank you.