Intervention by H.E. Peter Launsky, Director General of Multilateral Development Cooperation, Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Austria

Distinguished Heads of State, Government and Ministers,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by thanking the Chair of this meeting, the Hon’ble President of Zambia and LLDC-Chair, Edgar Lungu, to be able to address this distinguished audience.

The Austrian Federal President, Dr. Heinz Fischer, has instructed me to convey his warmest and very best wishes to this distinguished audience. Due to other commitments, my President cannot attend this important event, but to express his personal interest for the cause of landlocked developing countries. As a landlocked country, Austria feels a special degree of connection and solidarity for countries facing special challenges due to their geographic location.

Thanks to the leadership of Zambia, and to your commitment, the 2nd Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries in Vienna in fall last year was a great success.

The Vienna Plan of Action provides a blueprint for the next 10 years on how to overcome the geographic and too often economic disadvantages of landlocked developing countries. Further, the conference helped bringing the issue and the special challenges faced by landlocked developing countries to the centre of the international debate, as is being demonstrated by the fact that the Vienna Plan of Action is prominently placed in the Means of Implementation Chapter of the new Agenda 2030, adopted at the highest level at this Summit.

Since the adoption of the Almaty Programme of Action 10 years ago, tangible progress has been achieved by all landlocked developing countries:

- In transit policies, the harmonization of customs procedures, rules and documentation has considerably reduced transaction costs and delays at borders.
- In infrastructure development, more roads have been paved and railways connected than ever before. The Trans-African or Asian Highways and the Trans-Asian Railway are excellent examples.
- In human development, we witnessed a significant decline of the mortality rate for children under the age of 5, youth literacy shows an upward trend while women’s empowerment has increased.
But let there be no room for complacency: Given demographic developments, worsening climate change, and simple dynamics of global markets, tremendous challenges still lie ahead of us, and many issues need to be addressed on all levels, be it national, regional or international, to find solutions.

I am confident, that the Agenda 2030 and its follow-up processes will be the right platform and tool to advance the course of landlocked developing countries. It will help to form partnerships, including south-south, north-south and particularly, partnerships with the business sector, in order to implement the Vienna Plan of Action and help LLDCs in their endeavour to reach the new Sustainable Development Goals.

Austria is firmly committed to continue its advocacy of the cause of LLDCs among industrialized countries and continue its practical assistance in the framework of its development cooperation.

I wish you successful deliberations.

I thank you for your kind attention.