Statement by H.E. Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, at the high-level forum on landlocked developing countries “Linking landlocked developing countries into global opportunities”

New York, September 28, 2015

Excellencies,
Honorable Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great privilege to participate at this high-level forum on landlocked developing countries.

According to UNESCAP statistics, Azerbaijan’s development cost of being landlocked equals to 11.24%. As a landlocked developing country, Azerbaijan has always viewed its integration in global economy as an important policy choice to achieve sustainable and inclusive development and accelerate economic diversification.

Azerbaijan welcomes the Vienna Programme of Action for landlocked developing countries as a strategic guidance for successful realization of its long-term economic sustainability goals. We believe that concerted actions of participating States to promote implementation of the Programme will help turn the challenge of being landlocked into an opportunity for mutually beneficial cooperation.

Over the course of past several years, Azerbaijan has pioneered a number of important initiatives in ICT, transport and energy that have undoubtedly contributed to unlocking the region’s huge potential to meet its development aspirations.

According to UNESCAP, Azerbaijan has the most robust cross-border connectivity and a highly developed ICT sector among the landlocked developing countries. Consequently, Azerbaijan has emerged as an important ICT hub for the region, especially through the implementation of Trans Eurasian Information Super Highway (TASIM) initiative. TASIM will help build broadband connectivity, promote development of ICT infrastructure and e-commerce across Eurasia and will further contribute to bridging the digital divide well beyond the boundaries of the immediate region.
We are also aware of the reality that effective integration of the landlocked developing countries into the global economy requires building efficient multimodal transport links. In this context, the restoration of the Historic Great Silk Way bears a strategic role in strengthening economic ties between Europe and Asia. Azerbaijan’s state-of-the-art transport transit infrastructure provides excellent avenues for its partners to expand inter and intra-regional trade through securing a more reliable, sustainable and economically viable route for international carriage of passengers and goods and increasing the volume of multimodal transportation. In partnership with neighboring Turkey and Georgia, Azerbaijan has supported and financed the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) railway as the shortest transport connection between Europe and Asia. The country has also successfully put into operation the new Baku International Sea Trade Port. The first test container arrived at the new Port from China across the Caspian in August 2015. Importantly, Azerbaijan’s recent accession to the Intergovernmental Organization for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF) will provide a uniform framework for the international carriage of passengers and freight by rail between Asia and Europe and vice versa.

Contribution to regional energy security remains the cornerstone of our vision. Azerbaijan has demonstrated its leadership in the process of initiating a number of energy projects of trans-regional value. The projects launched by Azerbaijan have fostered socio-economic progress in the region and have had a positive spill-over effect well beyond the country’s national borders. In this regard, as an enabler of the Southern Gas Corridor, we believe that contributing to European energy security is, in fact, a win-win situation for other energy producers of the region, consumers and transit countries alike.

I would be remiss if I did not mention an important challenge for my country to able to reap the benefits of regional cooperation. This challenge is being linked to the ongoing occupation by Armenia of the territories of Azerbaijan, in blatant violation of international law and the relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council, that has had a heavy human toll, forced hundreds of thousands civilians to leave their homes, led to the destruction of considerable parts of the country’s infrastructure and continues to pose a serious economic burden.

I would like to conclude by emphasizing that Azerbaijan is open for a constructive dialogue and cooperation in the LLDC framework with a view to further contributing to the socio-economic prosperity of the region.

Thank you.