HIGH-LEVEL FORUM OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT OF LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

New York, 28 September 2015

NEW YORK DECLARATION

I. Introduction

1. We, the Heads of State and Government and High Representatives of the 32 Landlocked Developing Countries, have met in New York, on 28 September 2015, under the theme: “Linking Landlocked Developing Countries to Global Opportunities”, during the 70th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, and following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the 2015 United Nations Summit on the post-2015 development agenda.

2. We recall the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, adopted in December 2014, which provides a comprehensive plan of action for the next decade to address the special challenges and needs of landlocked developing countries. We affirm our political commitment to implement this programme for sustainable development of our countries, with the support of development partners and transit countries, in the spirit of partnership and solidarity.

3. We also recall the Livingstone Call for Action for the Accelerated Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action adopted at the High-Level Follow-up Ministerial Meeting to the Vienna Conference held in Livingstone, Zambia, in June 2015 that highlights key measures and initiatives required to accelerate implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action.

4. We gather with a sense of urgency to renew our determination to fulfil our common vision and goals as landlocked developing countries. We emphasize that landlocked developing countries face special development challenges that are associated with their lack of direct territorial access to the sea, remoteness and isolation from world markets.

5. We emphasize that landlockedness is a major contributor to the high incidence of extreme poverty and structural constraints in several landlocked countries, and that some landlocked developing countries are among the poorest of developing countries, and that many of our countries are also least developed with limited technological and technical capacities. We are thus concerned that our countries, individually and collectively, face ongoing and emerging challenges, external shocks, including volatility and contractions in the global economy and their effects on our countries.
6. We further note gaps in our efforts to structurally transform our economies, build adequate physical and soft infrastructure, as well as in addressing trade and trade facilitation constraints. We emphasize the need for our countries to develop modern and efficient energy infrastructure as well as access to affordable, reliable and renewable energy and related technologies. In this regard, we stress the effective participation of landlocked developing countries in the Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) initiative of the Secretary-General, and in EXPO 2017 exhibition, under the theme, “Future Energy” that will be held in Astana, Kazakhstan in 2017.

7. We welcome and endorse the ambitious and transformational vision set out in The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and recognizes that eradicating poverty in all dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. We share the objectives of promoting a world free of poverty, hunger and disease, a world where human habitats are safe, resilient and sustainable and where there is universal access to affordable, reliable and sustainable energy, a world in which every country enjoys sustained, inclusive economic growth and decent work for all.

8. We stress that the implementation of The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through the revitalized Global Partnerships should take into account the vulnerabilities and special needs and challenges facing landlocked developing countries. We believe that ending poverty in all its forms, combating inequalities and achieving sustainable, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and shared prosperity are fundamental goals for humanity.

9. We affirm the complementarity between the goals and targets contained in The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the six priority areas of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024. The two outcomes are important blueprints that would drive the social and economic progress of our countries and to assist in the transformation of our economies from landlocked to land-linked countries.

10. We welcome The Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in July 2015, that affirmed the political commitment to address the challenge of financing and creating an enabling environment at all levels for sustainable development, in the spirit of global partnership and solidarity.

11. We further take note of The Sendai Declaration adopted at the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, in Sendai City, Japan, in March 2015, which recognized the increasing impact of disasters and their complexity in many parts of the world, and the determination to strengthen disaster risk management, and to reduce losses of lives and assets from disasters worldwide. We take this opportunity to express our collective sympathy and solidarity of the Government and People of Nepal who suffered from the earthquake in April, 2015, and thank those governments of the LLDCs that supported Nepal during the difficult period.
12. We further reaffirm that greater integration of landlocked developing countries into world trade and global value chains is vital to increasing our countries’ competitiveness and ensuring sustainable development. We welcome the convening of the 10th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Nairobi, Kenya, in December 2015. We are confident that the Conference will consider the important issues of trade and trade facilitation, in particular, how to support efforts made by landlocked developing countries to promote a better integration and more efficient greater participation in bilateral and Multilateral Trading Systems.

13. We are concerned by the negative impacts of climate change on our economies, particularly on water, energy, biodiversity, transport infrastructure, agricultural production, food security and inland fisheries. We stress the social, economic and ecological burden related to flooding, including glacial lake outburst floods. We express hope that the climate change Agreement, to be adopted in the context of the 21st Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) at the Paris Summit in December 2015, will take due consideration of the special challenges faced by landlocked developing countries and provide them with adequate support to help them manage the negative climate change impacts.

14. We also reaffirm that desertification, land degradation and drought are serious concerns for our countries. We reiterate that addressing these particular challenges, through adaptation and mitigation efforts, will enable landlocked developing countries to effectively deal with other related issues such as food security. In this context, we call for the 12th Conference of Parties of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), to be held in Istanbul, Turkey, in October 2015, to highlight the need to extend support to landlocked developing countries through, inter alia, the sharing of climate and weather information and forecasting, and early warning systems related to desertification, land degradation and drought.

II. Accelerating the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the decade 2014-2024

15. We express our unwavering and unconditional commitment to implement the Vienna Programme of Action, a holistic and results-oriented programme with overarching goal to address the special development needs and challenges of landlocked developing countries in a more coherent manner and contribute to sustainable and inclusive growth and eradication of poverty for more than 450 million people in the 32 landlocked developing countries.

16. We further acknowledge that the Vienna Programme of Action has called for renewed and strengthened partnerships between landlocked developing countries, transit countries and development partners. In addition, the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries has called for landlocked developing countries’ strengthened partnerships within the context of South-South and triangular
cooperation, as well as with the relevant international and regional organizations and between public and private sector actors.

17. We underscore that the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries reflects a deeper understanding of the challenges that the LLDCs face and we commit to the full implementation of the six priority areas of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries that include (1) Fundamental Transit Policy Issues, (2) Infrastructure Development and Maintenance, (3) International Trade and Trade Facilitation, (4) Regional Integration and Cooperation, (5) Structural Economic Transformation, and (6) Means of Implementation.

18. We reaffirm our collective commitment to mainstream the Vienna Programme of Action into national and sectoral development strategies for its effective implementation. We will work closely with transit developing countries, regional and sub-regional organizations to establish appropriate mechanisms, including establishing a set of indicators, for the follow-up and review of the implementation of the programme.

19. We affirm that the development of reliable and affordable infrastructure, regional connectivity, and its appropriate interlinkage through science, technology and innovation, including transport, roads, energy and telecommunications, as well as the promotion of market access for exports coming from Landlocked Developing countries, are essential elements in improving the quality of life of our people and in the sustainable development of our countries.

20. We are committed to promoting structural economic transformation in order to reduce the negative impact of landlockedness and external shocks, and as a means to job creation, poverty eradication, resilience building and sustainable development. We emphasise that increased value addition, economic diversification, institutional capacity-building and human resource development are at the heart of the transformation that we seek for our countries. Furthermore, higher-value and low-bulk exports are particularly crucial for landlocked developing countries. It is for this reason that we emphasise the development of manufacturing, agriculture and the services sector, including finance, information and communication technologies and sustainable tourism. We also underscore the need to deepen the integration of our economies into world trade and global value chains to drive competitiveness and efficiency.

21. There is a need to promote meaningful regional integration to encompass cooperation among countries in a broader range of areas than just trade and trade facilitation, to include investment, research and development, and policies aimed at accelerating regional industrial development and regional connectivity. This approach is aimed at fostering structural change and economic growth in landlocked developing countries as a goal, and also as a means of collectively linking regions to global markets. This would enhance competitiveness and help to maximize benefits from globalization.
Documentation of and the sharing and dissemination of best practices is important to allow cooperating partners to benefit from each other’s experience.

22. We further recognize the growing role of the services sector in modern economies, in particular, the importance of the tourism sector and ICT, and that an efficient and productive services industry will contribute significantly to productivity growth and for the overall competitiveness of landlocked developing countries’ economies. Furthermore, we recognize that employment gains will be most significant in reducing poverty in landlocked developing countries and will provide employment opportunities for women and youth. In that regard, we affirm our commitment to develop the service sector through the development of information and communications technology infrastructure and their integration in all the relevant areas to promote competitiveness, innovation and inclusion. We call on international organizations to support landlocked developing countries’ to develop their services sectors, through capacity building programmes and the strengthening of appropriate statistical and information tools.

23. We also recognize the contribution of the private sector to economic growth and poverty eradication, through the building of productive capacity, creation of decent jobs, promotion of innovation, economic diversification and competition. In that regard, we commit to strengthen an effective competition policy that supports business activity and further consolidate a supportive legal and regulatory framework, and to create macroeconomic conditions and systems that can facilitate the development of the private sector.

24. We recognize the important role that the International Think Tank for landlocked developing countries can play in producing quality, actionable research which can improve national and international decision-making for issues pertaining to landlocked developing countries, including trade-related or economic transformation strategies. We call upon those landlocked developing countries that have not yet ratified the Multilateral Agreement on the establishment of the International Think Tank to consider acceding to or to ratify, at their earliest convenience, in order to bring the Think Tank to its full operation. We call on Member States, including development partners, and relevant international and regional organizations to support the think tank so that it can undertake its role successfully.

25. We take note of the recent accession to the World Trade Organization’s Trade Agreement by the Government of Kazakhstan, bringing the number of landlocked developing countries that have so far acceded to the Agreement to 25. We call upon those landlocked developing countries that have not yet acceded to World Trade Organization trade agreement to consider to do so and that Members should take into account different national realities and capacities as well as the special needs and problems caused by the geographical disadvantage of being landlocked. The accession process for landlocked developing countries should be further simplified and be provided with adequate technical and financial assistance.
26. We also take note that Botswana and Niger have led the way among our group of countries in ratifying the Trade Facilitation Agreement that was reached during the Bali Ministerial Conference in 2013 and call upon those landlocked developing countries have not yet done so to consider to ratify the agreement.

III. Enhancing Global Partnership for Development

27. We underline the central role of a renewed and strengthened global partnership for achieving the goal of eradicating poverty in landlocked developing countries and integrate them into the world economy. We recognize the importance of national ownership and emphasize that the national efforts will need to be supported by transit countries, and development partners, including international and financial institutions, as well as private sector organizations.

28. We call upon leaders of the developed countries to agree and commit to a strengthened and scaled-up global partnership for development, which should be the centre piece and anchor for both the realization of Sustainable Development Goals and the Vienna Programme of Action. Such an enhanced global partnership should include the issues of increasing financial resources to landlocked developing countries, aid for trade, technology transfer and greater capacity building, as well as market access.

29. We reaffirm that Official Development Assistance remains the main source of international financing for many landlocked developing countries and that it is essential as a catalyst for development, facilitating the achievement of national development objectives, including achieving sustainable development goals and the Vienna Programme of Action. An enhanced predictable, reliable and sustainable flow of official development assistance is essential to meet the regular development challenges as well as the new and emerging challenges in landlocked developing countries.

30. In this regard, we urge developed countries and international organizations, in accordance with internationally agreed commitments, to provide adequate financial assistance to support the transfer of reliable and affordable technologies and to promote capacity-building, taking into account national priorities.

31. We also urge development partners to increase aid for trade to landlocked developing countries. We emphasize the complementary and catalytic role played by long-term international capital flows, particularly, foreign direct investment. We commit to continue promoting conducive policies to attract and retain foreign direct investment, including establishing a stable economic, legal and institutional framework.

32. We reaffirm the importance of strengthening South-South and triangular cooperation, and reiterate need to support for South-South and triangular cooperation as a strategy to sustain the development efforts of landlocked developing countries and as a means of enhancing their participation in the global economy. We reiterate our position that
South-South and triangular cooperation is a complement to, rather than a substitute for, North-South cooperation. In this context, we stress that South-South and triangular cooperation and its agenda must be driven by the countries of the South. As such, South-South and triangular cooperation, which is critical for landlocked developing countries, requires a long-term vision and a global institutional arrangement.

33. We welcome the endorsement by the General Assembly of The Addis Ababa Action Agenda. We recognize that the full implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda is critical for the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets including the launching of the new infrastructure forum aimed at bridging the infrastructure gap in developing countries by investing in sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including transport, energy, water and sanitation for all. We call upon development partners to support landlocked developing countries and transit developing countries in investing in transport development and completing missing links in areas of railroads and road systems. Call upon the agreed global infrastructure forum to give due priority to issues of transit transport infrastructure development for LLDCs and their neighbours.

34. We further welcome that The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals, adopted in September, 2015 have recognized the special needs and challenges faced by landlocked developing countries and the need to provide adequate financial and technical support in order to help them implement programmes to eradicate poverty in all its dimensions and achieve sustainable development in an integrated manner. We also look forward for international support to the key priority areas of the Vienna Programme of Action.

35. We call upon multilateral financial and development institutions and regional development banks to provide the landlocked developing countries with targeted access to long-term financing at concessional and affordable rates for infrastructure development and maintenance, including establishing special window borrowing facilities for landlocked developing countries.

36. Despite improvement in transport infrastructure in landlocked developing countries, poor quality and gaps in physical infrastructure are still major obstacles to developing viable and predictable transit transport systems. There is inadequate physical infrastructure in rail transport, road transport, dry ports, inland waterways, pipelines and air transport in many landlocked developing countries, as well as few harmonized rules and procedures and limited cross-border investment and private-sector participation. Physical links of landlocked developing countries to the regional transport infrastructure network fall well short of expectations. Landlocked developing countries have a lower logistics performance than other groups in the area of transport-related infrastructure. Missing links need to be addressed urgently, and roads, railways and inland waterways need to be upgraded to a level that can establish seamless and efficient transport infrastructure networks within the country and across
the borders. The improvement and maintenance of existing facilities is crucial. With regard to multi-modal transport, railways are important for the landlocked developing countries whose exports are usually bulky primary commodities. Railway transport should be promoted where its use is viable and rail networks already exist

37. We call on relevant international organizations and request international cooperation mechanisms to provide adequate assistance to landlocked developing countries, including through technology transfer, to develop their capacities to design and implement industrialization strategies and policies, in accordance with their national priorities. We call for the international trading system to respect and reinforce the policy space of landlocked developing countries for the promotion and growth of our industrial development and for the design and implementation of our industrial strategies.

38. We reiterate the need to the full implementation of the Bali Package of declarations and instruments, including the Agreement on Trade Facilitation, agreed upon at the Ninth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization, held in Bali, Indonesia, in December 2013. We stress that it is extremely important within the framework of the WTO that special attention should be given to the concerns and needs of landlocked developing countries in order to increase their participation in the Multilateral Trading System. In that regard, we underscore the need to have a specific recognition of the group of landlocked developing countries in the World Trade Organization. This has been a consistent call in various communiqués of our group.

39. We count on the constructive cooperation of transit countries for the effective and early application of disciplines that contribute to reducing transit time and costs, simplifying procedures and enhancing certainty in trans-border trade. We further recognize the importance of the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) for access of their production to international markets. In this context, we express our concern on the under-utilization of GSPs, and call upon countries granting GSPs to facilitate market access conditions, in particular with regards to norms, and international organizations to cooperate towards the diversification of their export offers and investment attraction to encourage the effective utilization of GSPs. We call upon all GSPs granting partners to maintain or to restore as soon as possible such systems to all LLDCs.

IV. Strengthening the Role of United Nations System

40. We underline the central role played by the United Nations system in supporting landlocked developing countries at the national, regional and global levels. We also recognize the expanded mandate bestowed upon the United Nations system which stems from the new priorities of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries, and call for the provision of additional resources to enable these offices to successfully undertake their work.
41. We call for relevant United Nations agencies and relevant international and regional organizations to continue mainstreaming the Vienna Programme of Action into their programme of work, to support the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action within their existing mandates and to conduct regular sectoral and thematic reviews of the Programme of Action, as appropriate. We further encourage the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to strengthen its technical assistance and support to landlocked developing countries in the areas of infrastructure and services, transit transport arrangements, technology, investment and trade facilitation, including trade negotiations with and accession to the World Trade Organization, as well as on inclusive sustainable development and interrelated issues in the areas of finance, technology and investment.

42. We appreciate the important role played by the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States in coordination and follow-up of development programmes of landlocked developing countries. We call the Office to ensure coordinated follow-up and reporting on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, and support undertaking of advocacy efforts at the national, regional and global levels.

New York, 28 September 2015