Statement by

H.E. Mr. Yerzhan Ashikbayev
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Republic of Kazakhstan
at the High-level Forum of Heads of State and
Government of the Landlocked Developing Countries

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Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to start by congratulating the President of the Republic of Zambia for convening this first High-level Forum of the Landlocked developing countries. We also wish to thank Zambia for the successful stewardship of this group for the past two years – a period that coincided with efforts to provide new and ambitious development plans for landlocked developing countries.

The Government of Kazakhstan attaches great importance to the Vienna Programme of Action and its six priorities. We are eager to implement this programme as a means to achieving two interrelated goals of 1) reducing the most limiting aspects of being a landlocked state, and 2) fulfilling our ambitious national goal of joining the top 30 developed nations of the world by 2050.

To this end President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan put forward 100 Concrete Step program. This comprehensive national plan aims for profound reforms in a range of key sectors with the ultimate goal of improving institutional capacity, enhancing public sector service delivery, as well as boosting economic productivity, diversification, and competitiveness.

We are confident that as we reform our education, legal and judicial systems, our development partners - new and old - would find Kazakhstan an attractive investment and business destination.

Excellences,
Consistent with the Vienna Programme of Action, Kazakhstan is focused on addressing challenges of isolation from global markets and limited access to international trade that are among major obstacles on our way to sustainable development.

We have invested over 10 bln US dollars into large scale transcontinental projects to streamline and upgrade our transport infrastructure, including network of roads and railroads, airports and pipelines. This infrastructure is critical to enhancing our potential as a major continental transit hub in the heart of Eurasia linking dynamic economies of South East Asia with Europe.
We have also significantly simplified bureaucratic procedures at the borders and modernized our customs operations to allow for smooth increase in transit flows.

Kazakhstan believes that regional economic integration offers great potential to overcome natural limitations of a landlocked country. We see great benefits in the functioning of the Eurasian Economic Union, with 4 out of its current 5 member-states actually being land-locked countries.

Excellences,

Availing of this opportunity let me inform this distinguished audience that this past June Kazakhstan finalized its negotiations on accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO). We plan to become a full-fledged WTO member-nation by the next Ministerial Conference in Nairobi, Kenya in December 2015.

WTO accession is a logical result of set of economic and legal reforms that Kazakhstan undertook in order to prepare itself to fully benefit from integration into global trading system.

Kazakhstan stands ready in his new capacity of WTO member-state to continue its fruitful partnership with LLDC’s and other like-minded countries to furthering our common interests in global multilateral trading arrangement.

Looking to the future, Kazakhstan strives to have an economy that is largely oriented towards global value chains, manufacturing and industrial activity. Industrialization, together with the development of a more robust private sector and an entrepreneurial class will be the primary drivers of our economy and a source of employment for the young generation.

Mr Chair,

Despite significant progress, we are nevertheless very aware that Kazakhstan is vulnerable to external shocks.

The global economic slowdown and lingering fiscal difficulties in a number of markets has placed tremendous pressure on the price of energy and commodities. This problem has been compounded by ongoing tit-for-tat sanctions, and tensions between major global players and our key trade partners.
Difficult as it may seem, we remain undeterred and continue to adapt our strategies to prevailing conditions without losing sight of our aspirations.

Excellences,

In the summer of 2017 our capital city Astana will host EXPO-2017 - a Specialized International Exhibition with the theme “Future Energy”. We are confident that the EXPO-2017 will provide useful insights into how industries, communities and peoples can have better access to clean, affordable and renewable energy sources.

As announced today on the margins of the EXCPO-2017 we are ready in partnership with OHRLLS to organize high-level forum on renewable energy. We hope that UN SG initiative SE4ALL will join us in this endeavor.

We are running special assistance program to ensure developing countries participation in that truly global event. We warmly invite you all to participate in EXPO-2017.

Let me also note that today in his address to the UN General Assembly President of Kazakhstan Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev proposed to utilize the infrastructure put in place for EXPO-2017 in Astana for the establishment of an International Centre for the development of green technologies and investment projects under the auspices of the UN.

Excellencies,

We are mindful of our place and standing in this group - for it was in Almaty, that the global community first met to deliberate on how to deal with the challenges of being a landlocked country.

Kazakhstan wishes to reassure countries in similar situations to our own, that we stand ready to support you. We shall continue to share our expertise and knowledge with and further increase countries of the global South in the spheres of energy, health and agriculture.

Today we must strive to integrate the Vienna Programme of Action together with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into our national development framework, priorities and strategies. We are confident that, if successfully
implemented, these two programmes would transform our economies and firmly put our countries on a clear path to economic prosperity and resilience.

Thank you for your attention.