Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the World Bank Group, I am honored to be speaking to you today at this High-Level Forum on Linking Landlocked Developing Countries to Global Opportunities.

Let me begin by expressing my thanks to

- Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia and Chair of the Landlocked Developing Countries
- And Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya, Under-Secretary General and High Representative for Landlocked Developing Countries

for organizing this important event and for their tireless efforts in support of landlocked developing countries.

The occasion is historic. This United Nations General Assembly will be remembered for many years for its endorsement of the Sustainable Development Goals. With the eyes of the world on UNGA, now is a unique opportunity to concretize the pledge that has been made in Vienna and in Livingstone to support land-locked developing countries, some of which are among the most vulnerable countries in the world.

The development constraints of Landlocked Developing Countries are a priority for the World Bank Group and we have a long track-record of
assisting them. Each year, we contribute about $2 billion in investments and technical assistance to improve their connectivity.

Over the course of the past 10 years, the World Bank has provided financing amounting to $51 billion to Landlocked Developing Countries. In addition, World Bank-managed trust funds provide nearly $1 billion a year in additional resources to Landlocked Developing Countries.

We have financed, for example, major regional transport corridor programs in Central Asia and Africa, and broadband fiber connecting landlocked countries in Africa.

Besides funding ‘hard’ infrastructure, the World Bank Group is also working closely with clients on interventions that underpin many Landlocked Developing Countries’ success stories: from customs reform to better regulation of trucking and other transport segments.

Let me share with you examples, where our interventions have markedly improved Landlocked Developing Countries’ connectivity.

The first example is from the Northern Corridor in East and Central Africa.

- Border clearance times have been significantly reduced along the Northern Corridor and are now among the lowest in Eastern and Southern Africa: crossing times at Malaba on the Kenya/Uganda border fell from 20 hours in 2005 to 6 hour now;

- Reduced transit times have increased vehicle utilization rates and therefore efficiency of transport services, with transit times falling from 19 days in 2005 to 6 days now from Mombasa to Kigali;
The second example is the New Silk Road linking Europe to China through, among other countries, Kazakhstan.

- The World Bank Group has financed about US$3.2 billion in Kazakhstan for the development of a section of the Western China – Western Europe Corridor. This is part of larger corridor investments that reduced transit times from China to St. Petersburg from 15 to 9 days, improved 2,800 km of corridor assets in Kazakhstan, created 35,000 temporary jobs, increased transit trade, and helped in the development of 20 Kazakhstan – China joint logistics firms.

The third example I would like to mention here today is one that we are currently working on: The Santa Cruz Road Corridor connector is a project that we will present shortly for approval to the World Bank Board that is aimed at strengthening the connectivity between Bolivia and Brazil. This will expand the opportunities for commerce through improving the quality of infrastructure that connects both South American nations.

As final example, the World Bank Board recently approved two transformational projects for Cote d’Ivoire and Burkina Faso to facilitate transport and transit on the Abidjan – Ouagadougou corridor by supporting reforms such as increasing competition in stevedoring services at the port of Abidjan and the trading services in both countries.

But more needs to be done, and our experience shows that it is critical to complement infrastructure lending with policy reform and advising services. This requires:

- Upstream analytical work and better project preparation to provide a framework for interventions on specific corridors
• Benchmarking of corridor performance and other critical connectivity conditions.
• Designing and implementing effective transit regimes
• Support to regional integration – including upstream work to facilitate the inclusion and implementation of regional connectivity agreements
• Engagement of and dialogue with key stakeholders, including the private sector

Should there be donor interest, the World Bank is willing to step up its assistance to Landlocked Developing Countries and create a dedicated trust fund for Landlocked Developing Countries. Such trust fund would assist our land-locked clients – and their transit neighbours – in policy reforms to improve their connectivity, and in upstream studies to facilitate infrastructure investments that will landlink these countries.

In conclusion, the World Bank Group has been a partner of the UN in implementing the goals of the Almaty Programme and we remain fully engaged in helping implement the Vienna Programme of Action. Given the development challenges in these countries and the significant financing needs, the World Bank Group will continue to work, alongside the UN and interested donor parties, to support the agenda of Landlocked Developing Countries in the years ahead.

Thank you