REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

STATEMENT OF THE CHAIR OF LLDCS TO THE UNCCD COP12 SIDE EVENT ON ACHIEVING LAND DEGRADATION NEUTRALITY IN LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

DELIVERED BY H.E. MS MIRIAM K. MULENGA, AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA TO TURKEY, MONDAY, 19 OCTOBER 2015, AT 8:00AM

ON BEHALF OF HON CHRISTABEL NGIMBU, MP MINISTER OF LANDS NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

OCTOBER 15, 2015
ANKARA, TURKEY
Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya, Under-Secretary-General High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States

Mr. Bukuru, Chief of Liaison Office of UNCCD at the UN Headquarters in New York

Excellencies

Distinguished Representatives

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

I have the honour to deliver this statement as Chair of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) to this side event on “Achieving Land Degradation Neutrality in Landlocked Developing Countries: Challenges and Opportunities” – an issue that is of great importance to the development of LLDCs.

Desertification, land degradation and drought devastate people’s lives, the impacts are particularly heavier in the landlocked developing countries who because of their geography have a large proportion of their lands under dryland ecosystems that are highly vulnerable to the impact of desertification and climate change. Degraded land and encroaching desertification have far-reaching implications in LLDCs. Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought (DLDD) foster food insecurity resulting in widespread hunger and increased populations living in extreme poverty. This situation exacerbates increased migrations, instability and other social crises.

The impacts of DLDD exert tremendous pressure on our economies – which none of our countries can afford to bear alone because of the disadvantaged development path that the LLDCs pursue while facing the challenges exacerbated by being landlocked.
It is an indisputable fact that generally, we the LLDCs have remote access to the sea ports a situation that increases the cost of transportation of goods to the world markets. In addition our Countries are beset by other challenges linked to inadequate infrastructure, inefficiencies at border crossings and bottlenecks related to customs procedures leading to high costs of doing business. These high costs impact negatively on our national budgets thereby slowing down our economic growth resulting in our countries not being able to fully harness the trade potentials to support our intended sustainable development agenda.

We are very grateful that during the post 2015 Sustainable development Summit and the United Nations General Assembly, our Heads of State and Government adopted the new global development framework – Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that acknowledges the needs of the most vulnerable countries including the unique and special challenges related to land-lockedness.

As you know the 2030 agenda has a Sustainable Development Goal Number 15 which addresses desertification and thereby directly relating to the Vienna Programme of Action for the landlocked developing countries for the decade 2014-2024. This Programme of action was adopted by Heads of State and senior representatives from governments and international organizations in Vienna, Austria, during the Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries held from 3rd to 5th November 2014.

The Vienna Programme of Action is a 10 year action-plan aimed at accelerating sustainable development in the world’s 32 landlocked developing countries. It is designed as a holistic programme with an overarching goal to address our special development needs and challenges.

The Addis Ababa Action Agenda adopted last July also recognizes the special needs and challenges faced by landlocked developing countries and the need to provide adequate financial and technical support in order to help us implement programmes to eradicate poverty in all its
dimensions and achieve sustainable development in an integrated manner.

It looks like we have all the fundamental frameworks in place to take us to where we would like to be – countries without poverty, hunger and disease free-countries where consumption and production patterns and use of all natural resources are sustainable.

We desire to be countries with inclusive and sustainable economic growth and decent work for all, countries with well-developed infrastructure and productive capacities, countries that have structurally transformed their economies and have well diversified economic production base; countries that have transited through, from being landlocked to being land-linked – just to mention but a few.

However in our countries, this wonderful vision can only be achieved if the challenges of climate change, desertification, land degradation and drought are tenaciously and expeditiously addressed. We all depend on land and natural resources for our living. To this end, addressing these core issues in a holistic manner is necessary particularly for landlocked developing countries to achieve sustainable development and improve our livelihoods. Therefore, there is an urgent need for concerted action to prevent the worsening of the current socio-economic situation occasioned by desertification and land degradation in our landlocked developing countries.

**Chairperson, distinguished delegates,**

Let me briefly highlight a few issues that are key in ensuring that landlocked developing countries are able to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN).

First - we need adequate and predictable financial support to enable us fully implement measures for reversing land degradation. In line with the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, financial resources to LLDCs, including Overseas Development Assistance (ODA), should be encouraged and enhanced. We also call upon the UNCCD to help our group receive targeted funding that is earmarked to assist us to address the impacts of the desertification, land degradation and drought.
Second – capacity building support, science and technology, are critical in supporting our efforts to achieve land degradation neutrality. We call for continued and scaled up support, with simplified access modalities, from the international community.

Third – sharing of successful experiences is a key ingredient for our success in achieving a land-degradation neutral world. I wish to appeal for practical measures to foster enhanced sharing of experiences amongst our countries.

Finally - the full implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is very important in ensuring the achievement of sustainable development in our countries. It will help bring out the desired outcomes including greater success in the social, economic and environmental development pillars of our countries, which are “economically viable”, “socially acceptable” and “environmentally friendly”.

I have high expectations that the discussions that we will have in this meeting shall help shed light on how we can mobilize additional resources to help us address desertification, land degradation and drought.

We all have a duty to make this planet a better place to live in. Planet earth is a heritage from God and an estate that we must pass on to generations to come without being blamed for not having done the right thing.

I thank you for your attention.