“The Implications of the New Global Development Agenda on the LLDCs and the Way Forward”- retreat of the LLDCs on 1 March 2016

Statement by Ambassador Per Thöresson, Deputy Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations and Co-Chair of the Group of Friends of the LLDCs

Mme/Mr. Chair, Mr. Under-Secretary-General, Excellencies, dear Colleagues,

Having followed the challenges of the landlocked developing countries closely for the last 18 months, I was very pleased to be invited to this important retreat. I would like to thank you, USG Acharya, and your team for organizing it. Following the adoption of the Sendai Framework, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the 2030 Development Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change last year, this is indeed a timely occasion for us to meet and take stock, as we now embark on the crucial implementation phase. Because implementation is what we will be judged by by future generations - not by ever so eloquent agreements. Never before have we had such an impressive development agenda before us, and to identify linkages and synergies and to make the most out of it for the LLDCs is a clear priority for Sweden.

As many of you know, I had the pleasure of co-chairing, together with my friend Ambassador Phansourivong of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, the negotiations in New York and Vienna in 2014, which resulted in the “Vienna Programme of Action for the LLDCs”. The Vienna Programme of Action is quite unique in its holistic, forward-looking and action oriented approach, clearly recognizing the particular vulnerabilities of the landlocked developing countries. Sweden warmly welcomes the recognition of the Vienna Programme of Action and the special challenges to the LLDCs being so clearly articulated in the 2030 Development Agenda, as well as in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

Throughout negotiations of the Vienna programme, LLDCs raised structural transformation as a priority need. And - in the end - we managed to include this as a separate priority. When looking at the new development agenda, SDG9 on infrastructure and innovation provides a very concrete example of an important connection between the Vienna Programme and Agenda 2030. There are, however, manifold linkages.
The importance of building endurable partnerships when fighting the “tyranny of distance” or “prison of geography” that LLDCs face cannot be overestimated. ODA will remain a foundation of international development. Sweden has a long-standing history of development cooperation. Our ODA has doubled over the past ten years and will remain at more than one per cent of GDI. Many LLDCs are, and will continue to be, main recipients of this assistance, through bilateral as well as multilateral channels.

The private sector’s role in fulfilling demands is key, not least considering the vast needs in areas such as telecommunications and transport that still remain for landlocked countries. I am convinced that the private sector is increasingly realizing these great business opportunities. Sweden hopes that SDG17 on partnerships will provide a strong mandate for solutions customized for the needs of the LLDCs.

When we met in Livingstone last June, it was stressed that the global community should work towards, at the very least, doubling annual investments for infrastructure development in the LLDCs from all sources. Sweden stands ready to play its part in fulfilling this goal.

Mme/Mr. Chair,

When it comes to implementing the Paris Agreement, we must bear in mind that many landlocked countries are among the most affected by climate change. Desertification, land degradation and drought are serious obstacles to any kind of development, as well as obvious sources of civil unrest, migration and, in the worst case, conflict.

International support on climate change is very important to LLDCs, since many do not have the capacity and resources to cope with its negative impact. Sweden’s contribution of approximately 580 million USD to the Green Climate Fund is the most ambitious commitment per capita. We warmly welcome the first batch of projects of the fund being approved in Livingstone in November.

Sweden is also one of the largest donors to the Adaptation Fund, the Least Developed Countries Fund and the Global Environmental Facility. Despite this, we intend to nearly double our contribution to multilateral climate finance for 2016, compared to 2015. There are already many good examples of the work of these funds in LLDCs - from increasing climate
resilience in agriculture in Turkmenistan to improving early warning to reduce the impact of climate change in Lesotho.

It is clear that the landlocked developing countries have a continuous need of their fair share of climate financing. Sweden is working hard with all the funds to make resources for adaptation and mitigation more easily accessible. And here, I would like to give a heads-up: We will arrange a seminar specifically on access to the Climate Fund and other funds with our Development Minister in New York on March 17, and we warmly welcome all of you to this event.

Just a few days after the success in Paris, we were able to reach a new global trade agreement in Nairobi. The agreement was a major and significant success for countries such as Sweden, heavily dependent on foreign trade, and LLDCs alike, and we can only hope that it will revitalize further negotiations on world trade. Needless to say, the Trade Facilitation Agreement from Bali remains essential for the future of the economic development for LLDCs. Sweden and the EU was early in ratifying the agreement, and we strongly urge others to follow suit.

Mme/Mr. Chair,

Following the adoption of the Vienna Programme of Action, it felt only natural to form a Group of Friends in New York, together with Austria. The aim of the “Friends of the LLDCs - Group” is to mobilize support from development partners and transit countries and to keep the implementation of the Programme of Action high up on our agenda. Meetings like this one are crucial for us as Co-Chairs, as they offer a unique opportunity for a constructive dialogue on your own priorities.

I would like to conclude by once again commending the work carried out by USG Acharya and his hard-working team at the OHRLLS in supporting the LLDCs. We are off to a promising start, but our continuous, common efforts are needed to keep the Landlocked Developing Countries on track for a future with well-deserved sustainable development and prosperity.

I thank you.