



## **Landlocked Developing countries call on international community to meet global commitments and support sustainable development**

### **Press Release**

Geneva, 24 June 2016 - Ministers and senior government officials from the world's 32 landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), meeting in Geneva this week, have urged the international community to mobilize all available resources to help them meet the global goals and targets agreed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

A Ministerial Declaration adopted at the end of the meeting welcomed the recognition by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the special needs of landlocked developing countries and emphasized the importance of strong synergy in their implementation.

The declaration clearly outlines the development objectives of landlocked developing countries, addressing how they can make full use of their trade potential to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction requiring structural transformation, investment in infrastructure and transit facilitation. The Declaration calls for development objectives to be sufficiently met with coordinated policies in areas including investment, infrastructure, logistics, technology and the energy sector. Ministers also encouraged concerted measures and actions required to support LLDCs' efforts to reduce commodity dependence, including through enhanced value addition and the diversification of their export base.

"Landlocked developing countries possess enormous potential in terms of both human and natural resources. We must be focused on fast and effective ways to turn around the situation in these countries with strong and consistent policy measures at the national level and equally robust and multi-pronged support at the international level", said Gyan Chandra Acharya, Under-Secretary-General and High-Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. "We wish to turn the landlocked countries into land-linked countries with cooperation of transit countries, development partners and UN and other international and regional organisations."

The two-day event, from 23- 24 June 2016, focused on ways in which landlocked developing countries can best utilize recent global development commitments to enhance their trade potential and overcome many of their structural and geographical challenges. "The high level meeting of trade Ministers of the LLDC Group provided the right platform to examine in great depth the important role of trade in accelerating the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and in the achievement of the sustainable development goals." said H.E. Mr. Raymond Mpundu, Deputy Minister of Commerce, Trade and Industry of the Republic of Zambia and Global Chair of the LLDC Group. "For our countries, enhancing trade is one of the key priorities to unlock the development potential of our economies and to ensure that no LLDC is left behind."

Ministers called for the rapid ratification and implementation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement which has important provisions for transparent and efficient

transit procedures and if fully implemented will be beneficial to landlocked developing countries. Ministers also called for a dedicated work programme for the Landlocked Developing Countries in the WTO.

“We stress the importance to have a specific Work Programme for LLDCs by the 11th Ministerial Conference. This Work Programme will address the special needs, challenges and vulnerabilities of LLDCs in order to increase their participation in the Multilateral Trading System.” said H.E. Mr. Juan Esteban Aguirre, Permanent Representative of Paraguay in Geneva and LLDC Group Coordinator on Trade and Development at the end of the meeting.

Ministers welcomed the fact that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda recognize the special needs of the landlocked developing countries and stressed the need for a special focus on LLDCs in the global fora like the High Level Political Forum. They also emphasized the importance of strong synergy in the implementation of global development frameworks and the Vienna Programme of Action and encouraged coordination and coherence in the follow-up processes.

The significance of international partnerships for landlocked developing countries was stressed in the Declaration which also underscored the importance of transit countries guaranteeing free and unrestricted transit through their territories, allowing landlocked developing countries enjoyment of a free and direct access to the sea ports.

“In this context, the importance of the aid for trade initiative and the implementation of trade facilitation reform measures targeted at reducing the cost of doing business remain critical to increasing the participation of LLDCs in international trade and unlocking the growth and development prospects of landlocked developing countries” said H.E. Mr. Raymond Mpundu, Deputy Minister of Commerce, Trade and Industry of the Republic of Zambia and Global Chair of the LLDC Group.

Long distances from seaports, poorly developed transit and transport systems and reliance on neighbouring transit countries for transit access, translate to high trade costs for landlocked developing countries. These high trade costs have impacted landlocked developing countries’ trade competitiveness. They continue to be marginalized in international trade, accounting for only 1 per cent of global merchandise exports. Landlocked developing countries rely heavily on primary commodities, which have little or no value added to them, lack of diversification of both exports and imports, and vulnerability to volatile prices of commodities and external shocks.

The Fifth Meeting of Trade Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries is co-organized by the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and the World Trade Organization.

In 2014 the Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing countries came out with the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries, a 10-year blueprint for their sustainable development, which underscores the commitment of the global community to support landlocked developing countries in dealing with challenges related to landlockedness, remoteness and geographical disadvantages.

Ministers of Trade of landlocked developing countries held their inaugural meeting in 2005 and over the years the trade ministerial session has become a regular event for discussing critical issues related to enhancing their trade potential and forging a common position on key issues on the international trade agenda.

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