Statement

by

Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya

Under-Secretary-General
High Representative
for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States

At the Closing Session

of the Fifth Meeting of Trade Ministers of LLDCs

WTO, Geneva, Switzerland

24 June 2016
• Honourable Ministers
• H.E. Mr. Raymond Mpundu, Deputy Minister of Commerce, Trade and Industry of the Republic of Zambia and Global Chair of the LLDC Group
• H.E. Mr. Juan Esteban Aguirre, Permanent Representative of Paraguay in Geneva and LLDC Group Coordinator on Trade and Development
• Mr. Shishir Priyadarshi, Director, Development Division, WTO
• Excellencies,
• Distinguished Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me a great pleasure to address this Closing Session of the Fifth Meeting of Trade Ministers of the Landlocked Developing Countries. Allow me first to convey my deep appreciation to all of you for your active participation in, and contribution to, this Meeting.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Ministers of Trade of LLDCs held their inaugural meeting in 2005 in Asuncion, Paraguay; The Second Meeting in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia in 2007; The Third Meeting in Ezulwini, Swaziland in 2009; and The Fourth Meeting in Almaty, Kazakhstan in 2012.

The Fifth Meeting today has adopted the Geneva declaration that raises very important areas crucial for successfully harnessing the trade potential of the LLDCs to accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The meeting provided a platform for sharing experiences and lessons learnt and also provided an opportunity to highlight initiatives that support promotion of trade in the LLDCs.
Some of the points you stressed in the discussions and in the Geneva declaration are very important to recapitulate.

There is need for increased focus on physical infrastructure development including for transit transport, ICT and energy that is critical to advance the development of productive capacities and to better connect to the regional and international markets.

The importance of soft infrastructure in particular trade facilitation was underscored. You called for the rapid ratification and implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. The Trade Facilitation Agreement is important for reducing transit time and costs, simplifying procedures and enhancing certainty through unfettered access at all times in trans-border trade. The LLDCs will benefit most from this agreement because it provides all these facilitation issues in an integrated manner. However only 9 out of 25 LLDCs who are WTO members have ratified. I wish to call upon the LLDCs that have not yet ratified to speed up the process. We can only draw benefits from the agreement after it enters into force, we therefore need to move very fast.

This meeting stressed the importance of structural transformation including increased industrialization, value addition and diversification. The importance to support micro, small and medium sized-enterprises was emphasized. The crucial importance of the services sector to sustainable development was also emphasized with focus on e-commerce, tourism and trade finance. In the services area, we heard ITC indicate that they will launch the Africa Electronic Commerce Cooperative.
Agriculture is very important for the LLDCs. You welcomed and called for rapid implementation of the decision of the WTO Nairobi Ministerial Conference on Export Competition. You also called for increased access for agricultural goods.

The role of enhanced international support including ODA, but particularly Aid for Trade, partnership with the private sector, South-South and triangular cooperation, and support from the UN and other international organizations was stressed.

Our discussions also emphasized capacity-building in all the trade thematic areas and for effectively implementing the Trade Facilitation agreement.

The importance of regional integration was acknowledged and stressed.

The call for a specific Work Programme for LLDCs under WTO to address the special needs, challenges and vulnerabilities of LLDCs in order to increase their participation in the Multilateral Trading System was also clearly stressed. There is no time to lose.

This is the right time to lift up the issue of LLDCs as WTO, SDGs and other frameworks are focussing in areas of importance to them. Let us build more synergy among all the institutions. Let us build mutual accountability frameworks – national leadership and commitment and strong emphasis on international partnerships.

I also wish to reiterate the importance of the 2016 Treaty Event to be held from 19 to 23 September 2016 in the margins of the general debate of the 71st UN General Assembly. The UN Secretary General wrote to all Member
States encouraging those that have not yet done so to ratify featured Conventions including conventions that are of great importance to the LLDCs including: Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of an International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries; TIR Convention, International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods; Customs Convention on Containers; and Customs Convention on the Temporary Importation of Commercial Road Vehicles. I would like to urge you to take advantage of this opportunity to ratify, accept, approve or accede to selected international conventions.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I now wish to express my special thanks to the WTO for co-organising the meeting and hosting it. I wish to thank you the Ministers responsible for trade and all the participants from LLDCs for the dedication and for your active participation and contribution to the success of the meeting. I am appreciative of the development partners who came to support this event.

I wish to recognize Deputy Minister Raymond Mpundu of Zambia and Zambia in general for their leadership role as the Global Chair of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries. I commend them for their excellent contribution and dedication. I also wish to thank Paraguay as coordinator on trade and development issues of the LLDC Group for their support and input in the preparations for this meeting in particular the negotiations of the declaration. I also thank the co-Chairs of the Group of Friends of LLDCs for their presence and contributions.
I would also like to convey my gratitude to the UN system organizations as well as other international and regional multilateral organizations for their support to this Meeting and their work in support of the LLDCs.

My deep appreciation also goes to the WTO and OHRLLS staff who worked for weeks to organise this meeting for their dedication and hard work, both of which contributed to the success of the meeting. My thanks go equally to the interpreters and conference services staff for their excellent support.

Finally as we leave Geneva, the next stage in our journey is to ensure the effective implementation of what we have agreed upon today contained in the declaration that we adopted. We also need to enhance and foster coherent implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in order to ensure that the LLDCs are not left behind. Rest assured that the United Nations stands ready to join hands with all stakeholders to support this noble and worthy cause.

I wish all of you returning home a safe journey.

I thank you for your kind attention.