



Republic of Botswana

Statement

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Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry

**The Fifth Meeting of Trade Ministers of Landlocked
Developing Countries**

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Geneva, Switzerland

Item 2: Promoting Trade in the LLDCS

Honourable Ministers, Excellencies

Head of International Organisations

Distinguished delegates

1. At the outset let me express my delegations gratitude to the Secretariats of 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 Organisation for the excellent organisation of this meeting.

2. Mr. Chairman, the theme “Harnessing the trade potential of the LLDCs to implement the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs and 2030 Agenda for sustainable development” is timely as we gear up for the implementation of the key decisions taken in the recent past which are critical for the integration of the LLDCs into the multilateral trading system.

3. As clearly articulated in the background paper, our countries are still faced with challenges emanating from landlockness. It is in this regard that the implementation of these key decisions is critically important to achieve desired prosperity for all. LLDCs' efforts on their own will not be sufficient to achieve the desired results. It is important from the outset that closer collaboration with all relevant stakeholders is garnered to ensure that no one is left behind. The contribution of transit countries, regional organisations, multilateral organisations and development partners in addressing the challenges of LLDCs can therefore not be overemphasised. In this regard, we call on all relevant stakeholders to expedite the effective implementation and monitoring of these key programmes.

4. Mr Chairman, the importance of the WTO as a multilateral organisation responsible for developing trade rules is central to achieving integration of the LLDCs. Decisions taken in the WTO should, therefore, ensure that the peculiar challenges of the LLDCs are specifically and effectively addressed. In this regard, we call for a development oriented Post-Nairobi Agenda and the adoption of a work-programme for LLDCS in the

WTO. The key role played by United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, International Trade Centre and other international organisations in building the necessary trade-related capacity remains important for LLDCs to be able to take advantage and reap the benefits of open trade.

5. Mr. Chairman, high cost of trade in LLDCs is mainly attributed to amongst other, delays and inefficiencies associated with border management, including custom procedures and cumbersome documentation requirements. Implementation of the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation is essential to mitigate these challenges. We therefore call upon other WTO Members, in particular the LLDCs to expedite the ratification of the Agreement. To date TFA ratifications stand at 83 and only 8 LLDCs have so far ratified the Agreement, this essentially means the LLDCs wield enough leverage to ensure the TFA enters into force.

6. Mr. Chairman, let me share Botswana's national efforts aimed at improving competitiveness and trade performance. Inclusive growth and building economic resilience, economic diversification, employment creation and poverty alleviation have been identified as key components of the national economic development agenda.

7. Infrastructure developments, including ICT, transport, and energy infrastructure have been afforded more prominence in the development of our National Development Plan 11. The Government has also committed to implementing the following strategic initiatives: reforms to improve the doing business environment, develop human capital and implementing economic diversification strategies amongst others.

8. With the assistance of the UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, Botswana held a national stakeholder sensitisation workshop in 2015. The workshop was aimed at facilitating the mainstreaming of the Vienna Programme of Action into sectoral development initiatives which feed into the National Development Plan.

As this workshop preceded the drafting of sectoral chapters of the Eleventh National Development Plan, it greatly complemented the process.

9. Botswana is also in the process of developing a National Aid for Trade Strategy, with the assistance of the Commonwealth Secretariat. The Strategy will outline strategic areas aimed at improving our trade performance and integration into the global value chains. The strategy, is scheduled to be launched on the 7th July 2016, and we call upon development partners to support this important initiative.

10. Mr. Chairman, following ratification of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, Botswana is undertaking reforms which will facilitate implementation of the Agreement upon entry into force. Botswana is in the process of reviewing customs legislation to align it to the WTO TFA and the Revised Kyoto Convention.

11. At the regional level, the Southern African Custom Union is in the process of developing a Regional Trade Facilitation Programme, whilst the Southern African Development Community (SADC) adopted the Trade Facilitation Programme in March 2016. SADC through its Industrial Development Programme is also making efforts to develop regional value chains. These efforts are aimed at facilitating regional integration. Building synergies at the regional level will greatly aid integration into the multilateral trading system. In this regard, funding of regional projects and provision of technical assistance remains critical and is encouraged.

12. Mr. Chairman, let me reiterate our appeal to development partners on the immediate withdrawal or drastic reduction of assistance on the basis of income-classification of countries. This tends to undermine the efforts achieved to attain a higher classification. As LLDCs, and countries with special needs, the support of development partners remains important to address the persistent challenges brought about by our landlockedness.

The continued support is necessary to achieve the objectives of the Vienna Programme of Action.

13. Infrastructure development including: transport, Information, Communication and Technology, strong technological and research base, the advancement of functional intellectual property systems amongst others remain fundamental to the development of LLDCs. These initiatives require huge financial investment as well as legal, regulatory and administrative reforms. In this regards, we call for increased, predictable and consistent international support in these areas.

14. In conclusion let me express our appreciation to our development partners for their continued support.

Thank you for your attention.