Statement by Hon. Mr. Jayant Chand, Minister for Commerce, Nepal at the fifth Meeting of Trade Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries
Geneva, 23 June 2016

Mr. Chairman,
Fellow Ministers,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to participate in the fifth Meeting of Trade Ministers of the LLDCs held under the joint auspices of United Nations Office of the High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS and WTO. I take this opportunity to thank UN Undersecretary General and High Representative, the Director General of WTO and other distinguished speakers of this opening session for their comprehensive and insightful remarks on the theme and objective of this important meeting.

The Vienna Programme of Action has given us a comprehensive framework to address the special development needs and challenges of the landlocked developing countries. There is a need to mainstream and effectively implement all the priority areas set in the Programme of Action in conjunction with globally inclusive and transformative Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

Needless to say, trade is an important enabler of sustainable development, poverty reduction and sustained economic growth. Looking at the general development level achieved by LLDCs and their share of around 1.2 percent in the global export trade, one can say it is far less than satisfactory. Our group of countries continue to suffer from remoteness and isolation from the global and regional markets, structural weaknesses of the economies, supply side constraints, poor infrastructure and poor transport connectivity and, moreover, the high cost of trade transactions due to high transit transport cost and lack of adequate measures for trade facilitation. Our economies do not attract sufficient foreign investment for expansion and diversification of trade either. High dependence of our countries on commodities and low value added manufacturing for exports, which suffer from downward market trends and fluctuations in the market place, also constrain the prospects.

Coming from an LLDC which also happens to be an LDC, I underscore that raising the productive capacity of these countries in areas like agriculture, manufacturing and service, and achieving structural transformation and diversification of their economies and trade must get highest priority. Closer attention to development of modern energy resources, development and promotion of ICT, construction and maintenance of quality transport and transit infrastructure, multimodal transport connectivity with transit neighbours as well as countries in the region, and effective and efficient trade facilitation measures at the border posts pay us back in terms of raising efficiency in doing trade. These initiatives in quality infrastructure
development and improvement of connectivity pave the way for attracting more investments into the economies of LLDCs and linking them to the regional and global value chains. More aid for trade should flow in these areas.

The important role that transit neighbours can play and the synergy regional and global enabling environments of partnership and cooperation can create to improve the situation of landlocked developing countries can hardly be emphasized. Unfettered transit transport to the nearest sea is the lifeline of the economy of the landlocked country like Nepal. We therefore emphasize that the transit right of the LLDCs must be respected in all situations. We in Nepal are effortful in increasing infrastructure connections and trade and investment relations with neighbouring countries and the region through bilateral mechanisms and regional cooperation arrangements such as SAARC and BIMSTEC.

We look forward to coming into effect of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement soon. We attach value to trade facilitation not only to have speedier and more efficient border crossing for cargo and transport vehicles, but also to attract more investment in modern transport infrastructure network to ensure more efficient multimodal bilateral and regional transport connectivity.

Devastating earthquakes that hit Nepal in April and May last year has given us lesson that we need to build resilience by employing all techniques of building back better for disaster risk reduction. We are thankful of solidarity and support received from all over the world in the aftermath of the disaster. This sense of togetherness and cooperation must flourish in our time of intense globalization which has yet to take a human face by leaving no one behind as stipulated in the principle of SDGs. We have set up a national authority for reconstruction which is undertaking a comprehensive package of programme for reconstruction and rebuilding of damaged infrastructure, housing, and service outlets. The new inclusive and federal democratic constitution promulgated last year that has fully enshrined all human rights issues has kindled new hopes for equitable, inclusive and sustainable development and social justice among all the citizens of Nepal.

Finally, Mr. Chairmen, north-south, south–south and triangular cooperation, as well as enhanced and strengthened global partnership for transfer of technology, finance, ideas and knowhow are essential to implement all globally agreed development goals including VPOA and SDGs in which people of LLDCs have pinned hopes. This must be complemented by comprehensive, coordinated and coherent policy initiatives at the global, regional and local levels.

Thank you!