Mr. Chairman,

First and foremost, allow me to thank the UN Under-Secretary-General and High Representative, UN-OHRLLS, for his tireless efforts in driving this agenda in close collaboration with the Global Chair and the Coordinator.

The theme of this 5th Ministerial Meeting, “Harnessing the Trade Potential of the LLDCs to Implement the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” is timely.

The Vienna Programme of Action has set overarching goals for LLDCs including achieving the structural transformation through industrialisation and more specifically through the development of value-addition in the agriculture sector and manufacturing as well as in advanced services. Technology and innovation will be key to realizing required technological change for our economies to move from commodity dependency to the labour-intensive production and technology-intensive production later.

Rwanda has been experiencing a rapid and long-term (relatively) growth since 2000 with an average GDP growth of 7% for more than 10 years and committed to continue this development path in years to come with a view to achieving Sustainable Development goals.

As rightly highlighted by some previous speakers, the relationship between landlockeness and development/poverty is not a simple direct correlation. Indeed some landlocked countries are developed while many of LDCs are coastal countries. It is however worth noting that in general landlockness is an aggravating and hindering factor for trade and development. That is the reason why we commend UN-OHRLLS and WTO for keeping this important issue on the agenda with alive discussion around it.

Mr. Chairman,

Much as achieving SDGs requires much more than addressing trade related issues and needs to go far beyond market access issues, empirical evidence shows that unlocking countries using a set of complementary measures has very positive effect on development. The example of the EAC where Rwanda is located shows that regional integration is critical to complement national efforts. The EAC leadership at the highest level has been instrumental in driving the integration agenda to the extent that the EAC can be considered as an integration model on many accounts. Some examples: Rwanda established one stop border post with neighbouring countries; a number of regional NTBS have been eliminated; a national customs electronic single window has been operational since 2012. All these
measures have drastically reduced both time and cost of trading for Rwanda gradually unlocking the trade potentials. A number of projects in pipeline will further expedite movement of goods with a high reduction of business associated costs.

Based on that experience we are firmly convinced that full implementation of all TFA provisions will significantly contribute to unlocking our countries’ trade potentials.

Mr. Chairman,

Rwanda has undertaken the task of coordinating the ACP Group since end of February this year and I wish to share some perspectives that we indeed share with this Group (LLDCs) as far as WTO negotiations are concerned. ACP group commends all WTO membership sense of responsibility and flexibility which produced such amazing results in Bali 2013, and thereafter in Nairobi in 2015. We are however still far from delivering on the development promises since Doha in 2001. For us, it is inconsistent to advocate for free trade on the one hand and on the other hand to keep diverse trade distorting practices especially trade distorting subsidies in agriculture. While we call again all members to make all necessary steps for immediate and full implementation of all decisions (i.e. Agriculture export competition), at the same time we wish to stress how all DDA issues are interlinked to the extent that expected benefits from TFA, removal of exports subsidies,...are going to be offset by the on-going trade distorting subsidies, mainly domestic support in agriculture. Therefore, the agriculture reform is critical for the realization of the SDGs precisely given that many countries are planning to industrialize through agro-processing, among other avenues. Hence the important need to level the playing field in this critical area.

Against this rationale, the ACP countries are preparing a complete and comprehensive proposal regarding how to address all DDA remaining issues, based on updated findings on the impact of those issues on our economies. We expect all our partners to receive positively and support that forthcoming proposal and we shall be keen in sharing those findings with Members of this group (LLDCs).

I thank you