Opening remarks

by

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at the HLPF Side Event
Leaving no country behind:
Sustainable industrialization and infrastructure to support Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs)

20 July
1:15-2:30 PM
Conference Room 3
Honorable Ministers,
Excellencies and distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour and pleasure for me to welcome you to this HLPF side event “Leaving no country behind: Sustainable industrialization and infrastructure to support Landlocked Developing Countries”, organized by OHRLLS, UNIDO and the Group of Friends of LLDCs.

We have a panel of distinguished speakers with us but before giving them the floor, allow me to briefly highlight a few issues to set the stage for our discussion today.

The theme of this year’s HLPF, leaving no one behind, is particularly relevant to the landlocked developing countries. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has reaffirmed that the most vulnerable groups of countries, including LLDCs, but also LDC and SIDS, face special challenges in the pursuit of sustainable development and therefore deserve special attention from the international community. Indeed, these countries represent almost half of the United Nations Memberships and are characterized by high levels of poverty, low levels of human capital, and increased vulnerability to economic, environmental and other external shocks. It is clear that the SDGs cannot be achieved without progress in the most vulnerable groups of countries, LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

The new development framework has now recognized that not only social, but also economic and environmental goals have to be achieved in order to deliver on sustainable development. We now have goals and targets for economic growth, employment, innovation, urbanization and sustainable consumption and
production, among others. What we are going to specifically focus on today, is SDG Goal 9, Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.

These are issues of critical importance for the LLDCs. The LLDCs as a group suffer from a unique geographical disadvantage, which combined with a variety of related as well as new and emerging challenges, has undermined their economic development prospects and has left them marginalized in the global economy. These challenges are further exacerbated by inadequate infrastructure and constraints on structural transformation and economic diversification of their economies. But when we are able to deal with these challenges, there is a great opportunity to uplift the development prospects of LLDCs. We would like to turn them into land-linked countries.

This has been duly recognized by the Vienna Programme of Action for the LLDCs, which was agreed at the Second UN Conference on LLDCs in Vienna, Austria in 2014. The VPoA is the development blueprint for LLDCs for the period 2014-2024 to address their special challenges and needs in a more comprehensive and coherent manner than before.

Priority 2 of the VPoA focuses on infrastructure development and maintenance. Acknowledging the inadequate levels and quality of transport infrastructure in LLDCs, the VPoA includes specific objectives to significantly increase the quality of roads, to expand and upgrade railway infrastructure and to complete missing links in regional road and railway transit transport networks. It also encompasses energy and ICT infrastructure, which are critical growth enablers in any modern economy.
While infrastructure development has always been at the core of LLDC issues, now for the first time, the Programme of Action for the LLDCs also includes structural economic transformation and regional economic cooperation and integration, amongst its six priority areas.

The LLDC economies and exports rely heavily on a limited number of mineral resources and low-value agricultural products. Data shows that primary commodities accounted for 80 per cent of LLDC merchandise exports in 2014. At the same time, around 70 per cent of LLDC imports are manufactured products. This reflects the limited industrial content of LLDCs economies. High level of unemployment and burgeoning youth population also demand that we develop those economic sectors that provide solutions to these deep-seated challenges.

Structural economic transformation, centered upon industrialization of the LLDC economies in an inclusive and sustainable manner, is critical for successfully integrating into the global economy and achieving sustained, broad-based and employment-creating economic growth. Industrialization would support the move from traditional economic activities into higher value-added and more diversified economic activities. It will allow LLDCs to become more competitive in the international markets and be connected with regional and global value chains.

Having sustainable and efficient multi-modal transit transport systems, with effective trade facilitation measures and supportive energy and ICT infrastructure, is critical in this endeavour. They support sustainable industrialization that would enable the LLDCs to achieve sustained and sustainable economic growth.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
I hope that our discussions today will highlight some best practices, challenges and recommendations for LLDCs on how to connect infrastructure and industrialization for sustainable development in LLDCs, and how transit developing countries and development partners can support those efforts.

Without further ado, allow me now to give the floor to our distinguished speakers for this session.