MINISTERIAL COMMUNIQUE

15th Annual Ministerial Meeting
of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries

New York, 22 September 2016

We, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), have met at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, on 22nd September 2016, on the occasion of the 71st session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, and have held our deliberations under the theme “Harnessing coherence in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Vienna Programme of Action”,

Recognizing that the lack of territorial access to the sea, aggravated by remoteness from world markets and high transit costs and risks, impose serious constraints on export earnings, private capital inflow and domestic resource mobilization of LLDCs and therefore adversely affects their overall sustainable development,

Recalling the Almaty Declaration and the Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the special needs of the landlocked developing countries within a new global framework for transit cooperation for landlocked and transit developing countries, adopted in August 2003,

Recalling the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs for the Decade 2014-2024, adopted in November 2014 (A/RES/69/137), which provides a comprehensive plan of action for the next decade to address the special challenges and needs of LLDCs,

Recalling the Livingstone Call for Action for the Accelerated Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action adopted at the High-Level Follow-up Ministerial Meeting to the Vienna Conference held in Livingstone, Zambia, in June 2015 that highlights key measures and initiatives required to accelerate implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action,

Recalling further the General Assembly resolutions 69/232 of December 2014, and 70/217 of December 2015 related to the particular needs and challenges of LLDCs to be addressed by the effective implementation the Vienna Programme of Action,


Recalling also the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (A/RES/69/313), that is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

Recalling also the Paris Agreement adopted at the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC),

Recalling also the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction adopted at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction,
Recalling also the declaration adopted by the meeting of Heads of State and Government and High Representatives of the 32 LLDCs, held in New York, on 28 September 2015, under the theme: “Linking Landlocked Developing Countries to Global Opportunities”,

Recalling further the Ministerial Meeting of the Group of LLDCs at the margins of the 10th Ministerial Conference of the WTO held in Nairobi, Kenya on 19 December 2015,

Welcoming the declaration adopted at the Fifth Meeting of Trade Ministers of LLDCs held in June 2016 in Geneva under the theme - Harnessing the trade potential of the LLDCs to accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

Recalling the outcome documents of the fourteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XIV), held on Nairobi, Kenya, from 17 to 22 July 2016, and the Ministerial Communiqué of the Landlocked Developing Countries adopted on 16 July 2016 prior to that session,

Recalling also the Call for Action adopted at the High Level Symposium on SDG 6 and Targets: Ensuring that No One is Left Behind in Access to Water and Sanitation, held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, from 9 to 11 August 2016,

Welcoming also the Ministerial Declaration of the 2016 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council on the theme “Ensuring than no one is left behind”,

Recalling Resolutions 700 (XXXVI) and 711 (XXXVI) adopted at the Thirty-Sixth Session of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, resolution 71/3 adopted by the seventy-first session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and resolution 934(XLVIII) adopted by the Eighth Joint Annual Meetings of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration and the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024,

Recalling also agreed conclusions 524 (LXII) adopted by sixty-second session of the Trade and Development Board of United Nations Conference on Trade and Development which invites UNCTAD to mainstream the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024 into its work programme,

Have adopted the following Ministerial Communiqué:

1. We take note of the Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations presented to the General Assembly on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action (A/71/313);

2. We reaffirm the ambitious and transformational vision set out in The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We stress that the 2030 Agenda is people-centred, universal and transformative and that its Goals and targets are integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental. It is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity that also seeks to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom, to be implemented by all countries and
stakeholders acting in collaborative partnership. We reaffirm all the principles recognised in the Agenda, and that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development and pledge to ensure that no one is left behind;

3. **We stress** that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through the revitalized Global Partnerships should take into account the vulnerabilities and special needs and challenges facing LLDCs. We believe that ending poverty in all its forms, combating inequalities and achieving sustainable, and inclusive economic growth and shared prosperity are fundamental goals for humanity;

4. **We recognize** that the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, which is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, provides an enhanced and revitalized global framework for financing sustainable development and reaffirm the need to address the special challenges and needs of landlocked developing countries in structurally transforming their economies, harnessing benefits from international trade, and developing efficient transport and transit systems;

5. **We reaffirm** our collective commitment to mainstream the Vienna Programme of Action into regional, national and sectoral development strategies and in this regard we call upon our development partners including international and regional organizations to provide technical support to our mainstreaming efforts, including towards holding of national workshops;

6. **We also reaffirm** our commitment to the full and timely implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and our support for mainstreaming it into our national development policies and programmes;

7. **We welcome** the fact that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda recognize the special needs of the LLDCs and emphasize the importance of fostering strong synergy and coherence in their implementation and the Vienna Programme of Action and encourage coordination and coherence in the follow-up of their implementation;

8. **We reaffirm** that the High-level Political Forum has a central role in providing political leadership, guidance and recommendations for the implementation of sustainable development commitments. The Forum is now called to oversee a network of follow-up and review processes of the 2030 Agenda at the global level, working coherently with the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and other relevant organs and forums, in line with existing mandates. We stress that the HLPF continues to focus on addressing the challenges of the most vulnerable countries including the LLDCs;

9. **We stress** that the availability and use of accessible, timely, reliable and high-quality disaggregated data underpins our efforts to leave no one behind by, inter alia, identifying inequalities. Data should measure poverty in all its forms and dimensions as well as progress on sustainable development, to reveal inequalities, gaps, progress and recurrent challenges, identify innovative solutions and inform all necessary policies in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at all levels. Given LLDCs’ constraints and challenges in this regard, we call upon the development partners and international organizations to assist LLDCs in building and strengthening their official national capacities for data collection, disaggregation, dissemination and analysis;
10. *We underline* that the development and maintenance of transit transport and information and communications technology infrastructure are crucial for LLDCs in order to reduce high trading costs, improve their competitiveness and become fully integrated in the global market;

11. *We emphasize* that a strong energy infrastructure and improved access to clean and renewable energy in LLDCs is needed to advance the development of domestic productive capacity and to better connect to the regional and international markets. We call on the international community to enhance its support to create such infrastructure in our countries. In this context, we also reemphasize that resources should be mobilized for the production, distribution and marketing of clean energy;

12. *We stress* that the magnitude of the resources required to invest in infrastructure development and maintenance remains a major challenge and requires forging international, regional, sub-regional and bilateral cooperation on infrastructure projects, construction of quality infrastructures and maintenance of all transport and other trans-border and regional infrastructures, allocating more from national budgets, effectively deploying international development assistance and multilateral financing in the development and maintenance of infrastructure and strengthening the role of an accountable private sector, Public-Private Partnerships as well as other innovative means of finance;

13. *We call on* the LLDCs to develop and imbed infrastructure investment development plans in their national development strategies, and strengthen the domestic enabling environment and urge the international community to provide financial and technical support for LLDCs to translate these plans into concrete implementable projects;

14. *We invite* multilateral financial and development institutions and regional development banks to establish dedicated infrastructure funding for the LLDCs and provide them with a special window for allocation of resources for infrastructure development and maintenance and to undertake analytical work and provide support towards better project preparation;

15. *We welcome* the launch of the Global Infrastructure Forum, led by the multilateral development banks (MDBs), on 16 April 2016 in Washington, DC. We stress that the Forum should address the infrastructure needs of the landlocked developing countries in a focused manner;

16. *We stress* that cooperation on fundamental transit policies, laws and regulations between landlocked developing countries and their transit neighbours is crucial for the effective and integrated solution of cross-border trade and transit transport problems and in this regard encourage LLDCs and transit countries to join and implement the international conventions on transport and transit and bilateral, sub-regional and regional agreements and, where applicable, abiding by customary international norms on transport and transit to and from LLDCs;

17. *We call on* the international organizations to build the capacity of LLDCs and transit countries to understand the benefits and implications of accession to the international conventions and other legal instruments related to transit transport and
trade facilitation through training, in-depth studies on the costs and benefits of joining the conventions and guidelines for the implementation of the conventions;

18. **We stress** that it is extremely important within the framework of the WTO that special attention should be given to the concerns and needs of landlocked developing countries in order to increase their participation in the Multilateral Trading System. In this regard, we support the call made by the Fifth Meeting of Trade Ministers of LLDCs for establishment of a specific Work Programme for LLDCs by the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference. This Work Programme will address the specific concerns and needs of LLDCs in order to increase their participation in the Multilateral Trading System with the key areas on Trade Facilitation, Aid for Trade, Services, and Accession;

19. **We call upon** the WTO membership to strengthen the negotiation function of WTO and to reinvigorate work towards a successful conclusion of the Doha Development Round, with meaningful, ambitious and development-centered outcomes for the LLDCs;

20. **We call upon** the WTO member States for a rapid ratification and implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement. We urge members to continue to provide and enhance technical, financial and capacity building assistance to LLDCs, on a sustainable basis, for the effective implementation of the Agreement;

21. **We call upon** international organizations to establish special facilities and dedicated programmes for the LLDCs, such as the WTO’s Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility, to assist LLDCs with execution and scaling-up of trade facilitation initiatives and effective implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement and of important international conventions and regional agreements;

22. **We call upon** the international community to assist in undertaking research and analysis on the impact of landlockedness on sustainable development and the effective participation of LLDCs in international trade, and develop policy recommendations that can help our countries to make progress towards achieving the sustainable development goals;

23. **We are committed** to promoting structural economic transformation in order to reduce the negative impact of landlockedness and external shocks, and as a means to job creation, poverty eradication, resilience building and sustainable development. Furthermore, higher-value and low-bulk exports are particularly crucial for LLDCs. It is for this reason that we emphasize the development of manufacturing, agriculture and the services sector, including finance, information and communication technologies and sustainable tourism;

24. **We note** the importance of LLDCs integrating into regional and global value chains to expand their export markets and diversify their export baskets. However many LLDCs need guidance on what activities they should pursue and how they can join. In this regard, we call on development partners and international organizations to help the LLDCs in strengthening their capacity to participate in regional and global value chains and identifying the best opportunities for developing new products and export markets, given their comparative advantages;

25. **We express** our serious concern on the frequent falling of commodity prices which have affected our efforts towards sustainable development. We call upon the international community to enhance efforts to support LLDCs in diversifying their exports, through -
inter alia - the transfer of relevant technologies, support to develop and strengthen their productive capacities, value-addition and capacity building in developing relevant policies;

26. We recognize the growing role of the services sector in modern economies, in particular, the importance of the tourism sector, finance and ICT, and that an efficient and productive services industry will contribute significantly to productivity growth and for the overall competitiveness of LLDCs’ economies. In that regard, we affirm our commitment to develop the service sector and call on international organizations to support landlocked developing countries’ to develop their services sectors;

27. We recognize in particular that e-commerce presents an unparalleled opportunity for LLDCs to explore, as this form of trade is less susceptible to the constraints of being landlocked. We call upon the international organizations and development partners to support LLDCs to successfully develop e-commerce;

28. We note with concern that the LLDCs are highly exposed to climate change and disproportionately affected by its adverse impacts due to their location, low income, low institutional capacity, and greater reliance on climate-sensitive sectors like agriculture. This is exacerbated by desertification, land degradation, drought, floods, cyclones and other natural and man-made disasters; LLDCs must be provided with adequate levels of resources in order to enhance their resilience to climate change;

29. We welcome the Paris Agreement as a means to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, which is one of the Goals of the 2030 Agenda. We look forward to its prompt entry into force and ambitious action by all, as well as the mobilization of resources to assist its implementation;

30. We request strengthening a regional integration framework; transit countries should guarantee free and unrestricted transit through their territories for landlocked developing countries to allow the enjoyment of a free and direct access to high seas. The close cooperation with transit countries is the only way for LLDCs to face the obstacles and to enhance the regional integration processes including improved transit transport connectivity, border agency cooperation and harmonized customs procedures and common regulatory policies;

31. We also stress the need to promote meaningful regional integration in a broader range of areas including investment, research and development and policies aimed at accelerating regional industrial development and regional connectivity, including in energy and ICT. These processes will help towards ensuring greater intra-regional trade, deepening of regional markets and fostering structural change and economic growth in LLDCs. We call on our partners to support these initiatives;

32. We request for strengthening of the role of economic corridors, corridor management organizations, sub-regional arrangements and regional groupings in achieving deepened regional integration; and note with interest the recent formal establishment of an economic corridor between Mongolia, China and the Russian Federation. We stress the importance on focusing on a transport corridors framework as a first stage for cost reductions; which involves the upgrading of road, rail and port and inland waterways infrastructure to support trade along the routes and reduce congestion at entry points,
hence promoting the smooth movement of goods and services. We also recognize the significance of international transport corridors for regional sustainable development;

33. *We recognize* the efforts of the LLDCs to enhance domestic resource generation including broadening of the tax base and enhancing of revenue administration through modernized, progressive tax systems, improved tax policy and more efficient tax collection and administration and call on the international community to support our national efforts. We are committed to reducing corruption and increasing transparency at all levels;

34. *We call upon* development partners to increase the amount of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to LLDCs, in a sustainable manner to help us to overcome the obstacles imposed by geography and to integrate into the multilateral trading system. ODA remains the main source of international financing for many LLDCs that it is essential as a catalyst for development, facilitating the achievement of national development objectives, including achieving sustainable development goals and the Vienna Programme of Action in a coherent manner;

35. *We appreciate* that in December 2014 at its High-Level Meeting, the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) adopted a communique in which its members committed to dedicate more of total ODA to countries most in need, specifically mentioning LLDCs as one of the groups to be further supported. We encourage the DAC to move forward in fulfilling this commitment;

36. *We reiterate* our request that development assistance provided in the context of the Aid for Trade initiative should consider the special needs and requirements of LLDCs to build their trade and supply-side capacities and should also be enhanced;

37. *We emphasize* the complementary and catalytic role played by long-term international capital flows, particularly, foreign direct investment. We commit to continue promoting conducive policies to attract foreign direct investment that leads to promote trade as well as sustainable development of LLDCs. We call on development partners to provide greater financial assistance and support to the FDI-seeking efforts of LLDCs by adopting and implementing economic, financial and legal incentives to encourage FDI flows to LLDCs;

38. *We urge* international and regional organizations and development partners, to provide financial and technical assistance to support the transfer of reliable and affordable technologies and to promote capacity-building, taking into account our national priorities;

39. *We recognize* the importance of the private sector participation in the development process of our countries, including the large, medium and small-sized enterprises, in promoting economic growth and poverty reduction through the creation of decent jobs, promotion of innovation, economic diversification and competition, in accordance with national policies. We commit to develop deliberate policies to support the strengthening of the private sector, in particular, improved access to financial resources, development of appropriate human capacity and the promotion of investment in a supportive economic infrastructure. We call upon development partners to provide enhanced financial and technical support to the private sector, especially in the area of development of SMEs;
40. We reaffirm the importance of strengthening South-South and triangular cooperation to support the development efforts of LLDCs and enhance their participation in the global economy. We commend efforts made through South-South cooperation in the areas of transit transport cooperation between landlocked and transit developing countries and request that these efforts are scaled up so as to help LLDCs address the complex and severe development challenges that they face because of their geographical disadvantages. We also reiterate the Group's position that South-South and triangular cooperation is a complement to, rather than substitute for, North-South cooperation;

41. We call for relevant United Nations agencies and relevant international and regional organizations to continue mainstreaming the Vienna Programme of Action into their programme of work, to support the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action within their existing mandates;

42. We stress that in accordance with the mandate given by the General Assembly, the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States should continue to ensure coordinated follow-up to and effective monitoring of and reporting on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, and to undertake advocacy efforts at the national, regional and global levels. We also stress that the Office, in collaboration with other relevant stakeholders, should continue to work on developing relevant indicators for measuring the progress on implementing the Programme of Action in landlocked developing countries, within their existing mandates;

43. We invite partner countries and the international financial and development institutions to make voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund established by the Secretary-General to support the activities related to the follow-up to the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action;

44. We call on and encourage all LLDCs that have not yet done so to ratify the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of an International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries, in order to bring it into the full operation for the benefits of all LLDCs members, which will contribute to strengthening our capacity to undertake research and analysis and to negotiating for and benefit from bilateral and multilateral trade and transit agreements;

45. We welcome the project entitled “The Research on Economic Diversification of LLDCs: Cases of Mongolia, Bhutan, Nepal and Paraguay” which will be implemented by the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries from 1 January 2017 that will provide important evidence-based policy recommendations to assist the LLDCs on how to build their productive capacities, diversify their economies and undergo structural transformation;

46. We welcome the High-Level Seminar: “Accelerating Sustainable Energy for all in LLDCs through Innovative Partnerships” that will be held in Vienna, Austria, from 24 to 25 October 2016, and further reaffirm the importance of universal access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy services for all;

47. We welcome the High-Level Meeting on Sustainable Transport of Landlocked Developing Countries that will be held in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, from 13 to 14 October 2016 and the first Global Sustainable Transport Conference that will be held in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, from 26 to 27 November 2016. The outcomes of
these meetings will feed into the process of defining new strategies, cooperation initiatives and policy recommendations on trade and transport issues in line with the Agenda 2030;

48. *We reaffirm* our strong commitment to the full implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs that is an integral part of the Agenda 2030. Furthermore, we call for a revitalized, renewed and strengthened global partnership between landlocked developing countries and the transit countries, their development partners and other stakeholders;

49. *We welcome* the establishment of the Group of Friends of the LLDCs and appreciate the efforts undertaken by the Group of Friends in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs, and encourage their continued engagement to assist in the process of addressing the special challenges and needs of the LLDCs;

50. *We appreciate* the important role played by the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States in coordination and follow-up of development programmes of landlocked developing countries;

51. *We recognize* the role that Paraguay has undertaken in the coordination of trade and development issues of the Group of LLDCs in Geneva;

52. *We express* our sincere recognition to the Government of the Republic of Zambia, in its capacity as the Chair of the Group of LLDCs, for the efforts undertaken in coordinating the Group’s activities, including the revision of the Rules of Procedure of the Group of the LLDCs in order to enhance the work of the Group.

New York, 22 September 2016