As delivered

Statement

by

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Under-Secretary-General
and High Representative
for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries
and Small Island Developing States

at

the opening session of the

High-Level Meeting on Sustainable Transport of Landlocked Developing Countries

Santa Cruz, Bolivia
13 October 2016
- Your Excellency Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia
- Your Excellency Mr. Martin Vizcarra Vice President of Peru
- Your Excellency Mr. Milton Claros Hinojosa, Minister of Public Work and Housing Services of the Plurinational State of Bolivia
- Your Excellency Honourable Brian Mushimba, the Minister of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Zambia and Global Chair of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries
- Mr. Wu Hongbo, Under-Secretary-General of DESA,
- Mr. Percy Fernandez, Mayor of Santa Cruz de la Sierra
- Distinguished Ministers and delegates,
- Excellencies,
- Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour and privilege for me to address this opening session of the high-level meeting on Sustainable Transport of Landlocked Developing Countries.

Let me begin by commending the Government of the Plurinational State of Bolivia for graciously offering to host this meeting and for the excellent and efficient arrangements that have been made to make our stay enjoyable and the meeting productive.

We are honoured to have President Evo Morales Ayma who is very dedicated to the Vienna Programme of Action. Indeed at the Second UN Conference on LLDCs in November 2014 you invited all the LLDCs and transit countries to meet in Bolivia as a follow-up to the Vienna Conference and to enhance joint initiatives. I commend you for this strong commitment to the Vienna Programme of Action.
I am also very appreciative of the excellent partnership and support of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs in organizing this meeting. UNDESA is a key partner in advancing the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and in building coherence with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

Let me take this opportunity to thank all the distinguished delegates and participants from the LLDCs, transit countries, development partners, UN agencies and other international organizations, regional organizations, the private sector, and the civil society, for your invaluable participation in this meeting.

I wish to express my sincere thanks and deep appreciation to the Chair and the Bureau of the LLDCs who have travelled from the capitals and New York to participate in this meeting. I wish to thank the Government of Zambia, Chair of the LLDCs Group for their able leadership of the Group in cooperation with the Bureau in New York and the Government of Paraguay for coordinating the trade and development matters of the Group in Geneva.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

Sustainable transport is a lifeline to the modern economy and contributes to poverty reduction, economic development and achievement of overall sustainable development in all countries. But most importantly they mean a lot in the 32 landlocked developing countries who because of their geography, they require an efficient transit transport system in order to effectively participate in global trade.
Critical infrastructure deficiencies, long distances to ports and poor trade facilitation result in high transport and overall trade costs.

The LLDCs pay almost double in trade costs when compared to their neighbouring coastal countries. The World Trade Organization estimates that trade costs of LLDCs amount to applying an ad valorem tariff of 260% to international trade. This constitutes a great impediment to LLDCs’ trade competitiveness, equitable access to global markets and the overall welfare of their combined population of more than 470 million.

Reducing these high costs and improving the export competitiveness of the LLDCs requires addressing both the hard physical infrastructure, and the soft infrastructure which includes the legal framework and institutions. Improved physical infrastructure including roads, bridges, railroads, seaports, inland waterways, airports and of the supporting infrastructure at the borders and intermodal points, is necessary for improved connectivity of the LLDCs and they are crucial for turning transport corridors into development corridors.

Faster movement of goods also requires improving the soft infrastructure or legal and regulatory framework including through international conventions, and regional, sub-regional and bilateral cooperation that govern transit issues at the border, between the borders and behind the borders.

Regional cooperation and regional level planning and investment in infrastructure have a great potential to create a win-win situation for all.
Transport systems need to be sustainable to avoid the negative environmental, social and economic impacts of unsustainable transport such as air pollution and harmful greenhouse gas emissions. We also need to develop infrastructure that is resilient to the impact of climate change and natural disasters.

Being landlocked is a challenge but should not be taken as a destiny. With concrete actions and enhanced partnerships, landlocked developing countries can be transformed into land-linked countries. The Vienna Programme of Action adopted in 2014 reflects the commitment of all stakeholders to address the special needs and challenges of the LLDCs. It stresses the importance of reducing transit times and transport costs, promoting infrastructure development and maintenance, ensuring increased trade and trade facilitation, promotion of economic diversification, structural transformation, moving up the value chains, bolstering regional cooperation and ensuring the means of implementation.

Last year world leaders endorsed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction which underscore the importance of sustainable transport in development. These global outcome documents have important supportive provisions for the LLDCs. The World Leaders noted that the VPoA is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Sustainable transport is crucial for the achievement of all the SDGs and is specifically noted in SDG 3 on health; SDG 9 on resilient infrastructure and industrialization; and SDG 11 on making cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Both the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda recognize the special needs of LLDCs.
The Paris Agreement calls for cleaner air and significant lowering of greenhouse gas emissions. The Sendai Framework calls for promotion of resilience of new and existing critical infrastructure, including transportation infrastructure and adequate, sustainable and timely provision of support, including through finance, technology transfer and capacity-building to countries facing specific disaster risk challenges.

You may also be aware that the 2013 WTO Ministerial conference adopted the Bali Package that includes the Trade Facilitation Agreement which will have a great impact on effective transit procedures and will be beneficial to the LLDCs. The full implementation of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation has the potential to reduce the trade costs of WTO member States by 14.3 per cent on average. The success of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement will be dependent on the presence of a good sustainable transport system on the ground.

It looks like we have all the fundamental frameworks in place to take us to where we would like to be – sustainable transport systems that can support economic growth without compromising the health and well-being of people and environment and can improve the connectivity of the LLDCs.

This meeting provides us with a unique opportunity to share and map out strategies to achieve sustainable transport. Let me briefly highlight a few key issues that are crucial in enhancing sustainable transport in landlocked developing countries.

First: It is important to complete the mainstreaming of the VPoA into national agendas and sectoral plans, and to accelerate the integration of the SDGs into national plans, strategies and budgets. This is crucial as it will foster coherence in
the implementation and follow-up of the VPoA and the 2030 Agenda and maximizes the sustainable development outcomes for the LLDCs.

Second: There is need to close the transport infrastructure gaps, the missing links, expand and upgrade all modes of transport infrastructure needed in the cities, rural areas and to connect LLDCs to sea ports and to build transport infrastructure that is resilient. This also requires deepening of regional integration and strengthening of international transport corridors.

Third: Promotion of clean and efficient transportation is essential through development of relevant nurturing policies.

Fourth: Enhanced cooperation between LLDCs and transit developing countries in promoting an enabling legal environment to make transit transport and trade faster and efficient. I wish to encourage you to ratify and effectively implement relevant international conventions and regional agreements and bring them into force in your respective areas.

Fifth: Investment needs are high in both the LLDCs and transit countries. Domestic resource mobilization for infrastructure financing remains critical. However domestic public finance alone will hardly meet the total financing needs. Enhanced flows of ODA including Aid for trade will have a significant impact towards meeting LLDCs’ infrastructure development needs. South-South and Triangular cooperation has great potential and should be increased. The contribution of the state institutions, private sector towards infrastructure development and maintenance, including through public-private partnerships (PPP) is crucial and needs to be enhanced.
The role of multilateral and regional development banks, in providing financing as well as technical capacity building for infrastructure development is crucial. The efforts that the financial institutions are currently undertaking are acknowledged and greatly appreciated. However more is needed including in the form of dedicated infrastructure funding for the LLDCs and special instruments and vehicles that can help them de-risk investments, attract new finances including through blended finances. The global infrastructure forum requested in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, held an inaugural session early this year. The Forum will be hosted in the future by different development banks and I strongly encourage the LLDCs to actively participate in the Forum and to advocate for dedicated funding or special facilities to help bridge the infrastructure gap.

Lastly, capacity building support particularly in developing bankable projects, science and technology, are critical in supporting sustainable transport in LLDCs and the international community is called upon to support the LLDCs in this regard.

Leaving no one behind is the fundamental principle of the SDGs. I am sure that in implementing the SDGs, LLDCs will not be left behind.

I look forward to our discussions and a productive outcome here in Santa Cruz. Your outcome will feed into the Secretary-General’s Global Sustainable Transport Conference that will take place on 26 and 27 November in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan.
I wish to express OHRLLS’s full commitment to working with all Member States to support the LLDCs on their efforts on sustainable transport.

Thank you for your kind attention.