Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

- First and foremost allow me to extend a very warm welcome to all of you to the City of Vienna.
- As a landlocked country, Austria expresses both great sympathy and special interest in the challenges and needs of landlocked developing countries.
- As most of you know, Austria has, at all times, been ready to share its experiences and know-how, which is why the Government of Austria, inter alia, hosted the Second United Nations Conference on LLDCs in Vienna in November 2014.
- Not least thanks to the leadership of the Republic Zambia and the great commitment of our dear friend, Under-Secretary-General Acharya, the LLDC conference was a big success.
- The conference adopted an important forward-looking outcome document, which, I am proud to say, is called the Vienna Programme of Action.
- Now, we must take another leap forward toward implementing the commitments that we have jointly undertaken.
- Please rest assured that Austria will do its part in this very endeavour: in fact, several LLDCs have the status of priority countries for the Austrian Development Cooperation as set forth in our strategy for 2016 to 2018.
- Ladies and Gentlemen, we take great pride in that Vienna has become a major international energy hub, currently hosting several international agencies with activities in the field of energy;
- among them the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), which will celebrate its 50th founding anniversary this year, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), with the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID), the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership (REEEP), and the latest addition Sustainable Energy for All (SE4All).
- These organizations are joining forces for a much needed regular exchange of information and expertise on energy issues.
- It is therefore a great pleasure to welcome such a large number of distinguished participants – a testimony to the importance of the issue of sustainable energy for LLDCs and of the support of the international community for the LLDC group.
• Ladies and gentlemen, if you please I would like to briefly address three topics of importance to all of us, **first, the Vienna Plan of Action & the challenges ahead.**

• As noted at the beginning, at the 2nd Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries in Vienna in November 2014, we adopted the Vienna Plan of Action for LLDCs, which sets out an ambitious Work Plan for the LLDCs and the entire UN membership for the years to come.

• This Work Plan is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which will guide global development efforts until the year 2030.

• I am sure all of you agree when I say that the issue of sustainable energy rightly figures prominently in the Vienna Plan of Action as more than 55% of the population of LLDCs lack access to modern energy,

• At the same time, through new technologies, market-oriented policies and regional co-operation, many LLDCs have made great progress towards the goal of providing access to modern energy services for all their citizens. However, lack of finance remains an important obstacle.

• **Second, I would like to address Austria’s role as advocate for LLDCs.**

• Ladies and gentlemen, the challenges landlocked developing countries face require joint efforts by all stakeholders in a strong partnership to enhance both national development and regional integration.

• The case of Austria, as a landlocked country in the European context, might be of interest to the LLDC group.

• In fact, Austria was able to economically transform itself, largely as a consequence of regional cooperation and integration.

• It was European integration that brought forward a common regional policy and investments in trade facilitating infrastructure across Europe.

• Moreover, European integration gave us the European Single Market leading to free movement of capital, labour, goods, and services, including in the field of energy.

• And it was Austria’s membership in the EU and Eastern European enlargement that provided Austria with unprecedented economic opportunities and welfare benefits for its citizens.
• Bearing our own development in mind, Austria regards it a privilege to serve, along with Sweden, as Co-Chair of the Group of Friends of LLDCs and to advocate the cause of LLDCs in various global fora.
• That being said, please rest assured that Austria will remain committed to supporting the priorities and actions set out in the Vienna Plan of Action, through policy dialogue, as well as through concrete actions in the framework of our development cooperation.
• This includes our support for Regional Centers for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency in Western Africa, Southern Africa, and in Eastern Africa, as well as for ADAs sustainable energy projects in partner countries like the Kingdom of Bhutan, Uganda, Burkina Faso and Ethiopia.
• **Third, and on a final note I would like to stress the role and the importance of the private sector.**
• On behalf of the Austrian Development Agency I would like to emphasise that the conference should lead to all forms of partnerships, including south-south, north-south and particularly, partnerships with the business sector.
• The energy sector in particular requires close cooperation between Governments and the private sector and the task of providing universal access to sustainable energy demonstrates that there is a need for both the private sector perspective and their participation.
• It is, therefore, my firm belief that businesses and governments should intensify their partnerships whenever real value is created, equally benefiting both sides.
• Whether the financing of major energy infrastructure projects or the transfer of technology and technical expertise is concerned, private sector engagement is paramount.
• Ladies and gentlemen, the preparatory process for this conference has seen intensive discussions taking place on a national, regional and global level and I would like to take this opportunity to thank Under-Secretary-General Acharya and his team for all their efforts in preparing this conference.
• Now it is up to us to fulfill the pledge and the strategic vision of the Vienna Programme of Action, with its clearly defined priorities and targets because access to sustainable energy in LLDCs is of crucial importance in our global endeavour to realize the vision of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.
• Thank you very much for your attention.