Statement

by

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at the

Introduction of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for the LLDCs

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Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

I have now the pleasure of introducing to you the Report of the Secretary-General on agenda item 22 (b) on progress in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action contained in document A/71/313. The report provides an update on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action focusing on the six key priority areas that include: fundamental transit policy issues; infrastructure development and maintenance; international trade and trade facilitation; regional integration and cooperation; structural economic transformation; and means of implementation.

The report starts by stressing the importance of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development the new, ambitious and universal development agenda to be implemented over the next 15 years and its overarching principle of leaving no one behind. It notes the close linkage between the VPoA and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development underscoring that the effective implementation of the VPoA is instrumental for the achievement of the sustainable development goals by the LLDCs. The VPoA is a holistic development framework that reflects a commitment of the international community to support the world’s 32 LLDCs to address landlockedness and is integral to the 2030 Agenda. The report stresses the need to foster coherence in the implementation of the VPoA and the implementation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

The report also underscores the need to build coherence in the implementation of the VPoA with the other development processes including: The Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk
Reduction, the Nairobi Package of the Tenth Ministerial Conference of the WTO, the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, outcome of UNCTAD 14 and the outcome of the upcoming Global Conference on Sustainable Transport.

According to the report, the LLDCs’ GDP grew by just 3.7% in 2015, more than one and half percentage points lower than in 2014. GDP grew by more than 7% in only 6 LLDCs in 2015 whilst in 12 countries it grew by less than 3% and 3 countries experienced negative growth. This is closely linked to their trade performance which experienced continued decrease in their share of global exports in 2015 to just 0.96% from 1.21% in 2011, largely due to a sharp decline in commodity prices. This indicates a continued marginalization of a large number of LLDCs from the global trading system and the need to harness all efforts to reverse this trend. In addition, greater efforts are needed to support the LLDCs to diversify their exports, promote value-addition and connect to international and regional value chains.

On the social front, despite efforts to tackle poverty, it remains prevalent in many LLDCs although it has been on the decline since 2002. The LLDCs’ proportion of population below the international poverty line of US$1.90 per day declined from about 49% in 2002 to 31% in 2012 as noted in the Secretary General’s report on progress towards the sustainable development goals. Greater efforts are needed to reduce poverty and eradicate extreme poverty in the next 15 years.

On the priority area on fundamental transit policy issues; progress is being made in the ratification of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. To date 10 LLDCs and 15 transit countries that are WTO members have ratified the agreement. The LLDCs have a lot to benefit from the agreement and I would like to encourage WTO Member States that have not yet done so to consider
ratifying the agreement as soon as possible in order to ensure that it comes into force as soon as possible.

There are also important relevant international conventions that support cooperation between LLDCs and transit countries on transit and trade facilitation such as the TIR and Harmonisation conventions that I wish to encourage LLDCs and transit countries that have not yet done so to ratify. It is encouraging that one LLDC and two transit countries became party to the Revised Kyoto Customs Convention in 2015 and key transit countries Pakistan and recently China acceded to the TIR Convention this year.

With respect to infrastructure development and maintenance, LLDCs and transit countries in cooperation with their development partners continue to make efforts to expand and upgrade their road transport and border crossing infrastructure. Mobilization of additional resources for infrastructure development is critical to complement the domestic efforts of the LLDCs.

On trade facilitation, the report notes that many LLDCs and transit countries, with support from development partners are continuing to implement initiatives to speed up transit and border-crossing such as One Stop Border Posts, Electronic Single Windows, electronic payment systems for payment of customs duties and taxes, TIR carnets, ASYCUDA, Regional Third Party Motor Vehicle Insurance, electronic cargo tracking systems and others. However, despite positive changes in this area, LLDCs still experience considerably high cost of trade. It is important that trade facilitation initiatives that are effective be scaled up and there is need for urgency in the ratification and entering into force of the WTO trade facilitation agreement.
On regional integration and cooperation, LLDCs are party to, on average, 3.8 regional trade agreements which shows their commitment to improved connectivity, market expansion and increased trade potential. It is important that these regional agreements are effectively implemented.

On structural economic transformation it is important to note that the trends in the value-added of agriculture and manufacturing sectors as a percentage of GDP in the LLDCs have continued to decline underscoring the need to build proactive capacities and nurture industrialisation.

On Means of implementation, in 2014, net ODA to LLDCs decreased slightly by 1% compared to 2013. ODA remains the main source of external finance, accounting for 5% or more of gross national income in 15 LLDCs. It is crucial that ODA including aid for trade is enhanced. The report also suggests the need for the international community to find ways of assisting all LLDCs to attract and retain foreign direct investment which dropped by 3% between 2013 and 2014.

The report underscores that the effective implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action hinges on the ability to successfully mainstream it into national and sectoral development plans and encourage the LLDCs that have not yet done so to mainstream the SDGs into their development strategies in a way that fosters coherence with the implementation of the VPoA.

The report highlights the joint work that the UN system and international and regional organisations continue to undertake to ensure the effective implementation of the VPoA. OHRLLS recently jointly organised the Fifth meeting of Trade Ministers of LLDCs in collaboration with the WTO in June in Geneva where a forward-looking declaration was adopted. Similarly an LLDC
trade Ministers meeting was organized just before the Nairobi meeting of UNCTAD. OHRLLS also organised a side event during the HLPF in collaboration with UNIDO and the Group of Friends of LLDCs on sustainable industrialization and infrastructure to support the LLDCs. Just last week OHRLLS in cooperation with DESA and the Government of Bolivia organised a high-level meeting on sustainable transport of LLDCs that adopted an outcome document that will feed into the global conference on sustainable transport to be held next month in Turkmenistan.

The High-Level Seminar on Accelerating Sustainable Energy for All in Landlocked Developing Countries through Innovative Partnerships to be hosted by the Government of Austria in Vienna next week will come out with strategies for harnessing partnerships and initiatives at national, regional and international levels to contribute towards accelerating sustainable energy for all in LLDCs and the implementation of the Vienna Programme and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Government of Vietnam has offered to host a High-Level Meeting for the Euro-Asia Region on Improving Cooperation between LLDCs and Transit Countries on Transit, Trade Facilitation and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to be held in the early part of 2017. These are important initiatives that will help carry forward the implementation of the VPoA.

In conclusion, I would like to assure you that my office will do its best to carry out its mandate in support of the full, effective and timely implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and to assist the LLDCs in fostering coherence with the 2030 Agenda and the other development frameworks. I thank you for your attention.