Improved transport and trade facilitation key to achieving sustainable development for landlocked and transit countries in Euro-Asia

Press Release

Hanoi, 9 March 2017 – Ministers and representatives from landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and transit countries in Euro-Asia called for greater partnerships and collaboration to develop key infrastructure, facilitate trade and promote regional cooperation at a high-level meeting which was held from 7 – 9 March 2017 in Ha Noi, Viet Nam.

The UN High-level Meeting for the Euro-Asia Region on Improving Cooperation on Transit, Trade Facilitation and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, co-organised by the Government of Viet Nam in partnership with the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS), assessed the key issues in transit cooperation and trade facilitation in the Euro-Asia region. Ministers and other senior official representatives from UN member states, senior representatives of international financial organisations, regional and sub-regional organisations, the private sector, UN system departments, agencies, funds and programmes, and think tanks shared best practices and lessons learned over the three days, with a focus on implementing the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014 – 2024 (VPoA) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Trade Facilitation Agreement of the World Trade Organization (WTFA) which has recently entered into force, was welcomed at the event for the potential significant benefits it could bring to landlocked developing countries in relation to reduced trade costs as well as strengthening cooperation with their transit neighbours.

“This meeting provides a unique opportunity to enhance dialogue and cooperation on issues of transit, trade facilitation and regional cooperation that are very important to the overall sustainable development of landlocked developing countries and their transit neighbours within the framework of 2030 Agenda.” said Gyan Chandra Acharya, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. “Our collective action and the global partnership can transform landlocked countries into land-linked countries.”
Recommendations from the meeting highlighted the need for integration of the VPoA and the 2030 Agenda into national plans, strategies and budgets. Participants highlighted the importance of LLDCs and transit countries collaborating to establish secure, reliable, efficient and quality infrastructure and transit transport systems. Greater international support was also called for towards regional and bi-lateral cooperation initiatives by the LLDCs and transit countries to enable them to achieve the objectives of both the VPoA and the 2030 Agenda.

Constructive cooperation between the LLDCs and transit countries was emphasised as a critical component to facilitate free and quicker movement of goods from the LLDCs to ports and as such regional approach to trade facilitation.

“Through our experience of over 30 years of reform and international integration, we have come to fully appreciate that trade and investment facilitation is critical to economic growth and poverty alleviation,” said H. E. Phạm Bình Minh, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Viet Nam. “We believe the success and prosperity of our neighbors will have a positive multiplier effect on our own development, and help advance the sustainable development of the whole region.”

Recommendations from the meeting will be used to advance the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals for LLDCs and put forward to the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Ministers Responsible for Trade Meeting in Ha Noi, Viet Nam later this year.

The 32 LLDCs face development challenges owing to their geographical disadvantage of lacking territorial access to the sea and their remoteness and isolation from world markets. There are 34 transit developing countries that provide transit services to the LLDCs and also have the major seaports that are used by the LLDCs.

The VPoA underscores the importance of partnerships between LLDCs and transit countries for the improvement and maintenance of their infrastructure connectivity and of technical and administrative arrangements in their transport, customs and logistic systems. It also stresses the importance of promoting enabling legal environments and institutional arrangements. Effective cooperation between landlocked developing countries and transit developing countries is crucial for their effective participation in international and regional trade and coordinated development of transit transport infrastructure.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda recognize the special needs and challenges faced by landlocked developing countries and stress the need for the international community to support the development efforts of the LLDCs.

The Government of Viet Nam has generously hosted the meeting with support also provided by the International Road Transport Union, World Customs Organization, and the Government of Japan.

For more information: http://unohrlls.org/event/euro-asia_lldcs-transit-countries_viet-nam/

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