

Statement by H.E. Mr. Frederick Musiiwa Makamure Shava

President of UN Economic and Social Council

**THE HIGH-LEVEL EURO-ASIA REGIONAL MEETING ON IMPROVING COOPERATION ON TRANSIT, TRADE
FACILITATION**

AND THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Ha Noi, 7 March 2017

H.E. Mr. Pham Binh Minh, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the S.R. of Viet Nam

Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and High Representative, UN-OHRLLS

Excellences, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Government of Vietnam and the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States for inviting me to participate and address the opening session of this High-Level Meeting for the Euro-Asia Region on Improving Cooperation on Transit, Trade Facilitation and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In 2015, global leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that will have an enormous impact on the countries represented here. The 2030 Agenda is intended to deliver inclusive and sustainable development and to leave no one behind. The 2030 Agenda recognizes that the Vienna Programme of Action and its six priority areas which include transit policy issues is integral to the Agenda. Thus effective implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action is crucial for the attainment of the SDGs and in leaving no one behind in the LLDCs.

Effective partnerships between LLDCs and transit countries are important and necessary to drive the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the VPoA forward. Partnerships are critical in particular on proven mechanisms for enhancing transport infrastructure development and connectivity, improving ICT connectivity, improving and harmonizing border crossing procedures, scaling up trade facilitation initiatives, and implementing conducive legal framework for transit transport. Partnerships are also crucial for sharing

experiences and best practices on successful sustainable development policies, initiatives and solutions to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs.

Deepening of cooperation between neighbours and overall regional integration requires continued commitment of the national leadership, dedicated support from national and international partners, and sufficient resources. Today I see many of the development partners in the meeting. I wish to emphasise that if we all commit to play our parts, then there will be immense opportunities for LLDCs and their transit neighbours to achieve both the VPoA objectives and the SDGs.

ECOSOC as the principal United Nations body for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on economic, social and environmental issues, as well as for implementation of the internationally agreed development goals is very important in advancing the LLDCs development agenda. The annual cycle of ECOSOC presents various opportunities to pay attention to their priorities. The specific needs of LLDCs can be integrated into the discussions of the various functional commissions, various segments and expert bodies, and high-level meetings. Such opportunities include the Partnership Forum, Integration Segment, the multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the SDGs and the Financing for Development Forum, amongst others.

This year, the Council is dedicating time to address infrastructure development and industrialization, as a high priority for all the countries in special situations. I will be convening a Special Meeting of ECOSOC on “Innovations for Infrastructure Development and promoting Sustainable Industrialization”, to be held on 31 May in New York. This meeting will be preceded by two preparatory meetings one will be held in Dakar, Senegal, later this month and the other will be held in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. I hope that these preparatory meetings will come up with viable proposals and recommendations to feed into the global meeting. In the

same vein, I hope that this meeting will come up with tangible and concrete proposals in particular on sustainable infrastructure development that can also feed into the global meeting.

This year the High-Level Political Forum will review goal 9 among other seven goals. In terms of infrastructure development, it has been noted that transport is the only aspect that has no dedicated goal. In this regard, I welcome the World Bank coordinated initiative on Sustainable Mobility for All which addresses among other issues; access, safety and efficient systems which can only improve transport logistics and facilitate transit trade. The initiative will hopefully build on the momentum generated by the Global Sustainable Conference held in Ashgabat.

The High-Level Political Forum to be convened under the auspices of ECOSOC high-level segment in July also presents an opportunity to raise the LLDC issues. It is evident that the LLDCs are engaging more and more in this process and they need to be commended. In 2016, there was only one LLDC participating in the Voluntary National Reviews out of the 22 participants. In 2017, there will be seven LLDCs participating. It will be an important opportunity to learn from their experiences, in particular on how to address LLDC-specific challenges.

Distinguished delegates

I would also want to welcome the entry into force of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement on 22 February 2017 whose provisions include expediting the movement, release and clearance of goods including those in transit. Trade facilitation has proven to be a key to unlocking the trade potential of landlocked countries by increasing their competitiveness and enhancing their prospects for growth and development.

I want to reiterate that ECOSOC is committed to continuing to address the special challenges of the LLDCs as well as to support their neighbouring transit countries that are also developing countries to achieve sustainable development. The Council will work to ensure that due attention is paid to their challenges and to raise the support of the international community for the LLDC cause. By focusing on the special needs of the LLDCs and the provisions of the Vienna Programme of Action, we can ensure that no one is left behind as we move forward with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

I thank you for your strong commitment and engagement.