**Intervention by Umberto de Pretto, IRU Secretary General**

H.E. Ambassador Lazarous Kapambwe, Permanent Representative of Zambia to the United Nations and Global Chair of the Group of LLDCs

Excellencies,

Distinguished Representatives of the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the International Trade Centre (ITC), and the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island States (UNOHRRLS)

Mr Moderator,

Distinguished Panellists,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to join the IRU President, Mr Christian Labrot in expressing my gratitude for the opportunity for IRU to co-organise this important meeting with the Permanent Mission of Zambia to the United Nations, the IFC, the ITC and UNOHRRLS, which addresses the role of the private sector in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA), to enable Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) to achieve their development objectives.

We are long past the point of consensus on this issue: The private sector is an indispensable partner for LLDC governments in efforts aimed at strengthening their economies. The challenge before us now is to identify solutions and best practices to help stimulate and intensify greater private sector engagement in the implementation of the recommendations of the VPoA to promote rapid and enduring structural economic transformation in LLDCs. We must identify the best models to promote effective public-private cooperation to ensure greater connectivity for LLDCs to regional and global markets. In so doing, LLDCs can access expanded trade opportunities for their goods, and generate much-needed income to finance their sustainable economic and social development.
As you are aware, IRU is a global organisation that comprises a vast global network of national road transport associations that represent truck, bus, coach and taxi operators in more than 100 countries across all five continents. Our strength lies in the strength of our national member associations, who work tirelessly to make the road transport industry strong, resilient and competitive.

Through their efforts, passengers and goods are moved to where they need to be, people access economic opportunities, communities are linked, regions are connected and entire economies and regions thrive. However, our Members do not achieve these successes alone. The success of the transport industry requires intensive cooperation between the private sector and public authorities, policy makers and decision-makers at the highest level of governments. It is an ongoing collaborative effort based on a common understanding of the challenges to be addressed at the national level. Through effective public-private partnerships, LLDCs can duplicate the successes realised by other countries to promote their accelerated development, as envisaged by the VPoA.

Concretely, and viewed in the context of IRU’s experience in working with industry actors and governments, what role do we see for the private sector in implementing the objectives of the VPoA? I’d like to refer to a presentation delivered by UNOHRLLS in 2014 that presented an analysis of the priorities, objectives and specific actions required to implement the VPoA. The presentation suggested that a total of 87 actions were necessary to implement the VPoA priorities. Of the 87, 34 actions were specifically required by “LLDCs and transit developing countries” (together). The remaining 53 actions were attributed to (1) LLDCs transit developing countries separately, (2) to LLDCs, and (3) to development partners.

The prevalence of actions attributed to LLDCs and transit developing countries (together) clearly confirms that a great deal of the potential for LLDCs to achieve structural transformation of their economies lies in the area of trade facilitation – an area where the on-the-ground knowledge and expertise of private sector operators can significantly contribute to the design and deployment of effective actions to respond to the VPoA recommendations and to facilitate trade and transit for LLDCs.

In this particular context, the private sector, and transport operators in particular are well placed to inform policy makers of the impediments they encounter in transit - whether they be physical, legal or procedural, the costs generated by such impediments and the measures required to eliminate such barriers in order to facilitate trade and transit. IRU’s experience as the global voice of the road transport industry, and in particular, our long experience in administering the TIR system tells us that among the most effective means to simultaneously facilitate trade and transit, and enhance constructive public private cooperation at the national and regional levels is through LLDCs’ accession to the United
Nations TIR Convention – a tried and tested instrument that facilitates trade in 70 countries across the globe today.

TIR is one of the longest-standing and most effective public private partnerships in existence. Most recently, China acceded to the TIR Convention, which will dynamise trade and transit in every region of the globe – with a large share of the benefits accruing to Developing Countries, Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs).

Allow me to once again cite the UNOHRLLS presentation from 2014, which concluded that LLDCs’ trade was just 61% of the trade volume of coastal countries; transport costs for LLDCs were 45% higher than the representative coastal economy and have continued to increase over time; and, the level of development in LLDCs is about 20% lower than what it would be, had they not been landlocked.

Against this background, it is useful to note that countries that implement TIR have realised increases in trade volumes; they have significantly reduced costly delays and other costs associated with burdensome border-crossing procedures; and they have benefitted from overall increases in revenues from trade. The resulting positive impact on regional integration has conferred additional benefits on countries and regions where TIR is in operation, by allowing them to diversify their export base and to create new markets for their goods and services.

In our discussions with countries in Africa and Asia in particular, we note their determination to implement the priorities of the VPoA to facilitate trade and transit and to achieve sustainable development. Moreover, they recognise that among the most effective means to achieve these objectives is through effective, constructive and enduring public private partnerships. IRU fully supports this approach. We believe without reserve that PPPs provide the best option for LLDC governments to achieve both quantitative and qualitative successes in implementing the VPoA, and to empower the private sector to serve as a trusted partner in contributing to national development efforts over the long term.

I would like to close my intervention by once again echoing the words of IRU President, Mr Christian Labrot that IRU, through its advocacy, technical and capacity-building efforts stands ready to support the efforts of LLDCs to accelerate progress in meeting the objectives of the six priority areas of the Vienna Programme of Action.

We are committed to contribute our vast experience in working with landlocked countries, and our keen understanding of the particular challenges that landlockedness and other geographical constraints impose on countries, as well as our success in implementing TIR –
one of the most effective public private partnerships in existence, to help LLDCs to achieve accelerated progress in facilitating trade and transit in order to more fully integrate into regional and global trading systems.

Thank you.

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