Annual Ministerial Meeting of Foreign Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries

20 September 2017
UN Headquarters, New York
Time (TBC), Conference room TBC

Concept Note

Theme: Accelerating the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Background
The 32 landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) found globally face development challenges owing to their geographical disadvantage of lacking direct territorial access to the sea and their remoteness and isolation from world markets. LLDCs, face substantially increased total expenses for transport and other transaction costs as a result of the additional border crossings and long distances from major markets. The high cost of trade is a major stumbling block to LLDCs’ equitable and competitive access to global markets and their ability to fully harness their trade and overall sustainable development potential. The WTO estimates that trade costs of LLDCs amount to applying an ad valorem tariff of 260 per cent to international trade and UN-OHRLLS estimated that the level of development in LLDCs is, on average, 20 percent lower than what it would be were they not landlocked.

The Vienna Programme of Action for the LLDCs for the Decade 2014 – 2024 (VPoA) adopted in November 2014 at the Second UN Conference on the LLDCs offers a holistic approach to improving the integration of LLDCs into world trade. The VPoA is a results-oriented programme comprising of an overarching goal, six specific goals as well as time bound specific objectives in six priority areas namely: 1) fundamental transit policy issues, 2) infrastructure development and maintenance, 3) international trade and trade facilitation, 4) regional integration and cooperation, 5) structural economic transformation and 6) means of implementation. The priority areas include 21 specific objectives and 87 actions to be undertaken by LLDCs, transit developing countries and development partners to help ensure the achievement of the goals of the VPoA.

The successful implementation of the VPoA requires strengthened partnerships between LLDCs, transit countries and development partners, and enhanced support and partnership efforts with relevant international and regional organizations, between private and public sectors and stronger and widened North-South and South-South cooperation.

In September 2015, world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) and pledged that no one should be left behind.
The 2030 Agenda is the overarching development framework which is bold, ambitious, and transformational. The 17 SDGs are relevant for the LLDCs in their pursuit to achieve sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes the special challenges and needs of LLDCs and World leaders at the summit also observed that the implementation and realization of the Vienna Programme of Action is integral to the 2030 Agenda. The Agenda reaffirms that international trade is an engine for inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction, and contributes to the promotion of sustainable development.

The Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA), which is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda, also recognizes the special challenges and needs of the LLDCs and stresses the need to support the LLDCs to enable them to structurally transform their economies, harness benefits from international trade, and develop efficient transport and transit systems. It also emphasizes that effective global partnerships, capacity-building, science and technologies are integral solutions to addressing poverty.

There are other recent global development frameworks that are relevant to the LLDCs and vital for their achievement of the SDGs. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change is a landmark agreement to enhance the provision of urgent and adequate finance, technology and capacity-building support to the developing countries. Its effective implementation will help the LLDCs to build their resilience to climate change impacts such as desertification, land degradation, recurrent droughts, and flooding, including glacial lake outburst floods. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction calls for enhanced provision of coordinated, sustained and adequate international support for disaster risk reduction to the LLDCs.

The WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) which entered into force on 22 February 2017 marked an important milestone for the multilateral trading system as it has potential benefits particularly for the LLDCs. The WTO TFA when fully implemented is expected to expedite the movement, release and clearance of goods, including goods in transit and thereby significantly cutting the costs of trade by 14.5% on average. The WTO TFA can help developing countries like the LLDCs to diversify their economies — in terms of both exported products and markets reached and can also enhance their participation in global value chains. It is a major step towards reducing the trade costs of the LLDCs.

The successful and effective implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action is necessary for the achievement of the SDGs by the LLDCs. It is important for the VPoA and the SDGs, and the other global development frameworks, to be implemented in a coherent and integrated manner to effectively achieve the goals of the programmes. An important element for the effective implementation of both the VPoA and the 2030 Agenda is the mainstreaming of the VPoA and SDGs into national and sectoral development plans and into the work programmes of the international, regional and sub-regional organizations. At the global level, it is critical that LLDC issues and the priorities of the VPoA are integrated into the global development follow-up processes such as the Global Infrastructure Forum, the High Level Political Forum and other processes.

This year marks the third year of implementing the VPoA and the second year of implementing the 2030 Agenda. It is important for the Ministerial Meeting to review the progress that has been achieved so far, identify the challenges and propose recommendations that can accelerate the implementation of the VPoA and the achievement of SDGs by the LLDCs.
2. Objectives
The key objectives of the Ministerial Meeting include the following:

- Review the progress made by the LLDCs in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action including identifying the challenges faced.
- Review in particular the progress made and challenges faced in mainstreaming the Vienna Programme of Action and the SDGs by the LLDCs.
- Share knowledge, experiences and innovative approaches on implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action
- Identify recommendations and opportunities for accelerating synergies and implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Vienna Programme of Action at the national level in LLDCs, as well as regional and global levels.

3. Possible questions
1. What have been the key achievements in implementing the Vienna Programme of Action in your countries? What have been the major challenges and how can they be addressed?
2. What is the progress in mainstreaming the Vienna Programme of Action and the SDGs into your national development plans and strategies? What have been the major challenges and how can they be addressed?
3. What are the best practices and innovative approaches on implementing the Vienna Programme of Action?
4. What are the key recommendations and opportunities for accelerating implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Vienna Programme of Action at the national level in LLDCs, as well as regional and global levels?

4. Expected Outcome
The Ministerial Meeting will reinforce the political commitment to the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and is expected to come up with policy recommendations on how to accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs and foster coherence and synergies with follow-up processes of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other global development frameworks to ensure optimal benefits for the LLDCs. The meeting will adopt a Ministerial Declaration of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries.

5. Participation
The Ministerial Meeting will be attended by Ministers and High-Level officials from the 32 LLDCs. Ministers and high-level officials from transit developing countries, development partners and representatives of UN system and other international and regional organizations will also be invited to participate.

6. Documentation Available online
i) The Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs for the decade 2014-2024;
ii) Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
iii) The Addis Ababa Action Agenda;
iv) The WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement;
v) General Assembly Resolutions on the LLDCs; on the HLPF.
vi) Report of the 5\textsuperscript{th} Meeting of Ministers of Trade of LLDCs
vii) Report of the Annual Meeting of Foreign Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries held in 2016
viii) Achieving Sustainable Transport in Landlocked Developing Countries