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Statement by

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for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing
States

at the Ambassadorial Meeting of the LLDC Group

7 September 2017, 15:00– 17:00

Conference Room 11

H.E. Ambassador Lazarous Kapambwe, The Chair of the Group of LLDCs

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to thank Ambassador Kapambwe for the kind invitation extended for me to join your meeting. I sincerely appreciate this opportunity as I have been very keen to meet with the LLDC group since I joined the organization in May. At the outset, I wish to affirm that I am committed to continue the dialogue and consultation process already established to understand your special needs and to jointly identify priority activities that we can undertake together. I look forward to interacting with you on a regular basis and to welcome your ideas and constructive suggestions that will allow me to better advocate for your needs.

As you are well aware my Office advocates for the 91 vulnerable countries, including least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states. I am fully aware of the special challenges and vulnerabilities that the landlocked developing countries face due to your unique geography and the resultant high transport and trade transaction costs that impose serious constraints on your efforts to achieve sustainable development. The Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs with its 6 priority areas is a holistic and results-oriented programme that the international community adopted three years ago at the Second UN Conference on the LLDCs to address your special needs.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes the special needs of the landlocked developing countries and the Vienna Programme of Action is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda. The 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.

On landlocked developing countries, my Office is mandated: to advocate and raise awareness; to mobilize and coordinate international support and resources for the effective implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action; to monitor, follow-up as well as to report on the implementation of the Vienna programme of action; and to foster coherence with the follow-up and implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I wish to assure you that the effective implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action is a top priority of our work. OHRLLS is committed to continue to provide substantive support to LLDCs in the

implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and foster coherence with the follow-up and monitoring processes of the 2030 Agenda, Addis Ababa Action Agenda and other global agreements including the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and others.

In my new role as High Representative, one of the issues I would like to promote is localization of the internationally agreed global frameworks, such as the SDGs and the VPoA. It is my view that having all the relevant stakeholders at national and regional levels to be fully engaged in the implementation of SDGs and the Vienna Programme of Action is key to the successful implementation of the VPoA and achievement of the SDGs. In this regard I shall shape advocacy and awareness raising to support these efforts.

An important element for such effective implementation at national level is mainstreaming of the Programme into national development plans and into the work programmes of the international, regional and sub-regional organizations. Some countries have made good progress and have completed the mainstreaming process. This is an issue that I wish to facilitate support through joining hands with the other parts of the UN system. I am currently advocating to UNDP to include mainstreaming of the VPoA when they undertake Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) activities in the LLDCs.

Another aspect that can also facilitate implementation of the VPoA at national level is to have national focal points that can coordinate implementation of the VPoA with all the other stakeholders. These National Focal Points are the direct link between the global processes and national-level implementation. The system of national level focal points has been well established and is working well with the LDC group. This year, we organised the LDC focal points meeting during the HLPF which also enabled participants to attend some of the sessions. We are trying to do the same with the SIDS and I hope that the LLDCs group can support this initiative, and nominate National Level Focal Points from your respective capitals.

On the mandate of mobilizing and coordinating international support, OHRLLS has been able to successfully mobilize the UN system and other international organizations in support of the LLDCs mainly through the Inter Agency Consultative Group on the LLDCs. We have developed committed partners at global and regional levels including for example the UN Regional Commissions, UN DESA, UNCTAD, World Bank, World Trade Organization, World Customs Organization, regional development banks, the IRU and others who are working on specific issues addressed to the LLDCs. This is also an area that I wish to enhance and further strengthen coordination and partnerships.

I would like to strongly support your Group is profiling the special needs of the LLDCs in different global fora. I would like to support your efforts where relevant and necessary, to mainstream your concerns into major United Nations processes in particular the HLPF, Financing for Development Follow-up, the Global Infrastructure Forum, WTO's-Doha negotiations, meetings on South-South Cooperation and others. This will help obtain the necessary support to assist LLDCs to overcome the challenges that they face and accelerate progress towards the achievement of the SDGs.

Let me now highlight the four key thematic areas that are very important in accelerating the implementation of the VPoA and achievement of the SDGs.

First - Addressing transit issues between the LLDCs and the transit countries at the border, and behind the border is key to reducing the high trade costs faced by the LLDCs and for improving their trade potential. This is an issue that is at the heart of OHRLLS's programme. OHRLLS is working to advocate and support capacity building and promotion of cooperation of LLDCs and transit countries on transit policies, harmonization of regulatory frameworks and border crossing procedures and ratification and implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and other transit legal instruments and scaling up of trade facilitation measures.

Second - Development of quality and adequate transport, energy and ICT infrastructure is critical for connecting the LLDCs to the markets. Achieving this is dependent on successful mobilization of increased financing towards infrastructure development and maintenance. I would like to focus on how OHRLLS can support the LLDCs to be able to successfully mobilize resources.

It will require working closely with the multilateral institutions, the development partners and the private sector. In addition there is a need for enhanced sharing of experiences to ensure that good practices are scaled up and replicated.

Third - Regional integration and increased trade is important for the LLDCs. Regional connectivity including the promotion of development corridors will help foster growth in the LLDCs and regional integration will open up bigger markets. The nexus of humanitarian response, sustainable development and sustaining peace is relevant to the LLDCs. Improved regional integration, and enhanced cooperation between the LLDCs and transit countries will help facilitate the achievement of this nexus in the spirit of the integrated and coherent approach to development promoted by the Secretary General.

Fourth - Structural economic transformation centered upon industrialization is critical for successfully integrating the LLDCs into the global economy and achieving sustained, broad-based and employment-creating economic growth. Industrialization would also support the move from traditional economic activities into higher value-added and more diversified economic activities. It will allow LLDCs to

become more competitive in the international markets and be connected with regional and global value chains.

Overall, I will pursue strong advocacy and outreach activities to generate the necessary awareness and leverage wider and deeper global partnerships in favour of LLDCs.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like now to give you an update on some of the activities that my Office has undertaken this year and some of our planned activities.

My Office undertook advocacy efforts to raise awareness on the connectivity needs of the LLDCs. Some of the meetings where we advocated for the special needs of the LLDCs include: The Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, held on May 14–15, 2017 in China; the WTO Sixth Global Review of Aid for Trade on “Promoting Connectivity”; 2017 Special Meeting of ECOSOC on “Innovations in Infrastructure Development and Promoting Sustainable Industrialization”; and Energy EXPO in Astana, Kazakhstan.

OHRLLS organized in collaboration with partners and Member States important events including: High-Level Meeting for the Euro-Asia Region on Improving Cooperation on Transit, Trade Facilitation and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development held in Vietnam in March 2017; the side event on Enhancing the role of the private sector in the implementation of the VPoA and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that was held in the margins of the 2017 ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development Follow-up; and the side event on Accelerating Inclusive and Sustainable Development in Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) Through Structural Transformation: Pursuing Policy at the Nexus of Infrastructure and Industrialization held in the margins of the 2017 High Level Political Forum.

We also participated in the World Customs Organization (WCO) Global Transit Conference, Brussels, Belgium, 10-11 July where the WCO transit guidelines were launched. OHRLLS organized a side event in the margins of the conference entitled “Importance of Efficient Transit Cooperation for the Achievement of the SDGs by Landlocked Developing Countries.” The meeting underscored the importance of investing in soft infrastructure and regional cooperation in achieving efficient transit and improved trade facilitation for the LLDCs.

We also organized in collaboration with the Chair an LLDC focused side event that was held during the Ocean Conference entitled Enhancing the participation of the landlocked states in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14. The meeting called for a more detailed briefing on the United

Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and its provisions for the LLDCs. In this regard a more detailed briefing is being organized in cooperation with the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the UN Office of Legal Affairs and the International Seabed Authority.

OHRLLS is currently preparing for an expert group meeting on Financing Infrastructure Development for enhanced integration of the LLDCs into global trade that will be held 4 and 5 October.

We are also looking forward to the upcoming Ministerial Meeting of the LLDCs and is ready to provide all the secretariat support for the meeting to be successful. I am also looking forward to the upcoming Ministerial Meeting of the LLDCs in the sidelines of the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference to be held in Argentina.

Implementing the 2030 Agenda will require us to redouble our efforts. It is in this regard that the Secretary General saw it vital to undertake reforms and reposition the UN to be able to deliver on the SDGs including the development, peace and security pillars. The reform measures proposed by the Secretary-General seek to increase efficiency and effectiveness of the Organization and are necessary to position it to effectively serve the Members States especially the most vulnerable group of countries including the LLDCs.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you for reaching the required ratifications necessary to bring the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of the International Think Tank for the LLDCs into force. The entry into force of this Agreement is a milestone achievement by the LLDCs. It demonstrates the highest level of political commitment of the LLDCs for the establishment of the first ever intergovernmental body of this group. I wish to commend the Government of Mongolia for hosting the Think Tank and supporting the interim management. UN-OHRLLS stands ready to provide support towards the formalization of the Think Tank. I call on the other LLDCs to also ratify the Agreement.

To conclude, I would like to note that this is the third year of implementing the Vienna Programme of Action. We are therefore now starting to look towards preparing for the Comprehensive high-level midterm review on the implementation of the VPoA.

I would like to reiterate my commitment to the LLDCs, and would like to assure you of the UN's support to galvanize international support towards the development of the LLDCs. Let me also reassure you that my Office will continue to provide substantive support to the Chair and any assistance that the LLDC Group might require.

I thank you for your kind attention.