Concept Note

Ministerial Meeting of the Group of the Landlocked Developing Countries

10 December 2017, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Introduction

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda underscores the importance of international trade as an engine for inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction, and an important means to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs (SDG17.10) recognize the need to “promote a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization, including through the conclusion of negotiations under its Doha Development Agenda” to achieve the SDGs. The role of the World Trade Organization is therefore important in ensuring that trade plays a meaningful role in the achieving the SDGs.

The VPoA identifies international trade as one of its priorities and it recognizes the importance of integration of the LLDCs in global trade and its importance for their economic development. It also recognizes the importance addressing high trade costs incurred by the LLDCs, and the need to integrate the LLDCs into the global value chains. The VPoA sets several objectives aimed at integrating the LLDCs into global trade and improving the trade performance of the LLDCs. These objectives include: to significantly increase the participation of LLDCs in global trade, with a focus on substantially increasing exports; to significantly increase the value added and manufactured component, as appropriate, of the exports of landlocked developing countries, with the objective of substantially diversifying their markets and products; to invite Member States to consider the specific needs and challenges of landlocked developing countries in all international trade negotiations and to significantly simplify and streamline border crossing procedures with the aim of reducing port and border delays.

A balanced and inclusive multilateral trading system is important for the achievement of the VPoA objectives and to ensure that the developing countries including the LLDCs seize the opportunities of global economic and trade integration. It is important that multilateral agreements take into account the different capacities of different categories of members at different stages of development, so that the outcome will be an equitable sharing of benefits. Negotiations at the WTO aim at addressing the existing imbalance in the multilateral trading system and to ensure developing countries benefit from open trade. The continuous engagement of the LLDCs Group in the negotiating process of the WTO Agreements is necessary to ensure that the LLDCs’ needs are taken into account and ensure that they are integrated in the multilateral trade system.

In the recent past the WTO has made several deliverables on some of the issues which are very important to the LLDCs in particular the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement adopted at the Ninth Ministerial Conference held in 2013. The Trade Facilitation Agreement is expected to contribute to addressing the high trade cost faced by the LLDCs and it is also expected to help developing
countries in some key areas for their sustainable development such as export diversification, participation in global value chains and improved ability to attract investment. At the Nairobi Ministerial Conference held in 2015, a decision was taken to abolish export subsidies in agriculture. Agriculture is one of the important export sectors for most LLDCs and it is also important for the food security.

The WTO Eleventh Ministerial Conference is scheduled to be held on 10-13 December 2017 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Several issues are still under negotiations as possible deliverables at the Ministerial Conference. These include: Disciplines to trade distorting agriculture subsidies, A Permanent Solution on Public Stockholding for Food Security, discipline for fisheries subsidies and possible work program for future works.

**Purpose of the Meeting**

The High-level meeting is organized in the margins of the WTO Ministerial Conference with a view to consider progress on trade negotiations and to consider progress achieved in the implementation of the Agreements of strategic importance to the LLDCs. The meeting is expected to discuss the following:

- Remaining Doha issues under negotiation
- The implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement
- LLDCs as a negotiating group in the WTO
- The implementation of the VPoA.

The meeting is expected to issue a Ministerial Communique.

**Participation:** Ministers and high-level officials from Landlocked developing countries, transit countries and development partners.

**Format:** This event will feature statements and discussions.

**Date and Venue:** The ministerial meeting will take place on 10 December 2017 at Hilton Hotel and Convention Center, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

**Organizers:** Government of Paraguay (LLDCs Focal Point for Trade and Development issues in Geneva) and United Nations Office of High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS).

**Documentation:** Reports of the Chairs of Negotiation bodies of the WTO, The Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs for the decade 2014-2024; The Addis Ababa Action Agenda; Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement.