

## **Opening Session: Fostering the achievement of the SDGs in LLDCs**

16 May 2018

Introductory remarks by the Viceminister of Foreign Affairs,

Ambassador Federico González

Dear Ministers,

Madam Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations,

Mr. Secretary General of UNCTAD,

Mr. Deputy Director General of the WTO,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

For Paraguay, it is an honor to give the welcoming remarks in a new Ministerial meeting of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries; on this occasion, the meeting dedicated to Trade and Transport. Precisely on these issues, the Landlocked Developing Countries face the greatest challenges; our growth and development goals are largely related to our ability to advance in physical and virtual connectivity, as well as in the structural transformation of our economies.

Likewise, the 2030 Agenda emphasizes the importance of international trade as a driver of inclusive economic growth, poverty reduction, and as an important tool to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

For its part, the Vienna Program of Action is an integral part of the 2030

Agenda for Sustainable Development, and it has specific objectives on the subject we will deal with today.

It is worth noting that the Vienna Program of Action identifies the fundamental issues of transit policy, infrastructure development, international trade and trade facilitation, regional integration, structural economic transformation and means of implementation as its key priority areas.

Specifically, on key issues of transit policy it sets ambitious goals to reduce travel time along corridors, significantly reducing the time spent at land borders, and improving multimodal connectivity.

In addition, the Vienna Program of Action reiterates the importance of physical infrastructure for reducing commercial costs, and emphasizes its development and maintenance, both in landlocked developing countries and in transit countries. On the other hand, we must not forget the importance of promoting the development of information technology and energy infrastructure.

For all these reasons, I believe that this meeting is taking place very timely, as it will give us momentum to begin with the mid-term review process of

the Vienna Program of Action, scheduled for 2019. In that context, the issues that have been carefully selected to be discussed today represent all the edges that we need to strengthen to achieve the objectives set in Vienna, such as trade facilitation and connectivity.

Finally, I would like to highlight that less than a month ago, at the ECOSOC meeting on the occasion of the Follow-up Forum of the Finance for Development program of the Addis Ababa Agenda, a specific recognition was given to the special challenges and needs of landlocked developing countries and which stressed the need to support these countries so they can structurally transform their economies and develop efficient transport and transit systems.

I will end by expressing my sincere gratitude and congratulations to the Government of Kazakhstan and to the Office of the High Representative for Landlocked Developing Countries for their efforts to hold this meeting.

Thank you very much