



Republic of Botswana

Statement

Honourable Moiserale M. Goya

Assistant Minister

Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry

**Ministerial Meeting of Landlocked Developing Countries
on Trade and Transport**

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Astana, Kazakhstan

Mr. Chairman

Honourable Ministers

Head of International Organisations

Distinguished delegates

Good morning to you all,

1. Let me express my gratitude to the Government of Kazakhstan and the Secretariat of the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States for the excellent organisation of this meeting.

2. Mr. Chairman, the theme of this Ministerial meeting **“Achieving the SDGs in Landlocked Developing Countries through Connectivity and Trade Facilitation”** is an intriguing one as it gives us an opportunity to interrogate and reflect on challenges we face as LLDCs as the world

continue to be inte-rconnected whilst the LLDCs remain marginalized. As clearly articulated by the background papers by the OHRLLS, our countries are still faced with challenges emanating from landlockedness. The LLDCs are faced with high cost of trade due to weak transport infrastructure coupled with delays and inefficiencies associated with border management, including custom procedures and cumbersome documentation requirements. Implementation of the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation and the development of infrastructure are essential to mitigate the challenges of the LLDCs and to connect them to global markets. Botswana has undertaken, and continues to make efforts to address the challenges associated with landlockedness.

3. Mr. Chairman, allow me to share Botswana's national efforts aimed at improving interconnectivity and competitiveness. At the forefront of the national development priorities is inclusive growth and economic resilience, economic diversification, employment creation and poverty alleviation. Botswana is

actively pursuing policies and programmes to achieve these objectives.

4. Furthermore, infrastructure developments, including ICT, transport, and energy infrastructure have been afforded more prominence in the development of our National Development Plan 11. To this end, my Government is also actively pursuing strategies for regional cooperation on infrastructure development and integration as a means of creating more active trade routes and expanding market access. Botswana together with Namibia and South Africa have developed a Trans Kalahari Corridor, which is a highway aimed at facilitating faster and cheaper movement of goods between the three countries. Botswana has also signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the development of the North–South corridor, which will further link Botswana to other trading partners in the north and south.

5. Mr. Chairman, Botswana and Zambia are in the process of constructing the Kazungula Bridge which is a joint project between the two countries aimed at further facilitating movements of goods and persons along the north-south corridor as well as to facilitate trade among the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA) and East African Countries (EAC) regional economic communities. Botswana further envisages the development of a Trans Kalahari Rail line to Namibia that will also link to Zambia via the Kazungula road and Rail Bridge. Botswana and Zambia are also in the process of establishing a One Stop Border Post facility as part of the Kazungula Bridge Project. These projects are expected to reduce transport costs and link Botswana to regional and global markets.

6. Mr. Chairman, Botswana attaches great importance to the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement as attested by the fact that

Botswana was one of the first countries to ratify the Agreement. Botswana is undertaking reforms to facilitate the implementation of the Agreement. We have a committee set up specifically to deal with trade Facilitation issues. In this regard, we are in the process of finalizing the review of our customs legislation to align it with the WTO TFA and the Revised Kyoto Convention. Botswana and South Africa are in the process of interfacing their customs IT systems with a view to facilitate trade. Botswana is also working on implementing a National Single Window.

7. At the regional level, the Southern African Custom Union (SACU), which Botswana is a Member, is in the process of finalizing a Regional Trade Facilitation Programme, whilst the Southern African Development Community (SADC) adopted the Trade Facilitation Programme in March 2016 and its implementation is ongoing. SADC through its Industrial Development Programme is also making efforts to develop

regional value chains. These efforts are aimed at facilitating regional integration which is one of the key priorities of the Vienna Programme of Action for the LLDCs. We reverently believe that Building synergies at the regional level will greatly aid integration of the LLDCs into the multilateral trading system.

8. Mr. Chairman, as LLDCs, and countries with special needs, the support of development partners remains important to address the persistent challenges of our countries. Infrastructure development including transport, Information, Communication and Technology, strong technological and research base, the advancement of functional intellectual property systems amongst others, remain fundamental to the development of LLDCs. These initiatives require huge financial investment as well as legal, regulatory and administrative reforms. In this regards, we call for increased, predictable and consistent international support in these areas.

9. As I conclude, allow me to share with you that Botswana has developed a National Aid for Trade Strategy, with the assistance of the Commonwealth Secretariat. The Strategy has outlined strategic areas aimed at improving our trade performance and integration into the global value chains. I therefore call upon development partners to support this important initiative and finally allow me to express my Government's appreciation to our development partners and international organizations for their continued support. We are most grateful to them.

I thank you for your attention.