

Statement by His Excellency Mr. Humayoon Rasaw, Minister of Industry and Commerce of Afghanistan
at the Ministerial Meeting of Landlocked Developing Countries on Trade and Transport, Session 3 16-17
of May 2018 Astana, Marriott Hotel, Kazakhstan

Your Excellency Ministers;

Honorable Delegates, Experts, Esteemed Guests;

Good Morning! It is a great honor for me to participate in this Ministerial Meeting of Landlocked Developing Countries on Trade and Transport. I would like to thank the government of Kazakhstan and UNOHRRLLS for holding such an important meeting. Ladies and Gentlemen! I am pleased to note that this session is focused on progress made by LLDCs in improving their trade, share best practice experiences and identifying the outstanding challenges and suggested recommendations. It will also discuss how to accelerate the implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement.

Today, Landlocked Developing countries underscore 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, as recognized by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. However, I believe we need to declare that the continued marginalization of the LLDCs from global trade should be recognized and there is an urgent need to address the trade related challenges of the LLDCs.

In particular, the high trade and transport costs, supply side constraints, undiversified products, limited technological advancement, infrastructure and market access challenges and recognizing the important role of the WTO in facilitating the integration of the LLDCs into the global trade. Furthermore, there is need to adopt general and specific support measures for LLDCs in the Multilateral Trading System, as well as in other relevant trade fora, taking into account the particular needs and special problems of these countries. Prior to that I would like to stress that full attention should be given to the interests of landlocked developing countries on the remaining Doha issues.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

The Vienna Program of Action has given us a comprehensive framework to address the special development needs and challenges of the landlocked developing countries. I trust, there is a need to mainstream and effectively implement all the priority areas set in the Program of Action in conjunction with globally inclusive and transformative Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

The World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) is important in accelerating the flow of goods between countries, in improving transparency and in reducing the high trade costs faced by the LLDCs. In this regard, we welcome the entry into force of the TFA, we call for its full and timely implementation by all members of the World Trade Organization, and call upon those members that have not yet done so to deposit their instrument of acceptance, as soon as possible.

I am happy to announce that Afghanistan has ratified the TFA on July 29 2016, becoming the 90th WTO member and the 9th LDC to ratify this agreement. Afghanistan believes the rules set in the TFA agreement addresses the trade facilitation challenges and we look forward, implementation of the contents of this Agreement should be complemented by initiatives aimed at addressing infrastructure related challenges for tangible results and impact. It is important that transit countries guarantee free, unrestricted and efficient transit through their territories for landlocked developing countries allowing the enjoyment of a free and direct access to seas.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

According to the OECD-WTO 2017 aid-for-trade monitoring exercise on the implementation of the various substantive provisions of the TFA; there is need to improve coordination between public authorities within and between countries in particular to build on progress achieved in aligning working days and hours as well as alignment of procedures and formalities. LLDCs need support to identify capacity needs as well as develop trade facilitation implementation strategies and further call for enhanced technical, financial and capacity-building support on a sustainable basis to facilitate the implementation of the trade facilitation strategies by the LLDCs and transit countries. The support should also cover the development of both soft and hard infrastructure as well as strengthening of national and regional institutional arrangements.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

I would like to close on a note that, with no doubt Landlocked Developing Countries are facing extreme challenges and obstacles such as high transit cost, delay and long waiting time for exportation and importation, border delays, multiple clearance process and many more. It is also obvious that only transit neighbors and the synergy regional and global enabling environment of partnership and cooperation can play an important role and create a condition to improve the situation of landlocked developing countries.

At the end I reaffirm the commitment of Landlocked Developing Countries to play a vital role in international trade and their effortful contribution in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Thank you!

Ladies and Gentlemen!