Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to greet all participants and express my sincere appreciation for organization of this Inaugural Conference of the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries here, in hospitable Ulaanbaatar.

On behalf of my country, I heartily congratulate the Government of Mongolia on this remarkable occasion and wish the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries every success in its future endeavours.

Republic of Azerbaijan and Mongolia established diplomatic relations in 1992 and since then have enjoyed successful bilateral cooperation. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia, H.E. Damdin Tsogtbaatar visited Azerbaijan in March 2018 and as part of his visit the two countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan and Mongolia.

We believe that Mongolia's timely initiative on bringing landlocked developing countries together in a research institution will undoubtedly lead to the establishment of a unique platform for landlocked developing countries that assist them in search of joint solutions to shared problems.

Being a landlocked country, Azerbaijan is well familiar with challenges that this group of countries is commonly entangled in and therefore, continues to make efforts towards achieving inclusive growth and sustainable development since the adoption of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade of 2014-2024.

In accordance with this Programme our country has focused on development and implementation of a number of infrastructure projects of regional and sub-regional importance. Azerbaijan considers Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs as another tool to ensure country’s sustainable development and efficient integration into the global economy, as well as to break into strategic markets.

Based on UN Secretary General’s request in accordance with UN General Assembly resolution 71/239 in 2017 the Government of Azerbaijan submitted comprehensive information on the status of implementation of Vienna Programme of Action at the national level as per six priority areas of the Programme: fundamental transit policy issues; infrastructure development and maintenance; international trade and trade facilitation; regional integration and cooperation; structural economic transformation; means of implementation.

Despite global economic volatility, Azerbaijan further continues its reforms on trade facilitation and transit-related measures, as well as advancement of transport and energy infrastructure as well as ICT.

Located at the crossroad of East-West and North-South international transport corridors, Azerbaijan has managed to become a pioneer in the region in initiating and enabling a number of strategic projects, such as Astara (Azerbaijan) - Astara (Iran) railway connection, Baku-Tbilisi-Kars.
railway project, Baku International Sea Trade Port Complex, New Terminal of Heydar Aliyev International Airport and 5 other international airports located in the regions of Azerbaijan.

The new law on the establishment of Alat Free Economic Zone represents another priority of Azerbaijan’s policy aimed at strengthening its position as a regional logistics and transportation hub and create a multi-vector transport infrastructure.

Meanwhile, Azerbaijan has been successful in becoming one of the key players and investors in energy infrastructure projects in the South Caucasus region and beyond. Through initiating and implementing sustainable energy projects Azerbaijan has established itself as a reliable energy supplier and become a vital bridge between Asia and Europe (Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline (BTC), South Caucasus Pipeline (SCP), Trans Anatolian Pipeline (TANAP) and Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP)).

Azerbaijan also emerges as an important ICT transit hub of the region, especially through the perspective implementation of Trans-Eurasian Information Super Highway (TASIM) project which is supported by relevant UN General Assembly resolutions and that will help to build broadband connectivity, promote development of ICT infrastructure and e-commerce across Eurasia and will further contribute to UN’s bridging the digital divide initiative.

My country has successfully accomplished Millennium Development Goals with the aim of timely and effective achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and implementation of 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

The National Coordination Council for Sustainable Development was established in my country in order to streamline the relevant activities for achievement of SDGs and to ensure better coordination among all involved stakeholders. The Council is chaired by Deputy Prime Minister and this factor is another proof of the importance the Republic of Azerbaijan attaches to effective implementation of the SDGs.

In this context I should especially note that at the High-Level Political Forum held in New York on 10-19 July 2017 Azerbaijan presented its first Voluntary National Review (VNR) on implementation of the SDGs in the country sharing its experience gained and future plans. Besides, on 25-26 October 2018 the Government plans to convene “Baku Forum on Sustainable Development” with UN Country Office to discuss the means of implementation of the national SDG Agenda.

Bearing in mind the crucial role of development partners and multilateral organizations in supporting the efforts of landlocked developing countries to achieve SDGs and targets set in Vienna Action Plan and 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, Azerbaijan looks forward to further cooperate with UN and UN Specialized Agencies to benefit from international experience on successful implementation of abovementioned projects.

Having in mind an importance of sharing experience, know-how, research and development and having an interest to further deepen the cooperation with landlocked developing countries Azerbaijan is interested in getting actively engaged in the activities of the Think Tank. At the same time, we hope that this institution will further enhance friendly relations between our countries both on bilateral and multilateral platforms. In this regard, Azerbaijan is keen to join the Think Tank and final internal procedures are underway to this end in our country.

I once again express my heartfelt congratulations to our Mongolian colleagues and wish you all a fruitful conference.

Thank you for your attention!