MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

Annual Ministerial Meeting of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries

New York, 28 September 2018

We, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), have met at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, on 28 September 2018, on the occasion of the 73rd session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, and have held our deliberations under the theme "Revitalizing partnerships to enhance the implementation of the VPoA and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development",

Recognizing that the lack of territorial access to the sea, aggravated by remoteness from world markets and high transit costs and risks, continue to impose serious constraints on export earnings, private capital inflow and domestic resource mobilization and therefore adversely affects the overall sustainable development of LLDCs,

Recalling the Vienna Programme of Action is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its full implementation is fundamental to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by LLDCs and ensuring that no one is left behind, further reiterate that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, including the means of implementation, are universal, indivisible and interlinked,

Welcoming the UN General Assembly resolution 72/232 that calls for convening of a Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Vienna Programme of Action no later than December 2019,

Welcoming the following; the outcome of the 2018 Follow-up and review of the Financing for Development; the Ministerial Declaration of the 2018 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development; the Ministerial declaration adopted at the Ministerial Meeting of the LLDCs held during the Eleventh WTO Ministerial Conference; the Ministerial Declaration adopted at the Ministerial Meeting of LLDCs on Trade and Transport held in Astana, Kazakhstan; as well as the Ulaanbaatar Declaration adopted at the Inaugural Conference of the International Think Tank for LLDCs held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

Declare as follows;

1. Take note of the Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs for the Decade 2014-2024;

2. Stress the importance of fostering strong synergy and coherence at all levels in the implementation, follow-up, and review of the Vienna Programme of Action with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Addis Ababa Action Agenda and other development processes including the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the Nairobi Maafikiano;

3. Take note of the progress that LLDCs have made on the SDGs and express concern that LLDCs as a group are still faced with developmental challenges that limit the progress as reflected by the declining annual growth rate of real GDP. We stress that priority attention
and support should be given to LLDCs in the implementation of the SDGs and in follow-up processes;

4. **Call upon** all LLDCs, transit developing countries, development partners, United Nations System, the private sector and other stakeholders to further strengthen their efforts to accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in LLDCs. We stress that collective action can promote policy integration, facilitate inclusive partnerships and provide support for achieving sustainable development and inclusive growth;

5. **Re-affirms** the importance of strengthening Resident Coordinators in the context of United Nations Development System (UNDS) reform and stress that the UNDS should accord high priority to the economic sectors and productive capacity building in LLDCs and should enhance support to LLDCs in their efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals and their development objectives;

6. **Underscore** that the critical role of Resident Coordinators in ensuring that the goals and priorities set out in the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs and the SDGs are mainstreamed into national development plans and strategies in LLDCs and transit countries;

7. **Underscore** the principle of national ownership and we continue to make concerted efforts to mobilize additional domestic public resources but large gaps in resource mobilization remains. We call on the development partners to enhance official development assistance to LLDCs in predictable, reliable and sustainable manner. We welcome the contribution of the South-South Cooperation to the development of LLDCs and stress that South-South Cooperation is a complement to, and not a substitute for, North-South cooperation;

8. **Recognize** the crucial role of deeper regional integration in the development of LLDCs by improving transit transport connectivity and ensuring greater intraregional trade, common regulatory policies, border agency cooperation and harmonized customs procedures to expand regional markets;

9. **Stress** that investment into quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, connectivity, transportation, water and sanitation, as well as ICTs are important for LLDCs to improve their competitiveness and fully integrate into the global economy, however the magnitude of resources required is beyond the capacity of LLDCs. We therefore call upon bilateral and multilateral development partners to provide enhanced assistance towards the development and maintenance of sustainable and resilient infrastructure in LLDCs. We also call for support to the LLDCs and transit countries in developing bankable implementable infrastructure projects that are financially viable, environmentally friendly and accepted by the local communities;

10. **Note with concern** that more than 48% of LLDCs’ population currently live without electricity. We will strive to achieve policies, regulatory and institutional frameworks that promote sustainable energy transition. We call for innovative partnerships between development partners, UN system and other international and regional organisations to support accelerated universal access, renewable energy and energy efficiency development;
11. **Concerned** that LLDCs’ share of global merchandise trade remains below one per cent of the global levels. We reaffirm our commitment to continue to intensify our efforts to build productive capacities, pursue structural economic transformation, industrialization, value-addition and encourage export diversification;

12. **Call** upon development partners to provide stronger support to LLDCs to build their trade and supply-side capacity including through enhancing Aid for Trade. We further call on the UN system and other international and regional organizations to enhance support to LLDCs to build their productive capacity;

13. **Underline** the need to ensure that LLDCs’ interests are given due consideration in the WTO to facilitate the integration of LLDCs into the global trade and welcome initiatives which will support greater and more effective participation of LLDCs in international trade;

14. **Note** with concern the increase in the adoption of protectionist measures by major trading partners. This situation can further marginalize LLDCs from global trade. We call on the WTO Members to preserve the multilateral trade system and resist all forms of protectionism to promote common prosperity;

15. **Encourage** LLDCs and transit countries that have not yet ratified the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and have not yet notified their category C measures and their capacity needs to do so and take advantage of the technical assistance opportunities. We also call on the development partners, the private sector and UN system and other international and regional organizations to enhance support to LLDCs and transit countries to facilitate the implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement;

16. **Welcome** capacity building activities organized by WTO, UN-OHRLLS, UNCTAD, WCO, World Bank and other partners provided to LLDCs and transit countries to facilitate rapid and effective implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, including the workshop on Transit to be held in Geneva in October 2018 in the margins of the Trade Facilitation Committee and the planned regional workshops on enhancing border cooperation. We encourage the WTO and partners to ensure wider participation of LLDCs and transit countries. We also call on the WTO and other relevant international and regional organizations to enhance assistance to LLDCs in the areas identified as requiring assistance in their notifications in particular, in the areas of institutional procedures, legislative and regulatory framework, ICT and needs assessment;

17. **Underscore** the significance of international transport corridors for reducing trade costs and promoting regional sustainable development, and request for strengthening of the role of economic corridors, corridor management organizations, sub-regional and inter-regional arrangements;

18. **Encourage** LLDCs to continue to build conducive business environment for private sector development. We call on development partners and international organizations to provide assistance to LLDCs to further strengthen their business environment and build the capacity of the Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises to participate in international trade;
19. **Commit** to continue promoting conducive policies to attract foreign direct investment that leads to promote trade as well as sustainable development of LLDCs. We call on development partners to provide greater support to the foreign direct investment -seeking efforts of LLDCs. We also call on the UNCTAD, UN-OHRLLS, UNIDO, United Nations Commission on International Trade Law, and other international and regional organisations to provide capacity building support to LLDCs to develop more focused policies, strategies and mechanisms;

20. **Recognize** that the growth in e-commerce provides international trade opportunities including new market opportunities for LLDCs. We call on UN-OHRLLS, UNCTAD and partners to undertake studies on how to promote e-commerce in LLDCs;

21. **Recognize also** that integration of LLDCs into the global and regional value chains can facilitate export diversification and industrial development. We call on WTO, UNCTAD, UNIDO, Common Fund for Commodities, World Bank, UNDP, ITC, UN-OHRLLS, regional economic commissions, and development partners, to provide assistance to LLDCs to strengthen their capacity to participate in regional and global value chains;

22. **Further recognize** that an efficient and productive services sector will contribute significantly to productivity growth and the overall competitiveness of LLDCs’ economies. In that regard, we affirm our commitment to build regulatory and institutional frameworks to strengthen our services sector and we call on international organizations to support LLDCs to develop their services sectors;

23. **Concerned** that LLDCs are disproportionately affected by the adverse impacts of climate change, desertification, land degradation, drought, floods, including glacial lakes outburst floods and other natural disasters due to their location, level of development, and greater reliance on climate sensitive sectors like agriculture. We stress the importance of continued support from international cooperation on adaptation and mitigation efforts and on strengthening resilience. We further stress the necessity of adequate and predictable financial resources from a variety of sources, including public and private ones, and stress that LLDCs should be accorded greater access to the UN Green Climate Fund and technical assistance to have beneficial access to the Fund;

24. **Recognize** LLDCs’ efforts to promote building of resilient societies through Disaster Risk Reduction. We welcome the key outcomes of the Central Asia and South Caucasus Sub Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction held in June 2018 in Armenia and the Asian Ministerial Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction held in July 2018 in Mongolia;

25. **Recognize** that large data gaps persist in the LLDCs, particularly as concerns disaggregated data, and that significant efforts are required to strengthen national statistical systems. We call on increased support of all types and from all sources, including capacity-building and technical support to LLDCs, to strengthen their national statistical systems;

26. **Look** forward to the convening of the 2019 High Level Political Forum under the theme “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”. We stress that the outcome of the Forum should take into account LLDCs issues;
27. **Recognize** the significant potential of multilateral development banks and other international development banks in financing sustainable development and providing know-how to the LLDCs and call on them to enhance their support especially towards infrastructure development;

28. **Welcome** the inauguration of the International Think Tank for LLDCs on 11 June 2018 and we encourage the International Think Tank for LLDCs to undertake research and capacity development for the LLDCs and to strengthen research collaboration with relevant international organizations including UN-OHRLLS, UNCTAD, UNDP, WTO and others, and with research institutions, think tanks, and other stakeholders on all the 6 priority areas of the Vienna Programme of Action and foster coherence in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action with the Sustainable Development Goals;

29. **Call upon** the Member States, United Nations system organizations and other stakeholders to provide voluntary contributions to the International Think Tank;

30. **Urge** all LLDCs that have not yet ratified the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of an International Think Tank for LLDCs to do so;

31. **Underscore** the importance of concluding modalities resolution for the Midterm Review of the Vienna Programme of Action as soon as possible;

32. **Underscore** that the midterm review should be preceded by thematic and pre-conference events that are in line with the priorities of the Vienna Programme of Action and recent developments relevant to the LLDCs development agenda;

33. **Stress** that UN-OHRLLS, as the focal point, in accordance with the General Assembly resolution, should undertake the necessary preparations, mobilise and coordinate the active involvement of the United Nations system organizations to ensure inclusive participation;

34. **Emphasize** that the outcome of the midterm review should be ambitious, action oriented, and concise and make renewed efforts to accelerate the implementation of Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development including eradication of poverty in LLDCs to ensure that no one is left behind;

35. **Welcome** with deep appreciation the generous contributions toward the convening of the midterm review received from the Governments of the Peoples Republic of China, Republic of India, the Republic of Kazakhstan, and Austria;

36. **Encourage** active participation at a high level of all States Members of the United Nations, in particular landlocked and transit developing countries and donor countries, as well as of the United Nations system and international and regional organizations and other relevant stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector in the midterm review;

37. **Note** the ongoing national and regional-level preparations that will make important contributions to the Midterm Review and call upon the Regional Commissions for their support in the organization of the regional review meetings;

38. **Encourage** Member States to conclude, at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, the negotiations on the draft outcome document in advance of the Midterm Review;
39. **Request** the Secretary-General of the United Nations to undertake all necessary measures to provide necessary resources to carry out the tasks related to the preparation of the Midterm Review of the Vienna Programme of Action;

40. **Invite** development partners and the international financial and development institutions to make voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund established by the Secretary-General to support the activities related to the follow-up and the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, including for the purpose of assisting LLDCs in participating fully and effectively in the Midterm Review and the preparatory process;

41. **Appreciate** the important role played by UN-OHRLLS in coordination and follow-up on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, including coordination of the preparatory process for the midterm review;

42. **Express** our sincere recognition to the Government of the Republic of Paraguay, for the efforts undertaken in coordinating the Group’s activities in its capacity as the Chair of the Group of LLDCs.