Draft
Report of the 2017 Annual Ministerial Meeting of Landlocked Developing Countries

Held on 20 September 2017 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York
Summary
On 20 September 2017, the Foreign Ministers of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) held their 16th Annual Meeting in New York in the sidelines of the 72nd session of the General Assembly’s high-level general debate from 3:00 pm to 6:00 pm in conference room 6 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. Honourable Harry Kalaba, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Zambia chaired the Ministerial Meeting in his capacity as the Global Chair of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries.

The Meeting was centered on the theme “Accelerating the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. The meeting reviewed progress and identified challenges faced by the LLDCs in implementing the VPoA and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The meeting also provided an opportunity for Member States to share experiences and best practices.

The Meeting reviewed the progress that has been achieved in implementing the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They noted that despite the achievements made, more needs to be done to address the priority areas of the Vienna Programme of Action and the SDGs. Participants called for support to the LLDCs to enable them to implement the necessary actions to achieve the SDGs. In this regard they called for enhanced partnerships, with the transit countries, development partners, international organizations, international financial institutions and the private sectors in the implementation of the VPoA and the 2030 Agenda. The meeting also called for dedicated funding and facilities to support the infrastructure needs of the LLDCs.

The Meeting welcomed the entry into force of the WTO Trade facilitation Agreement and made a call to LLDCs and transit countries to expeditiously implement the agreement and for WTO members that have not yet done so to ratify the WTO Trade facilitation Agreement. Calls were also made for enhanced support to the LLDCs and transit countries to facilitate the implementation of the Agreement.

The Meeting also welcomed the entry into force of the Multi-lateral Agreement on the establishment of the International Think Tank on LLDCs and called for the speedy formalization of the Think Tank and for enhanced support for the Think Tank from UN agencies, development partners, relevant regional and international organizations.

The Meeting emphasized the importance of fostering strong synergy and coherence at all levels in the implementation, follow-up, and review of the VPoA with the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and other development processes including the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and others. They also underscored the need to undertake the midterm review of the Vienna Programme of action in accordance with the VPoA.

At the end of the meeting, Ministers of LLDCs adopted the Rules of Procedure and the Ministerial Declaration by LLDCs, which called for all stakeholders to work together to effectively implement the VPoA and the 2030 Agenda.
A. Introduction

1. The Government of the Republic of Zambia and Chair of the LLDC Group in collaboration with the United Nations Office of the High-Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS), organized the 2017 Annual Meeting of Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries that was held on 20 of September 2017, in New York. The Meeting was held in the sidelines of the 72nd session of the General Assembly’s high-level general debate. The Meeting was held from 3:00pm to 6:00pm in Conference Room 6 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

2. Honourable Harry Kalaba, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Zambia chaired the Ministerial Meeting in his capacity as the Global Chair of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries.

B. Attendance

3. The meeting was attended by delegates, including Ministers and representatives, of the following LLDCs, and transit countries: Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Mongolia, Nepal, Niger, Paraguay, South Sudan, Turkmenistan, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Chile and Namibia and representatives from UNDP and the UN-OHRLLS.

4. The complete list of participants is presented in section I.

C. Opening Session

5. The meeting was officially opened by H.E. Honourable Harry Kalaba, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Zambia, in his capacity as Chair of the Group of the LandLocked Developing Countries. Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, UN Deputy Secretary-General also presented an opening statement.

6. In his opening remarks, H.E. Honourable Harry Kalaba, expressed the gratitude of the LLDC Group to the Deputy Secretary General for attending the meeting and also congratulated Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu on her appointment as the new Under Secretary General and High Representative for UN-OHRLLS. He also expressed the group’s gratitude to Mr. Gyan C. Acharya for his commitment to the work of the Group during his tenure as Under Secretary General and High Representative for UN-OHRLLS.

7. He indicated that the Ministerial Meeting offered an opportunity to review progress and identify challenges faced by the LLDCs in implementing the key development agendas, in particular the VPoA and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, amongst others. He highlighted that the meeting also provided an opportunity to agree on common positions and actions to address the challenges of the LLDCs.
8. He pointed out that the LLDCs are still faced with major obstacles to their development and he highlighted that high transport and trade costs, reliance of the LLDCs on the export of commodities with very low value addition and technology content are some of the challenges faced by the LLDCs. In view of these challenges, he called for enhanced partnerships, including with the transit countries, development partners, international organizations, international financial organizations and the private sectors in the implementation of the VPoA and the 2030 Agenda. He also emphasized the importance of mainstreaming the VPoA and the 2030 Agenda into the national development strategies to facilitate their implementation.

9. He thanked the LLDCs who have ratified the Agreement on the Establishment of the International Think Tank for LLDCs thus bringing it into force and he called for the speedy formalization of the International Think Tank. He encouraged the LLDCs who had not ratified the Agreement to do so and he further invited all the relevant UN agencies, development partners, relevant regional and international organizations to support the Think Tank. He also called for expeditious implementation of the WTO Trade facilitation Agreement and encouraged the LLDCs as well as the transit countries that have not ratified the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement to do so. He called for enhanced support to the LLDCs and transit countries to facilitate the implementation of the Agreement.

10. In her remarks, **Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, the UN Deputy Secretary General** expressed her gratitude for participating in the Ministerial Meeting of the Group of the LLDCs and thanked the Republic of Zambia for their leadership as the Global Chair of the Group and for advocating for the LLDCs at different forums.

11. She informed the meeting that as the UN transitioned from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals, good results were achieved. She however pointed out that the progress had not been even across regions, within countries, between the sexes, and among people of different ages, ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds.

12. She highlighted that the vision of the 2030 Agenda is to eradicate poverty, address climate change and build peaceful, inclusive societies for all – with a particular emphasis on women, youth and those left furthest behind. In this regard, she indicated that to achieve the vision there is need to ensure all key stakeholders are able to fully and effectively work to achieve the SDGs at a much faster rate and at much larger scale. She also pointed out that implementing the 2030 Agenda will require bold and transformative actions. She further highlighted that the 2030 Agenda places renewed emphasis on countries in special situations, including addressing the special needs of LLDCs, and the Vienna Programme of Action is recognized as an integral part of the 2030 Agenda.

13. She noted that as a group, the LLDCs continue to have mixed results on key development indicators, such as economic growth and trade and that they remain highly vulnerable, with the challenges of their geography compounded by other pressures, such as climate change, desertification, land degradation and drought.
She further pointed out that central to the development of the LLDCs will be implementation of the Paris Agreement. She indicated that the UN System supported countries in identifying and declaring their climate targets in the lead-up to the Paris Agreement. She emphasized that the priority now should be to scale this process up and accelerate actions to achieve country targets.

14. She highlighted that the Climate Summit in 2019 will provide momentum for increased ambition. She also indicated that the financing requirements for realizing the SDGs and the Paris Agreement are considerable and that the Addis Ababa Action Agenda provides the financing framework and a blueprint for global cooperation. She emphasized the importance of additional investments to implement many of the SDG priority areas. She further emphasized the need for the LLDCs to improve their productive capacities and their transit systems to be able to achieve global goals. She called for enhance regional integration and participation in global trade, strengthened governance and the need to forge deeper regional and global partnerships.

15. She also emphasized the significant role of the development banks in scaling up contributions to sustainable development financing. She further noted the important role of the private sector in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and called for the need to establish equitable and balanced partnerships with the private sector to ensure that all financing becomes sustainable and contributes to the SDGs. She emphasized the need to find approaches where the private sector are active agents of change for SDG action by embedding social and environmental factors in their investment decisions and supply chains.

16. She also pointed out the importance of disaggregated data in monitoring the SDGs and she also emphasized the need to build the capacity of national statistic systems and improving data availability. She further emphasized the need to explore and harness the powers of new technologies and big data. She noted the need for real time information to support evidence-based policy-making and ensure the voices and experiences of people are considered.

17. On Gender, she emphasized the advancement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as an outcome of and an enabler for the whole 2030 Agenda. She underlined that the systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the implementation of the Agenda is therefore crucial. She informed that the United Nations is committed to assisting on all these issues hence the Secretary-General had instituted reform of the development system to promote better delivery at country level.

18. In conclusion, she congratulated the LLDC Group for reaching the required ratifications needed for bringing the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of an International Think Tank for the LLDCs into force. She pointed out that the establishment of the International Think Tank will help to strengthen the collective voice of the LLDCs at the global level, including at the UN, by providing high quality research and policy advice. She pledged the full commitment of the Secretary-General and her own to serving the needs of the most vulnerable Member States. She further pledged to continue to work closely with the LLDC Group in pursuit of their sustainable prosperity.
D. Keynote Statements

Keynote statements were made by Professor Jeffrey Sachs, Director of the Earth Institute, Columbia University; H.E. Mr. Munkh-Orgil Tsend, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia; Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and Mr. Tegegnework Gettu, Under-Secretary-General and Associate Administrator, United Nations Development Program.

19. Professor Jeffrey Sachs, Director of the Earth Institute, Columbia University, in his keynote statement acknowledged the challenges faced by LLDCs in integrating into the global trading system, given their long distance from seaports. He emphasized the importance of modern information technology as a game changer for the LLDCs, since it transcends physical trade and makes it possible for any country to be part of the global information system. He explained that ICTs and internet in particular can facilitate provision of health, education and other services as well as facilitate trade in services and that while the cost of the necessary infrastructure is high, it is not comparable to the high cost of trade. He stressed that not connecting to the global internet represents a missed opportunity and urged that effective internet connectivity should be a strategic priority of the LLDCs.

20. He also noted the potential of the plentiful land areas in LLDCs for producing solar power and for LLDCs to become major exporters of clean energy to other parts of the world. He called for planning and financing of such bold projects that are now possible with new technologies. He noted that LLDCs are typically grouped in regions and urged new thinking on major regional scale projects. He emphasized that there are big opportunities in today’s world, mentioning China’s Belt and Road Initiative as a strategic, positive and well-thought out initiative to connect Europe and Asia, with great benefits for the LLDCs in the region to become critical hubs and take advantage of new infrastructure.

21. He suggested that the focus of the Vienna Programme of Action on transit, infrastructure and trade are important, but that new creative ideas in terms of ICT, new industries, renewable energies and large scale regional projects should be explored. He informed the meeting that the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, a network of universities established to help countries achieve the SDGs and led by himself, is at the LLDC Group’s disposal to undertake research and analysis on various energy, ICT and other practical options and solutions for sustainable development.

22. In his statement, H.E. Mr. Munkh-Orgil Tsend, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia announced that the ten ratifications required for the entry into force of the UN Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of an International Think Tank (ITT) for LLDCs have been received and the Agreement will enter into force on 6 October. He expressed appreciation to the Governments of those countries that ratified the Agreement and urged other LLDCs to do the same. He gave a brief history of the ITT, from the initial idea proposed by President of
Mongolia in 2006, to GA resolution 64/214 welcoming the establishment of ITT in Ulaanbaatar, and endorsement by the 9th Annual Ministerial Meeting of LLDCs held on 24 September 2010. He noted that the ITT started active operations under its interim management scheme since 2012 with the financial contribution of US$1 Million provided by the Government of Mongolia. He noted that the research agenda of the ITT so far included topics such as trade facilitation, multilateral trade negotiations, transit transport, ICT development and disaster resilience and ongoing work on economic diversification.

23. He informed the meeting that the ITT, together with OHRLLS will organize a high-level luncheon event for LLDCs on 6 October, preceded by a joint press conference. In terms of next steps, he highlighted that the first meeting of the Board of Governors will be organized in first quarter of 2018 and invited the Governments of those countries that ratified the Agreement and those in the process of joining to appoint person of high standing known for their commitment and contribution to the development of LLDCs for the Board of Governors. He also noted that the inaugural meeting of the ITT will also be organized in June 2018 in Mongolia. He stressed that in addition to its terms of reference, the ITT can also help maximize the efficiency of coordinated efforts for the effective implementation of the VPoA, the SDGs and the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement; avoid duplication; enhance sharing of best practices; provide a platform for LLDCs at international fora; mobilize assistance from the donor community and present a portal and digital library of research papers and information on issues of interest to the LLDCs. He reaffirmed commitment of Mongolia and the Interim Secretariat of the ITT towards smooth transition into full operationalization of the ITT, in particular in view of the immense challenges of LLDCs.

24. The Minister also briefly highlighted activities that Mongolia has been undertaking to implement the VPoA, including establishing a mechanism of coordination and cooperation, including Investment and Research Centre, for the development of Russian-China-Mongolia tripartite economic corridor as part of the Belt and Road Initiative. He also mentioned that recently Mongolia and Russia initialized a Transit Transport Agreement that will provide Mongolia with concessional tariffs for its export products transiting through the Russian railways.

25. In her statement, Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ʻUtoikamanu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative, noted that it was the third year of implementing the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the decade 2014-2024 and the good news is that progress can be noticed. However she pointed out that LLDCs continue to face development challenges associated with their geography. She noted that as a group, the LLDCs have experienced a decline in annual GDP growth from 6.9% in 2013 to 2.6% in 2016. She also indicated that trends in the value-added of agriculture and manufacturing sectors as a percentage of GDP in the LLDCs have been declining underscoring the need to build productive capacities and nurture industrialization. She pointed out that steady improvement was recorded in reducing under-five mortality rates; stemming HIV, malaria and tuberculosis, yet, average rates for LLDCs remain above the average of the developing world. She underscored that
although the proportion of the population living below the international poverty line has declined since 2002, poverty remain at about 30 per cent. She highlighted that these few indicators show the urgency to scale-up efforts if LLDCs are to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030 in line with the declaration and the SDGs.

26. Ms. ‘Utoikamanu further provided highlights on the progress made in implementing the six priority areas of the VPoA based on the Report of the Secretary General. She stressed that transit policy issues remain at the top of the agenda and encouraged WTO Member States that have not yet done so to consider ratifying the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. She indicated that efforts are underway to expand and upgrade road and rail transport infrastructure in all the regions with LLDCs, however, missing links remain and every effort must be made to close them while also not omitting to take care of maintaining the infrastructure that exists. She also called for more efforts to improve energy and ICT infrastructure.

27. The USG expressed concern that the LLDCs remain marginalized in global trade as the group accounted for only 0.88% of global merchandise exports in 2015 declining from 1.2% recorded for 2014. She also noted that LLDCs exports remain highly concentrated on just a few commodities making them extremely vulnerable to commodity price volatility. She pointed the sad fact that ODA flows to LLDCs decreased from $26.1 billion in 2014 to $24.8 billion in 2015 yet ODA remains the main source of external financing for many LLDCs, accounting for more than 10% of GNI in 8 of the LLDCs. She also indicated concern that foreign direct investment flows to LLDCs in 2015 decreased by 18% from $29.7 billion in 2014. And stressed that there is need for the international community to find ways of working, partnering and supporting better all LLDCs to attract and retain foreign direct investment.

28. She concluded by stressing the need for more collaboration and more partnering to ensure meaningful support towards improving the lives of the 480 million people living in LLDCs. She highlighted what OHRLLS will be working on to facilitate implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. She congratulated the LLDCs for the entry into force of the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of the International Think Tank for LLDCs and pledged OHRLLS’ support. She also pledged her personal commitment to make every effort to ensure that OHRLLS continues to provide the LLDCs with relevant substantive support.

29. In his statement, Mr. Tegegne Woreda Gettu, Under-Secretary-General and Associate Administrator, United Nations Development Program, recognized the tremendous challenges and opportunities involved in promoting inclusive sustainable development in landlocked developing countries. He mentioned that there are 32 LLDCs and 17 are also classified in the Least Developed Country category and facing severe structural impediments to sustainable development, such as high economic and environmental shocks and vulnerabilities. The level of development in these countries is, on average, 20 per cent lower than what it would be were they not landlocked and their share of global exports was only 0.9 per cent in 2016.
30. He listed two possible reasons for this problem. The first one is the inability of landlocked countries to effectively integrate in the global trading system and the reduced international competitiveness and discouraged investment due to landlockedness. Furthermore, geographical isolation is compounded by structural economic, social and environmental challenges that contribute to low levels of human development. He also pointed out that there are some welcome signs: The proportion of population living below the international poverty line of $1.90 per day in LLDCs has declined from 48.6% in 2002 to 30.5% cent in 2012. The performance of road corridors as indicated by transit speeds has also significantly improved. In this regard, he stressed that promoting connectivity and accelerated transit policy; enhanced market access and trade facilitation; improved regional integration; accelerated infrastructural development; faster economic diversification and industrialization; and improved climate change mitigation and adaptation are central to achieving the SDGs. And focusing concessional financing, technical support and partnership on these issues is vital to making progress on the SDGs.

31. Mr. Tegegneework Gettu also noted that UNDP continues to support the global integrated agenda for sustainable development and the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA), Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA), and SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA). UNDP is working to reinforce these positive developments and mitigate the adverse impacts of geographic location in the context of national development priorities. UNDP is also focusing on integrated support to accelerating the achievement of SDGs including public and private partnerships that improve the flow of technical and financial expertise to landlocked developing countries towards promoting inclusive and sustainable structural transformation. He concluded by indicating that UNDP will continue to develop global and country level targeted assistance to LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS in support of their skills, knowledge and capacity to transform and their own efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

E. Interactive Debate

32. Ministers and high-level officials representing landlocked developing countries and transit countries delivered statements during the interactive debate.

33. Hon. Mr. Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal, noted that LLDCs face multiple issues relating to connectivity, accessibility, and competitiveness. Nepal believes that only ensuring the full, timely and effective implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA) would let LLDCs get out of the plight. He assured that in implementing the VPoA, full synergy and coherence should be maintained with the Sendai Framework, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the 2030 Agenda, and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

34. He gave an example that Landlockedness makes development 20% costlier and doubles the price for export compared to their transit neighbors. In this way, the focus should be to bridge infrastructure gap between the LLDCs and their transit neighbors. He also pointed out that timely maintenance for transport
infrastructures is as important as developing infrastructures itself. He stressed that only enabling their meaningful participation in global value chains and international trade, 'land-locked' can be turned 'land-linked'. For this to happen, international support measures, not just ODA but also partnerships, technology transfer, and investments need to be increased.

35. Hon. Mr. Krishna Bahadur Mahara mentioned that Nepal has mainstreamed the 2030 Agenda into its national plans and programmes. The current development plan accords high priority to infrastructure development and connectivity. He nevertheless underlined that his country endeavors to utilize various regional forums to enhance bilateral, sub-regional and regional cooperation in facilitating transit and transport. He finally concluded that LLDCs must accelerate their efforts towards achieving the goals of VPoA and 2030 Agenda, which requires commitment, partnership, cooperation and concerted effort from all sides.

36. In his statement, H.E. Mr. Kairat Abdrakhmanov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, stressed that it is the responsibility of the LLDCs to integrate the VPoA, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Addis Ababa Action Agenda, Sendai Framework, the Paris Climate Change Agreement programs into their national development priorities and strategies to enhance progress on sustainable development. He noted the commitment of his country to implement the VPoA with the same commitment that his country had with the Almaty Programme of Action for LLDCs. He also indicated that through implementation of the VPoA, the country aims to achieve two interrelated goals of (1) reducing the most limiting aspects of being a landlocked state, and (2) fulfilling their ambitious national goal of joining the top 30 developed countries of the world by 2050. He stressed that his country stands steadfast to share knowledge, best practices and lessons learned in the fields of energy, health, education, agriculture, scientific technology and infrastructure development, to withstand unpredictable global markets.

37. Minister Abdrakhmanov highlighted the LLDC-specific actions in the Vienna Program of Action that have already been implemented as part of President Nazarbayev’s 100 Concrete Step Program. He noted that his country specifically targeted to increase the annual transit of cargo containers seven times to 2 million containers and air passenger traffic 4 times to 1.6 million passengers annually by 2020. This will increase earnings from transit by 5.5 times - up to $ 4 billion a year. On transit and infrastructure development, he indicated that his country is focused on addressing inefficiencies in its transport networks. He noted that his country has committed resources to streamline and upgrade road, rail, airport and pipeline infrastructure and has also addressed issues related to bureaucratic procedures at the borders by modernizing customs operations as well as eliminating border controls.

38. He expressed his country’s full support to the Belt and Road Initiative of People’s Republic of China, of building land and sea transport corridors stretching from China to Europe and beyond as the overland routes traverse their way through Kazakhstan thus supporting his country’s endeavors to develop economic hub at the heart of Eurasia. He also briefed the meeting about EXPO 2017 that his country hosted on the theme “Future Energy” from June 10 to
September 10, 2017 and indicated that an International Centre for the Development of Green Technologies and Investment Projects under UN auspices is being established utilizing the EXPO’s existing infrastructure. He reiterated his country’s commitment to continue to support the LLDCs’ transition to a green economy and address the long-term impact of climate change.

39. In his statement, H.E. Mr. Eladio Loizaga, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Paraguay expressed his country’s commitment to the work of the Group both in New York and Geneva. He welcomed and congratulated Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu on her appointment as the new Under Secretary General and High Representative for UN-OHRLLS. He pointed out that the year 2017 was full of achievements. He highlighted that the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement entered into force following the ratification by the 2/3 of the WTO Members. He pointed out that the TFA contains provisions that will make it easier to facilitate the movement of goods, dispatch of goods easier, transit, cut red tape, make it easier for transit countries to comply, make LLDCs more competitive. He informed the meeting that Paraguay has established a national trade facilitation committee which comprises public authorities, executive arm of government, and private sector.

40. He also indicated that they aim to develop national strategic agenda of measures necessary to develop in the economic sphere. He expressed his country’s gratitude for the support given by the LLDCs during the election of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea where Paraguay was elected. He indicated that it was the first time that an LLDC member will hold such important position. He pledged that Paraguay will be representing the group with a sense of responsibility. He pointed out that the unique characters of LLDCs were acknowledged in the outcomes of the Financing for Development, High Level Political Forum, and Ocean Conference. He also expressed his gratitude for the 10th ratification of the Agreement on the establishment of the International Think Tank for LLDCs, which will bring the Agreement into force. He indicated that the Think Tank will provide research studies that the group can use. He also pointed out that it is important that the Group adopts their Rules of Procedure. He informed the meeting about the joint project they are undertaking with Brazil to implement SDGs 6 and 7 on water and energy, clean and renewable energy in partnership with UNDP.

41. In his statement, His Excellency Mr. Damcho Dorji, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bhutan, highlighted the national experience of Bhutan in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. He stressed in particular the economic goals within the Goals 7 to 10 as game changers for the group of LLDCs to enhance their productive capacity, transform their economies and to develop resilient and sustainable infrastructure. He emphasized that infrastructure development, under Priority 2 of Vienna Programme of Action and achievement of SDG 9 is critical for the LLDCs. While acknowledging that infrastructure development is capital intensive, he noted that the support of development partners, both bilateral and multilateral, and the private sector, is needed in this regard. The Minister stressed that it was imperative that the Group works to enhance its voice and participation in the Global Infrastructure Forum and explore possibilities of support and assistance through multilateral banks. He
noted that Bhutan has been pursuing public-private partnerships (PPPs) for infrastructure development since 2009, initiating PPP projects to build a Technology Park, Hydropower Project and a Multilevel Car Parking Facility.

42. On structural economic transformation and economic diversification, he emphasized that Bhutan places tremendous importance to the development of private sector as the engine of growth and source of employment, focusing on growth of Small and Medium Enterprise (SMEs) through for example setting up of a Rural Development Bank to promote small and cottage industries in rural areas. He called for sharing of experiences within LLDCs by bringing together different research institutions to undertake research on LLDC issues and acknowledged the important role of the International Think Tank for LLDCs. He informed the meeting that Bhutan was pursuing domestic parliamentary procedures and hoped to ratify the agreement soon.

43. On the UN reform initiatives of the Secretary General, he noted in particular the benefit of the reform of UN Development System and country level delivery in the LLDCs. In conclusion, he noted that efforts need to be stepped up to implement the Vienna Programme of Action. He called for continued assistance and support of development partners to complement national efforts to achieve transformational change, become land-linked, eradicate poverty and achieve prosperity.

44. **Hon. Dr Emmanuel Fabiano, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Malawi**, reiterated the need to support economic growth, which is essential to development and progress, particularly for LLDCs. He informed the meeting that Malawi was proud to be part of the Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA) in the Southern Africa region. Despite technological progress and growth, he mentioned that poverty remains one of many development concerns, and it has been exacerbated by climate change. Hon. Dr Emmanuel Fabiano indicated that Malawi has put in place financial and economic policies and strategies as well as various social development initiatives with the aim of enhancing trade and development. On the UN reform initiatives of the Secretary General, he believed the changes are necessary if the system is to better respond to global economic, social and political landscape. He finally underlined the importance of international trade and development, and financing for development. He indicated that ODA, FDI and technology transfer are going to play a pivotal role in pulling up those left behind, of whom landlocked countries are a part.

45. In his statement, **Mr. Moeketsi Majoro, Honourable Minister of Finance of the Kingdom of Lesotho**, noted that the Think Tank will be helpful to enhance the analytical capabilities of the LLDCs, provide organic home-grown research to cater for their specific needs and promote the interest of the LLDCs as well as strengthen their collective voice at the global level. He indicated that it was "regrettably" that the average GDP for LLDCs only increased at 3.7% in 2015, which is far from the expectations. He mentioned that Lesotho is making strides in domesticating and implementing the Vienna Program of Action as well as the SDGs. He also informed the meeting that presently Lesotho is currently undertaking a rapid integrated assessment in order to determine possible gaps in
both data and national policies.

46. Honourable Majoro stressed the importance of the role played by regional economic communities and transit neighbors in addressing cross border trade and transit problems. He called for support in institutional capacity-building in LLDCs and transit countries for the harmonization and standardization of customs and administrative procedures. Since insufficient coordination among border agencies and lack of transparency in trade-related rules are still challenges for many countries, he called for support and maintenance of transit networks on the basis of mutual interest between LLDCs and transit countries. He reiterated that resources should be provided towards enhancing productive capacity, including industrialization and elimination of other supply side constraints even as the trade facilitation support is stepped up. Finally, he appealed for enhanced, predictable, reliable and sustainable flow of aid to meet both regular climate change development challenges.

47. H.E. Mr. Thongphane Savanphet, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, pointed out that the implementation of the six key priority areas had only obtained limited success and LLDCs continue to face enormous challenges. As a result, he said, LLDCs still have difficulties in fully entering into the regional and global trading system. He highlighted the achievements of the Lao PDR in the areas of economic integration, infrastructure development, and trade facilitation. He mentioned that the Lao PDR has invested various resources for integrating its economy into the regional and global cooperation frameworks, including physical infrastructure development such as roads and railways linking its national roads with the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks. At the same time, Lao PDR has been an active member in the ASEAN Economic Community and has participated in various free trade arrangements, which include trade in goods, trade in services and investment, with most of ASEAN’s dialogue partners as well as members of the World Trade Organization.

48. Mr. Thongphane Savanphet expressed his appreciation for the support from the immediate neighboring countries namely Viet Nam, Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar and China, and he hoped that such assistance and cooperation will be further enhanced so as to advance the implementation of the VPoA and other global development initiatives in the next decade. Finally, he called upon the international community, including transit countries, UN agencies, development partners, private sector and other stakeholders to continue supporting LLDCs in the implementation of the VPoA and other global development agendas.

49. In his statement, Amb. Mulugeta Zewdie, Director General of International Organizations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, noted that LLDCs continue to face specific development hurdles due to their geography. Poverty, the adverse impacts of climate change and funding gaps are serious developmental challenges to LLDCs. He strongly believes that LLDCs could realize inclusive and sustainable development with right national policies aligned with regional and international development frameworks. He highlighted that accelerating the timely and full implementation of the Vienna Program of Action is imperative to realize not only the
development aspirations of LLDCs but also the vision of leaving no one behind. He expressed his country’s hope that international support could have a lasting developmental impact if it is in harmony with national and regional policies and initiatives. He also indicated that he hoped that the Mid-Term Review of the Program would provide us with an excellent opportunity to review progress and gaps, and reaffirm global solidarity with LLDCs.

50. Amb. Zewdie mentioned that achievements had been made by Ethiopia. He noted that Ethiopia had been taking concrete actions anchored in poverty reduction and structural transformation to fully integrate the Vienna Program of Action into national development programs, such as the Growth and Transformation Plan. By pursuing comprehensive development policies and strategies, Ethiopia has continued to register rapid, broad-based and sustained economic growth; hence the initial implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda is encouraging. Ethiopia has implemented integrated rural development programs with significant progress in increasing agricultural production and productivity, in expanding social and physical infrastructures. He also pointed out that Ethiopia continued to implement a holistic urban development agenda, with particular emphasis on youth and women. On structural transformation, he noted that the Ethiopian government has been engaged in diversifying its economy by pursuing an ambitious industrial strategy with a vision of becoming one of the leading manufacturing hubs in Africa. Ethiopia has continued to launch eco-friendly industrial parks that have enabled it to attract domestic and foreign investment in line with our priorities.

51. Ethiopia is championing regional integration schemes and continues to harness the benefits of North-South, South-South and triangular partnerships. Ethiopia is also investing heavily on resilient and green infrastructures to enhance its global competitiveness. Mr. Zewdie underlined that he wanted to take this opportunity to renew the commitment of the Ethiopian government to redouble its endeavors to fully implement the Vienna Program of Action by drawing lessons from its current implementation. He finally reiterated that revitalized global partnership remains critical to address the multiple development challenges of LLDCs.

52. Ambassador Joey Bimha, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Zimbabwe read the statement of H.E. Mr. Simbarashe Mumbengegwi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Zimbabwe. In the statement, the Minister stressed that partnerships and deeper collaboration are important factors in the successful development of critical national infrastructure, facilitation of trade, promotion of regional cooperation and the achievement of the SDGs by the LLDCs. He noted that Zimbabwe recently commissioned work on the dualisation of the 897km Beitbridge to Chirundu highway which is an important part of Africa’s North-South transport corridor. He indicated that completion of this project fulfills the objectives of the VPoA.

53. On trade, Minister Mumbengegwi appreciated the support that his country has received from UNCTAD on capacity building to implement the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. He noted that his country is also implementing several initiatives to improve the business and investment environment including establishing Special Economic Zones through the Special Economic Zones Act.
that was passed in 2016. He informed the meeting that Zimbabwe is in the process of ratifying the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement.

54. **Ambassador Vahram Kazhoyan, Director of International Organizations Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia**, noted that integration of landlocked developing countries into the global economy is significant to their development. He assured that it is necessary to build trade-related infrastructure, technical and productive capacities in order to participate in trade in a fair and beneficial manner. Despite the problems and challenges that landlocked Armenia faces today, he mentioned, that Armenia keeps seeking effective ways for ensuring better quality life for its citizens. In particular, the improvements targeted at increasing the country’s competitiveness and the modernization of the economy, accentuating the shift toward a knowledge-based economy.

55. He stressed that closed borders, unresolved conflicts and continuing arms race are still the main challenges for Armenia, which are the hindrances for the perfect implementation of the SDGs. On infrastructure development, he mentioned that the development of information and communications technologies is one of the priorities of the Armenian Government. In this regard the country launched a number of programs and initiatives while anticipating the active involvement of donor organizations. He indicated that LLDCs need to be supported financially and technologically and stressed the importance of the cooperation with important financial institutions and Banks.

56. In his statement, **Mr. Boubakar Adamou, Ambassador, Director General Multilateral Relations of Niger**, pointed out that the result of implementation of the Vienna Program of Action and the 2030 Agenda in the majority of member countries was not up to expectations. He noted that Niger has taken into account the priorities of the Vienna Program in its 2012-2015 Economic and Social Development Plan and its successor (2017-2021), which is currently being finalized. During the implementation of the first Economic and Social Development Plan the Government initially undertook regulatory and tax reforms to improve the business climate and attract more investment. He indicated that from 2012 to 2015, the Government drafted and/or revised several legislative or regulatory texts, initiated the public-private partnership system and organized international round tables and fora to present to international investors the assets and opportunities offered by the economy Nigerian.

58. On foreign trade, he noted that reforms have been initiated to facilitate foreign trade. These include facilitating, simplifying formalities and procedures, reducing delays, red tape and abnormal practices in the marketing and export of our agro-pastoral products. The bill authorizing the ratification of the Economic Partnership Agreement between West Africa and the European Union was adopted. With regard to air transport, he indicated that the main activities include the creation of a national airline, the improvement of air services in Niger and the improvement of airport infrastructures and increased frequency of flights. In the field of telecommunications, the construction of the national backbone has made it possible to improve national coverage in fiber optics. The fiber optic line has increased from 550 km in 2011 to 1,750 km in 2015. Mr. Adamou remarked that despite the efforts made, much remains to be done, as the need for infrastructure and investment is enormous. He called on all partners to honor their commitments contained in international development finance frameworks, in particular the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. He underscored that development banks need to relax the conditionality of access to loans for LLDCs to enable them to carry out structuring projects for their economies. He also stressed that South-South cooperation should complement North-South cooperation, especially in the technical fields and the transfer of technology among developing countries.

59. In his statement, H.E. Adela Raz, Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Cooperation of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, underscored the importance of mainstreaming the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda into the national development strategies enhancing greater synergy and coherence between the activities of the Vienna Program of Action and that of other important development agenda. He put an emphasis on three important inter-connected priorities for LLDCs: Infrastructure development; Integration countries into regional and global value chains; and regional economic cooperation. He pointed out that Afghanistan plays a crucial role in regional and inter-regional connectivity. He mentioned that two important initiatives - the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA) and the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process - that have promoted progress in the area of regional cooperation. He indicated that the 7th Meeting of RECCA will be held in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. Moreover, two mega regional projects, namely the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan and India gas pipeline project and the Central Asia-South Asia electricity transmission line have also witnessed considerable progress. Afghanistan has also made in building of transit transport networks and digital connectivity.

60. Deputy Foreign Minister Raz underlined that, however, notwithstanding the development achieved, gaps in infrastructure, investment deficits and other barriers related to trade and transit still exist. Afghanistan will seek to reach common solutions to overcome challenges. He also noted that their investment promotion efforts will be directed towards diversification of fund mobilization to attract capital and investment from diverse private sector and public sources including the sovereign wealth funds, new regional funds and investment banks. Afghanistan is also working to address non-tariff barriers to trade across the region and to facilitate new business-to-business collaborative networks. He also mentioned that it is imperative for Afghanistan to expand cooperation, as well as
with other relevant groups and forums to realize their shared development goals.

61. Ambassador Sacha Llorenti Soliz, Permanent Representative of the Plurinational state of Bolivia to the United Nations, noted that LLDCs are the most vulnerable countries, who bear high transit costs and risks compared to coastal countries due to lack of territorial access to the sea and remoteness to world markets. Furthermore, LLDCs have to invest a lot of money on infrastructure for transportation.

62. He stressed that transit countries should make more contribution and help LLDCs address the complex and severe development challenges that they face because of their geographical disadvantages. He assured that the Vienna Programme of Action is integral to resolve the challenges and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

63. A representative of Chile noted that Chile is motivated to cooperate with LLDCs in order to accelerate the implementation of the VPoA. He stressed that Chile will always follow the United Nation’s Charter. He finally pointed out that Chile is willing to help the LLDCs to fully and successfully implement the VPoA and the 2030 Agenda.

F. Consideration and Adoption of the Rules of Procedure by LLDCs

64. At the end of the interactive debate, Honourable Harry Kalaba, Global Chair of the Group of LLDCs invited the members of the Group of the LLDCs to adopt the Rules of Procedure. There were no objections and the meeting adopted the Rules of Procedure included in annex 1.

G. Consideration and Adoption of the Draft Ministerial Declaration by LLDCs

65. Honourable Harry Kalaba, Global Chair of the Group of LLDCs invited the members of the Group of the LLDCs to adopt the Draft Ministerial Declaration. There were no objections and the meeting adopted the Ministerial Declaration which is in Annex 2.

H. Any Other Matter, Conclusion of the Meeting

66. Honourable Harry Kalaba, Global Chair of the Group of LLDCs, thanked the Ministers and all the participants for attending the meeting.

67. There being no further matters raised, Minister Harry Kalaba closed the Meeting.
I. List of Participants

1. **Afghanistan**
   - H.E. Adela Raz, Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Cooperation of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
   - Mr. Hassan Soroosh, Acting DG, Economic Cooperation Department, MoFA Afghanistan, mhy.soroosh@gmail.com

2. **Armenia**
   - Amb, Vahram Kazhoyan, Director of In International Organizations Department and HR Department of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, v.kazhoyan@mfa.am, yahram@rocketmail.com
   - Ms. Sofya Simonyan, s.simonyan@mfa.am

3. **Azerbaijan**
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5. **Bolivia**
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8. **Central African Republic**
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   - Mr. Michel Lenanguy, Counselor, michel.kenanguy@yahoo.fr

9. **Chile**
   - Ambassador Mr. Milenko Skoknic, Vice minister of Foreign Affairs.
   - Mr. Pablo Callis, Fourth Committee/Election Officer, Permanent Mission of Chile, to the United Nations, pcallis@minrel.gob.cl

10. **Ethiopia**
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- Mr. Asoka Rasphone, Director, UN Social Economic Affairs Division, Department of International Organizations, MoFA, Laos, asokamofa@gmail.com

13. **Lesotho**
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14. **Malawi**
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- Mr. Lot Dzonzi, the Permanent Mission of Republic of Malawi to the United Nations, lotdzonzi@gmail.com

15. **Mongolia**
- H.E. Mr. Munkh-Orgil Tsend, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia - The role of the International Think Tank for the LLDCs
- Ms. Gereltsetseg Baatarsuren, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Mongolia, newyork6@mfa.gov.mn

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17. **Niger**
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- Mr. Samadou Ousman, Counselor, Niger Permanent Mission to the UN,
18. **Paraguay**
- H.E. Mr. Eladio Loizaga, Minister of Foreign Affairs
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20. **Turkmenistan**
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21. **Zambia**
- Honourable Harry Kalaba, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Zambia, Global Chair of the Group of LLDCs
- Mr. Eliphas Chinyonga, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Assistant Director (International Organisations) elchinyonga@yahoo.com
- Mrs. Theresa Chipulu Luswili Chanda, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Zambia to the United Nations, theresachanda01@gmail.com

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**United Nations Executive Office of the Secretary General**
- Ms. Amina Mohammed, United Nations Deputy Secretary-General

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- Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS
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- Ms. Zenani Orengo, Advocacy Unit Intern, OHRLLS, guest1o@un.org
Annex 1.

Annex to the letter dated XX XXXXX 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Zambia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English]

Rules of Procedure of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries

1. The Group and its memberships

1.1. The Group of Landlocked Developing Countries is composed of 32 developing Member States of the United Nations that have no seacoast, as defined in article 124 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (see appendix for the list of Member States).¹

1.2. Any landlocked developing country, a Member State of the United Nations, that wishes to become a member of the Group shall do so by writing to the Group’s Chairperson and the Chairperson shall notify the Group accordingly.

1.3. The Group may grant observer status to other United Nations Member State that express interest in the work of the Group. Observer States may be invited to participate in formal meetings. The decisions on issues of importance to the group including the right to negotiate shall be reserved for its Member States.

2. Objective

2.1. The Group shall provide the forum for its member States to articulate and promote their collective economic interests, including, in particular, the effective implementation of the globally agreed goals, target and programmes of action related to the development of the LLDCs, in order to enhance their joint negotiating capacity on major international economic issues within the United Nations system, the World Trade Organization and all international and multilateral forums.

2.2. The attention of the Group shall be directed primarily at achieving the best terms for the Group in resolutions, declarations, plans of action and other decisions of the United Nations General Assembly, international summits, conventions and conferences. The Group shall try to obtain concessions, facilities and additional financial resources and technical assistance from transit developing countries, donor countries, the United Nations system and other international and regional development, economic, social and financial institutions.

¹ The Plurinational State of Bolivia underscores its maritime condition as stated in the declaration manifested in the United Nations Convention to the Law of the Sea.
3. **Decision-making**

3.1. The Group shall take decisions based on consensus\(^2\).

3.2. A presence of two thirds of the membership of the Group shall be required for the purposes of electing a new Bureau.

4. **Bureau, Chair and responsibilities**

4.1. The Group shall elect seven members of the Bureau from among the representatives of its members according to the following geographical distribution:

- Three representatives of member States from Africa
- Two representatives of member States from Asia
- One representative of member States from Eastern Europe
- One representative of member States from Latin America

4.2. The Group shall elect a Chairperson from among the Bureau members based on the principle of geographical rotation giving due regard to previous terms based on information provided by the Secretariat. In case that a Regional Group is unable to propose a candidate to serve as Chairperson, the next group in line shall propose a candidate, based on the principle of geographical rotation.

4.3 The Group shall elect a Vice Chairperson from among the Bureau Members. The Vice Chairperson shall act as the Chairperson during the absence of the Chairperson.

4.4. The election of the Bureau and the Chairperson shall be formalised during the annual Ministerial Meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Group of LLDCs.

4.5. The term of office of the Chairperson and Members of the Bureau shall begin on 1 January for a period of two years and shall end on 31 December.

4.6. The primary task of the Chairperson shall be to chair all meetings of the Group and coordinate the Group’s actions. The Chairperson shall act as spokesperson for the Group and represent the common views of the Group in the intergovernmental meetings of the United Nations system and all international and multilateral forums.

4.7. The Bureau may appoint any of its members as coordinators on specific substantive issues, such as, inter alia, international trade, financing for development and climate change.

4.8. The Bureau shall uphold and promote transparency and accountability of their actions during their tenure.

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\[^2\] Consensus means adoption of a decision without formal objections and vote; this being possible only when no delegation formally objects to a consensus being recorded, though some delegations may have reservations to the substantive matter at issue or to a part of it. - Based on the 1987 United Nations Juridical Yearbook, Chapter VI, p. 174
Visibility

4.9 The Chairperson shall develop a visibility and communication guidelines of the Group with the support of the UN-OHRLLS to effectively communicate the interests of the group to the international community to gain support for the Trust Fund aimed to carry out activities undertaken by UN-OHRLLS to effectively implement the globally agreed goals, targets and programmes of action related to the development of the LLDCs.

4.10. The visibility and communication guidelines shall be introduced at the beginning of the year for the consideration of the Group, and updated on an annual basis.

Annual report

4.11. The Chairperson shall present an annual report to the Group with the support of the UN-OHRLLS at the end of the year.

Calendar of Activities

4.12. The Chairperson shall present the Calendar of Activities to the Group for consideration at the beginning of each year.

Summary records

4.13. The Chairperson shall communicate to the Group summary minutes of the formal meetings.

Archives

4.14. The Chairperson shall designate a member from the Bureau to coordinate with the UN-OHRLLS to preserve and provide access to the records that document the activities of the Group of LLDCs.

5. Annual meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs

5.1. The annual meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries shall be convened, as appropriate, at the beginning of the regular session of the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York.

6. Meetings of ministers responsible for trade and transport infrastructure

6.1. Periodically, meetings of the ministers responsible for trade of the landlocked developing countries shall be convened, as appropriate, to consult on and coordinate the Group’s position on trade-related issues of interest to the Group, including the negotiations at the World Trade Organization.

6.2. Periodically, meetings of the ministers responsible for transport infrastructure of the landlocked developing countries shall be convened, as appropriate.

6.3. Ad hoc ministerial meetings of landlocked developing countries may be convened, as appropriate, to consult on the Group’s position on other development issues of major interest to the Group.
Appendix

Group of Landlocked Developing Countries: composition by region (as at September 2016)

Africa
1. Botswana
2. Burkina Faso
3. Burundi
4. Central African Republic
5. Chad
6. Ethiopia
7. Lesotho
8. Malawi
9. Mali
10. Niger
11. Rwanda
12. Swaziland
13. South Sudan
14. Uganda
15. Zambia
16. Zimbabwe

Asia
17. Afghanistan
18. Bhutan
19. Kazakhstan
20. Kyrgyzstan
21. Lao People’s Democratic Republic
22. Mongolia
23. Nepal
24. Tajikistan
25. Turkmenistan
26. Uzbekistan

Eastern Europe
27. Armenia
28. Azerbaijan
29. Republic of Moldova
30. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Latin America
31. Bolivia (Plurinational State of)
32. Paraguay

Observers to the Group
Switzerland (Geneva-based Group)
MINISTERIAL DECLARATION
Annual Ministerial Meeting of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries
New York, 20 September 2017

We, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), have met at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, on 20th September 2017, on the occasion of the 72nd session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, and have held our deliberations under the theme “Accelerating the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action 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 of LLDCs and therefore adversely affects their overall sustainable development,

Reaffirming also that Land-locked States shall have the right of access to and from the sea for the purpose of exercising the rights provided for in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, including those relating to the freedom of the high seas and the common heritage of mankind,

Recalling the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs for the Decade 2014-2024 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 the 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; as well as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda that is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement and also the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction,

Recalling also the Livingstone Call for Action for the Accelerated Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action Conference held in Livingstone, Zambia, in June 2015 that highlights key measures and initiatives required to accelerate implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action,

Recalling further the General Assembly resolutions 71/239 and 70/217 related to the particular needs and challenges of LLDCs to be addressed by the effective implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action,

Welcoming the following outcomes and acknowledging important events to the group of LLDCs since the last annual Ministerial meeting; the Ministerial Declaration of the 2017 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development convened under the theme “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world”; the entry into force of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement in February 2017, as well as the High-Level Meeting for the Euro-Asia Region on Improving Cooperation on Transit, Trade Facilitation and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development held in Ha Noi, Viet Nam in March 2017,
Having considered the importance of the Vienna Programme of Action for the Landlocked Developing Countries and also in view of the need to accelerate its implementation, declare as follows;

1. **Take note** of the Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024³;

2. **Further call** for the accelerated implementation of the Vienna Program of Action and encourage LLDCs who have not yet mainstreamed the Vienna Programme of Action into their national development planning to do so. We also urge development partners and the UN agencies, in particular OHRLLS to provide assistance to LLDCs to mainstream the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in their national development strategies;

3. **Reaffirm** our commitment to effectively implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, for all people everywhere, ensuring that no one is left behind. We reaffirm all the principles recognized in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and emphasize that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development;

4. **Underscore** that the Vienna Programme of Action is integral to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its full implementation is critical for the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals by the LLDCs. We 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 and other development processes including the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the Nairobi Maafikiano;

5. **Welcome** progress made in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels. In this regard, we stress that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through the revitalized Global Partnerships should take into account the vulnerabilities and special needs and challenges facing LLDCs. We stress that collective action can promote policy integration, facilitate inclusive partnerships and provide support for poverty eradication;

6. **Recognise** the LLDCs’ efforts to make progress in human and social development. However, significant investments are still needed to support LLDCs to combat poverty and hunger, and to improve health, education, and water and sanitation. We call for scaled-up support to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030 in LLDCs;

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³ A/72/272
7. **Also recognise** that investment into quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, connectivity, transportation, water and sanitation, as well as information and communications technologies are important for the LLDCs to improve their competitiveness and fully integrate into the global economy, and further **call on** bilateral and multilateral development partners to increase technical and financial assistance towards sustainable and resilient infrastructure development in the LLDCs, including, through strengthening of public private partnerships, to facilitate investment in infrastructure development and support towards negotiating public private partnerships agreements that are in the country’s best interest;

8. **Welcome** the convening of the 2017 Global Infrastructure Forum and we call on development partners to accelerate financing infrastructure Projects in LLDCs in line with national and regional priorities;

9. **Further recognise** that LLDCs hold great potential for the production of renewable energy, however energy investment in LLDCs continues to be low due to lack of adequate financial resources and capacity constraints in policy formulation and regulatory institutions. We therefore call on bilateral and multilateral development partners to enhance their support to the LLDCs to use these resources. We further call on development partners to mobilize the provision of technology transfer on concessional and preferential terms and the diffusion of new and existing environmentally sound technologies to LLDCs, as set out in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation;

10. Considering that energy is critical for the LLDCs, we **welcome** the international exhibition, EXPO-2017, held under the theme “Future Energy” in Astana, as well as the initiative of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan to establish the International Centre for Green Technologies and Investment Projects to provide a platform for the development and dissemination of renewable energy initiatives;

11. **Express concern** that the LLDCs continue to face high costs of broadband including mobile-cellular, and call on multilateral development banks and development partners to enhance financial and technical assistance to the LLDCs in order to develop the necessary hard and soft ICT infrastructure as well as develop robust ICT Policies;

12. **Calls upon** development partners to support efforts by landlocked developing countries in the field of infrastructure development and maintenance and support landlocked developing countries and transit developing countries in sharing experiences on transit transport development;

13. **Reaffirm** that international trade is an engine for inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction and can contribute to the promotion of sustainable development, and recognize the declining proportion of global merchandize exports from the LLDCs, and therefore call for improved market access for the LLDCs, and call upon development partners to enhance Aid for Trade towards the LLDCs to further integrate them into the global economy. We also express our deep concern at the increase in protectionist tendencies;
14. **Welcome** the entry into force of the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement and call for its full and timely implementation and encourage all World Trade Organisation Members to expedite its full implementation, and **urge** members to continue to provide technical, financial and capacity building assistance to LLDCs, on a sustainable basis, for the effective implementation of the Agreement;

15. **Recognise** that LLDCs are still heavily dependent on export of primary commodities and their economies remain undiversified thus making them vulnerable to volatile prices of commodities and external shocks; and further recognize that inclusive and sustainable industrialization is important for the structural transformation of our economies. We call on development partners, the UN system, including UNIDO to provide support in implementing our industrial and trade policies;

16. **Acknowledge** that innovation is essential for harnessing the economic potential of each nation and the importance of supporting entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, which add new momentum for economic growth and job creation and expand opportunities for all, including women and youth; and highlight the importance of innovation-driven development and the growth of micro, small and medium enterprises so as to increase employment in all sectors. **We call** on development partners to share innovative technologies, scientific knowledge and technical know-how and best practices;

17. **Stress** the importance of LLDCs integrating into regional and global value chains to expand their export markets and diversify their export base; and therefore call on development partners, transit countries and international organizations to help the LLDCs to strengthen their capacity to participate in regional and global value chains and in identifying the best opportunities for developing new products and export markets, given their comparative advantages;

18. **Welcome** the entry into force of the Paris Agreement and we encourage all its parties to fully implement the Agreement and to fully comply with the voluntary national commitments. We stress the importance of continued support for 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, to facilitate implementation of the Agreement and for enhanced support of the landlocked developing countries to address the challenges of climate change, land degradation, desertification, and deforestation in an integrated manner;

19. **Welcome** the outcome of the United Nations Conference to Support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development and take note of its seven partnership dialogues. We recognise the challenges faced by the LLDCs to fully participate in the implementation of SDG-14 including; limited access to the sea, limited resources and capacity constraints. We call on partners, regional and international organizations to recognize the peculiar challenges of the LLDCs in implementing the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
and other regional and international agreements related to the use and conservation of the oceans and the seas and we call on their assistance in addressing the challenges of the LLDCs.

20. Further reaffirm that the area of the seabed and ocean floor and the subsoil thereof, beyond the limits of national jurisdiction, as well as its resources, are the common heritage of mankind, the exploration and exploitation of which shall be carried out for the benefit of mankind as a whole, irrespective of the geographical location of States;

21. 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;

22. Underline the significance of international transport corridors for regional sustainable development, and request for strengthening of the role of economic corridors, corridor management organizations, sub-regional arrangements, inter-regional and regional groupings. Stress the importance of focusing on a transport corridor framework as a first stage for cost reduction to support trade along the routes and reduce congestion at entry points, hence promoting the smooth movement of goods and services;

23. Recognise the importance of mainstreaming regional connectivity in all the dimensions, including economic, socio-cultural and people-to-people, which is vital for increasing their competitiveness and diversification and helping to maximise the benefits of globalization;

24. Call on the LLDCs that have not done so to accede to and ratify relevant international, regional and sub-regional conventions and other legal instruments related to transit, transport and trade facilitation and ensure their effective implementation, with a view to reduce transport prices and time for the landlocked developing countries. Also encourage transit countries to fully comply with their obligations under the international law related to freedom of transit, transport and trade facilitation. Furthermore, we encourage the use of information technologies and electronic systems and improved border agency cooperation to improve transit traffic along transport routes;

25. Welcome the launch of the World Customs Organisation Transit Guidelines during the Global Transit Conference held in Brussels in July 2017. We call on the development partners to assist the LLDCs and transit countries to implement transit and trade facilitating measures contained in the World Customs Organisation Transit Guidelines;

26. Recognize that the LLDCs and transit countries should collaborate to establish secure, reliable, efficient, quality and sustainable infrastructure and transit transport systems, and upgrade existing infrastructure to international standards, with the support of development partners, including multilateral financial and development institutions and regional banks;
27. **Affirm** that traffic in transit shall not be conditioned upon collection of any fees or charges imposed in respect of transit, except the charges for transportation or those commensurate with administrative expenses entailed by transit or with the cost of services rendered and stress that improved trade facilitation, including through further streamlining and harmonization of customs and transit procedures and enhanced transparency is critical for effective utilization of transport corridors;

28. **Encourage** the participatory and collaborative regional development of relevant tools, including a freedom of transit index, to measure, compare and reflect the challenges that confront the LLDCs and elaborate more adequate public policies to overcome these obstacles;

29. **Concerned** with the declining trend of official development assistance to LLDCs and in this regard call for an enhanced predictable, reliable and sustainable flow of official development assistance to meet the regular development challenges as well as the new and emerging challenges including on climate change in landlocked developing countries; and also call on development partners to provide sustainable and timely support to the LLDCs, including through finance, technology transfer and capacity-building to strengthen their disaster risk reduction and early warning system in accordance with their needs and priorities;

30. **Invite** multilateral financial and development institutions and regional development banks to establish dedicated infrastructure funding for the LLDCs and provide them with a special window for allocation of resources for infrastructure development and maintenance and to undertake analytical work and provide support towards better project preparation;

31. **Underline** the prominent role that foreign direct investment plays in accelerating development and poverty reduction and we therefore encourage Member States to facilitate foreign direct investment flows to LLDCs. We commit to continue promoting conducive policies to attract foreign direct investment that leads to promote trade as well as sustainable development of LLDCs. We also call on development partners to provide greater support to the foreign direct investment seeking efforts of LLDCs;

32. **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;

33. **Reaffirm** that the Addis Ababa Action Agenda is imperative to implement the SDGs and in this regard, we welcome the convening of the Second ECOSOC Financing for Development Forum and we encourage all our development partners to implement its inter governmentally negotiated outcome, particularly those commitments related to LLDCs;

34. **Welcome** reaching the required ratifications of the UN Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of an International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries and we look forward to the entry into force of the Agreement that will
take effect on 6 October 2017. The International Think Tank will enhance the analytical capabilities of the LLDCs, provide home-grown research to cater for their specific needs, promote the interests of the LLDCs as well as strengthen their collective voice at global level including at the UN to defend the interests of the LLDCs;

35. **Call for** formalization and stress the need for convening the inaugural meeting of the Board of Governors at the highest level for the International Think Tank soon after the entry into force of the Agreement to establish the secretariat, and further call on the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States to continue to support the International Think Tank to facilitate its formalisation;

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

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

38. **Adopt** the revised Rules of Procedure of the Group of the LLDCs as agreed on 5th June 2017 annexed to this Declaration in order to enhance the work of the Group;

39. **Call** for the effective and comprehensive high-level midterm review of the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action pursuant to the General Assembly resolution 69/137. The high-level midterm review should review progress on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and launch concrete and specific global initiatives and provide strong impetus to the realization of the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. **Further call on the convening** of the meetings of the Ministers of Transport and Ministers of Trade preceding the comprehensive midterm review of the Vienna Programme of Action;

40. **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 comprehensive mid-term review of the Vienna Programme of Action;

41. **Further take note** of Secretary General’s efforts to undertake reforms of the UN development system. We emphasise that these reforms should be centred on the 2030 Agenda and should take into account the peculiar challenges and the needs of the LLDCs;

42. **Appreciate** the important role played by the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and we call for its continued coordinated follow-up, effective monitoring of and reporting on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, and to undertake advocacy efforts at the national, regional and global
levels, including to undertake research and analysis on issues specific to the LLDCs in addressing the priorities of the Vienna Programme of Action;

43. **Welcome** the appointment of the Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu as the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and we request OHRLLS to continue to work on addressing the challenges faced by the LLDCs;

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

New York, 20 September 2017