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UN-OHRLLS

Opening Statement by

**Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu,
Under-Secretary-General and High Representative
for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and
Small Island Developing States**

**at the Annual Ministerial Meeting
of the Group of the LLDCs**

28 September 2018

New York

H.E. Luis Alberto Castiglioni, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Paraguay and the Chair of the Group of LLDCs,
Honorable Ministers,
Dr. Mukhisa Kituyi, UNCTAD Secretary General,
Mr. Achim Steiner, UNDP Administrator,
Ms Olga Algayerova, Executive Secretary, ECE
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great privilege to participate in this Ministerial Meeting with the theme “Revitalizing partnerships to enhance the implementation of the VPoA and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. This theme is indeed quite relevant and very timely, as we strive to forge stronger partnerships to build coherence and accelerate implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As you know implementation of the VPoA is instrumental for the achievement of the SDGs by the LLDCs.

Let me first express my sincere appreciation to His Excellency Luis Alberto Castiglioni for Paraguay’s excellent leadership to the LLDCs Group and I also thank H.E. Mr. Julio César Arriola Ramírez for his dedication to the work of the LLDC Group here in New York. I also wish to thank the LLDC bureau (Burkina Faso, Lao PDR, Lesotho and Mongolia) for their contribution.

Excellencies,

The LLDCs have exhibited some progress towards the SDGs, however their progress is slow as they mostly lag behind the averages of all the developing countries and of the world. Real GDP growth for LLDCs continued to decline, reaching 2.8% in 2016, its lowest level since 1998. The LLDCs remain highly vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change and this continue to have undesirable consequences on the LLDCs food security. The land covered by forests has declined steadily from 16.3% in 2010 to 15.8% in 2015. According to FAO, between 2005 and 2015, drought caused about half of the agricultural production loss in the LLDCs.

On the priorities of the Vienna Programme of Action, the share of the LLDCs’ global merchandise trade remains below 1 percent. The LLDCs’ exports continue to be concentrated on very limited number of products. Addressing high trade costs remain fundamental to integrating the LLDCs into global trade.

The implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) has been identified as having a great potential in addressing the high trade costs faced by the LLDCs. To date, 22 LLDCs have ratified the WTO TFA and this needs to be commended. The implementation of the Agreement, however, lags behind as demonstrated by the rate of implementation of commitments which is about 34% for the LLDCs against the 59.4% for all developing countries. More needs to be done to build the capacity of the LLDCs to implement the TFA.

The LLDCs still lag behind the transit countries and the world in terms of paved road and the rail density. The LLDCs only have 12% of the global density for the paved roads and for the railways they only have just over a third. On access to electricity, the average proportion of the population with access to electricity was about 51% compared to the world average of 87% in 2016. The LLDCs also continue to face high costs of broadband and this hampers the

opportunities of leveraging emerging technologies, e-commerce, and smart transportation amongst others.

Excellencies,

These challenges erode the competitive edge of the LLDCs. According to UNCTAD, after a five-year decline of FDI flows, the LLDCs had a 3% increase in FDI flows in 2016. This increase is relatively modest and the FDI flows were concentrated in a few LLDCs and mainly went to extractive sector.

The persistent challenges faced by the LLDCs call for innovative ideas to address them. As we draw closer to the half way mark in the implementation of the VPoA, we have important work ahead of us if we are to advance sustainable development in LLDCs. The up-coming midterm review of the Vienna Programme of Action presents an opportunity to identify how we can achieve this.

Excellencies,

The 72nd Session of the General Assembly adopted landmark consensus resolution on the repositioning of the United Nations Development System. This resolution provides the basis for improving the UN system's collective support to implement the 2030 Agenda. With these reforms, the United Nations Country teams will be better placed to tailor their response to country's priorities. The LLDCs, which are among the nations that most need the assistance of the UN system, will benefit from these reforms however I wish to emphasize that national ownership remains an important ingredient for success.

OHRLLS will continue to make forceful case that the LLDCs deserve special consideration and treatment to overcome their vulnerabilities. We will continue to support the Group's participation in the intergovernmental process relating to the follow-up and the monitoring of the 2030 Agenda, Addis Ababa Action Agenda and building synergies between these global frameworks and the Vienna Programme of Action. In line with your interests, OHRLLS will also continue to produce thematic reports and organize meetings on themes relevant to the acceleration of the implementation of the VPoA and the 2030 Agenda.

As you are aware part of OHRLLS' mandate is to coordinate UN and international support for the implementation of the VPoA. It is in this regard that we continue to collaborate with other organizations in the effort to build the capacity of the LLDCs on the VPoA priority areas. With the help of the Chair, we have initiated organization of a joint training workshop on transit issues to be held in October at the WTO. We are also working on a project with the WTO, World Bank, WCO and other partners on enhancing border cooperation. The first workshop under this project will be held in Southern Africa in November 2018. The workshop will be replicated to other regions. We encourage the LLDCs to fully take advantage of these capacity building opportunities.

Excellencies,

I wish to commend the Chair of the Group of the LLDCs as well as all of you on the visible efforts of making your voices heard on issues of importance to LLDCs. The outcomes of the 2018 ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development follow-up and the High-level Political Forum contain references on the LLDCs as a result of your efforts. It is also very encouraging

that 6 LLDCs presented their Voluntary National Reviews during the 2018 HLPF and 8 LLDCs will be presenting next year.

I encourage you to maintain this momentum if not to make it better in the upcoming global processes that will be held over the course of the remainder of this year and next year (such as the Global Infrastructure Forum, the World Investment Forum, the 24th Conference of the Parties to the UN-Framework Convention on Climate Change, the 2019 ECOSOC Financing for Development Forum and the 2019 High-Level Political Forum). My Office remains available to provide substantive support to the Group.

I wish to congratulate you on the inauguration of your first inter-governmental body – the International Think Tank for LLDCs and wish to assure you that we will work closely with the Think Tank.

Before I conclude, I would like to announce that OHRLLS is organising together with the Global Green Growth Institute and the Republic of Korea, a High-level Event on Leveraging Green Growth Potential in Vulnerable Countries, which will take place today, at 1:15pm, immediately after this meeting, in this room. I would like to encourage you to participate and contribute to this important meeting.

In conclusion, let me once again assure you that OHRLLS will continue to mobilize the relevant UN system capacities and ensure coordinated follow-up on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action.

I thank you for your attention.