Statement by Paraguay, Global Chair of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries

at the side event

SDGs and Climate change: Challenges and Opportunities for landlocked developing countries

held at COP24

13 December 2018 at 13:15 to 14:45 in Pieniny Side Event Room 2, Area G – Multipurpose
Katowice, Poland

- H.E. Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States
- Mr. Paul Desanker, Manager, National Adaptation Plans and Policy, Adaptation Programme, UNFCCC Secretariat
- Excellencies
- Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

The landlocked developing countries are a group of 32 countries with a combined population of around 500 million. We face special challenges related to our geographical remoteness, lack of direct access to the sea and isolation from world markets, compounded by inadequate infrastructure, cumbersome border crossing procedures, structural deficiencies and limited capacities to deal with external shocks.

Despite accounting for a very low share of the global greenhouse gas emissions, landlocked developing countries are amongst the countries particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Our countries are experiencing the effects of climate change, such as increased frequencies of natural disasters, water scarcity, extreme weather events, persistent droughts, increased desertification, and flooding including glacial outbursts.
Exposure to natural hazards and the effects of climate change represents a significant challenge for our economies. An estimated 54% of the total land of the landlocked developing countries is classified as dry lands which are highly vulnerable to the impact of desertification and where the impacts of climate change are more pronounced. Given this vulnerability and the fact that some 70% of people in landlocked developing countries are dependent on climate-sensitive agriculture, the impacts of floods and droughts and other climate-induced disasters have significant impacts on food and health security, migration and poverty.

Because of the disadvantaged development path that we are on while facing the challenges exacerbated by being landlocked, the implications of climate change are thus much harder for our countries to recover from. It also slows or reverses our progress towards implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and achievement of the SDGs.

The adoption of the Paris Agreement on climate change was a milestone achievement. The Agreement recognizes the specific needs and special circumstances, including capacity constraints, of developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. It has important provisions for developing countries, including landlocked developing countries for adaptation, mitigation, loss and damage, international support and scaled-up financial resources and global stocktaking for accounting on climate action. The effective implementation of the Paris Agreement will help the landlocked developing countries to build their resilience to climate change and enhance the mitigation and adaptation efforts.

At the same time, landlocked developing countries can benefit greatly from an integrated and holistic approach to sustainable development and climate change. Harnessing synergies between the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement is critical since climate change is making it hard for the landlocked developing countries to achieve sustainable development. It is particularly important for overall achievement of the SDGs, especially Goal 13 on combatting climate change and its impacts, Goal 15 on sustainable management of forests, combatting of desertification and halting land degradation and biodiversity loss, as well as the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs. Landlocked developing countries therefore need to be fully included in the follow-up processes of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement.
Since the landlocked developing countries have unique vulnerabilities to climate change, it will be important for the landlocked developing countries to receive targeted funding to help support resilient measures for adaptation and mitigation efforts. Financing should not only be adequate but also be easier to access, more predictable, long-term and should support national development priorities.

As part of long-term financing efforts, the international community should also promote the rehabilitation of degraded land and support sustainable productive uses of upgraded land. There is also a need to ensure development of climate resilient transit infrastructure for the landlocked developing countries.

Landlocked developing countries also require technical capacity building to strengthen the institutional and policy capability to design climate change multi-sectoral strategies and mainstream climate change into national development plans, as well as to develop functional early warning systems. Some landlocked developing countries are making important progress in implementing the Paris Agreement and developing climate change strategies at the national level, but more support is needed. Global development cooperation and partnership can play a significant and unique role in supporting the landlocked developing countries in this regard.

It is also important to support the LLDCs with relevant technologies to improve their resilience. Some technologies such as clean energy technologies could be scaled-up rapidly.

Greater investment in climate science, services and the production of high quality data is imperative for the landlocked developing countries. These efforts will facilitate the development of early warning systems and further research on the impact, of climate change on the landlocked developing countries, their vulnerability and adaptation, which will contribute to important climate information and knowledge and help inform policy decisions, and development planning.

Sharing of experiences is necessary to facilitate landlocked developing countries to learn from successful experiences of others. I thank OHRLLS and UNFCCC for providing this forum that allows us to share our national experiences and appeal for other practical measures to foster enhanced sharing of experiences.
Finally, I would also like to emphasize the importance of the comprehensive high-level Midterm Review on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, to be held in December 2019. As we prepare for the Midterm Review, we will need to find innovative and sustainable solutions to accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the landlocked developing countries. Climate change is one of the major obstacles that we are facing.

I look forward to our discussion in this meeting and I hope that we will come up with inputs that can feed into the preparations of the outcome document of the Midterm Review of the Vienna Programme of Action.

I thank you.