Statement

by

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at

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of Landlocked Developing Countries

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Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

I thank USG Utoikamanu for inviting me here today. I’m very happy to talk about how the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) can support the implementation of the Vienna Plan of Action (VPoA). We are actively involved, and just earlier in September we co-organized with ESCAP and UNCTAD a workshop in Almaty to support preparations for the VPoA midterm review.

Landlocked developing countries face double the trade costs of coastal countries, and long distances from major trading markets. They must enhance connectivity, increase competitiveness, and facilitate trade and transport. UNECE develops norms, standards, regulations and legal instruments in all of these areas; most are available for global use. Let me give a few examples.

Inefficiencies at borders cost twice the amount spent on tariffs, duties, import taxes and fees, and block access to markets. The General Assembly recognized this in resolution 70/197, which calls for countries to ratify the TIR Convention and the Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods – both hosted in UNECE. Thanks to international customs guarantees, TIR enormously reduces the transit time and costs for trucks, thereby helping to meet the objectives of Priority 1 of the VPoA. We also launched the electronic version of TIR (eTIR) for paperless transit. China and Pakistan have joined TIR recently. We hope more will follow suit. Our Harmonization Convention, meanwhile, increases efficiencies and revenues by ensuring simple and speedy treatment of cargo at borders. These instruments are open to all UN Member States, and we are happy to assist in their implementation.
Under Priority 2 of the VPoA on infrastructural development, our United Nations Framework Classification of Resources (UNFC) enhances the management of energy and mineral resources, to improve productivity and value-addition and strengthen partnerships between countries. We have a project in Central Asia on the application of UNFC for sustainable resource management. Meanwhile, we also help to develop transport infrastructure via our EuroAsian Transport Links project.

Many countries are still dealing with cumbersome trade procedures. UNECE has been at the forefront of trade facilitation developments for over 50 years with the UN Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT). More than 480 recommendations, standards, and tools have been developed for trade facilitation in UNECE. They are used by countries and companies worldwide, every day, to boost competitiveness, optimize business processes, and access global markets.

One important example is the Single Window Recommendation for one-stop import-export. Let me also mention the United Nations rules for Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport (UN/EDIFACT) and UN/LOCODE, the global location codes. For details I refer you to our online, free Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide.

To help countries use these standards and tools and alleviate bureaucracy, we carry out studies on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade, including for the landlocked countries of Belarus, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and the Republic of Moldova.

To help strengthen innovation policies, and thus increase value-added and competitiveness, we also do Innovation Performance Reviews,
including for Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Another key tool is our UNECE agricultural quality standards. These help agricultural products become more attractive to international trade. A supermarket in Switzerland can call Uzbekistan and order “Class I” dried apricots, and it will know exactly what it will receive, without traveling to Uzbekistan to inspect the shipment - trade facilitation at its finest!

One of the least integrated regions in the world is Central Asia, where the countries are all landlocked. UNECE, together with ESCAP, supports the UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA). Under the SPECA trade programme we have helped to establish national Single Windows and trade facilitation committees in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. These efforts also assist in living up to the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement.

I hope that you will all join us, and use our norms, standards and conventions to make sure that we leave no landlocked country behind!

Thank you.