Statement

by

H.E. Professor Afework Kassu,

State Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

at

the LLDCs Ministerial Meeting

September 28, 2018

New York
H.E. Mr. Luis Alberto Catiglioni, Foreign Minister of Paraguay, Chair of the LLDCs Group,
Honorable Ministers,
Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa Utoikamanu, High Representative of UN-OHRLLS,

As this is our first ministerial meeting in New York since the delegation of Paraguay assumed the chairmanship of the Group of LLDCs, allow me, Chair, to congratulate you; and assure you of our continued support during your tenure. Let me also take this opportunity to reiterate our profound appreciation to the delegation of Zambia for effectively discharging its responsibilities as the previous chair of our Group.

I would also like to reiterate that Ethiopia attaches a great importance to the work of the UN-OHRRLS Office in promoting the implementation of the Vienna Program of Action.

Mr. Chair,

It is clear that LLDCs continue to face multiple development challenges due to our geographical locations and other structural obstacles. While we continue to take policy measures to promote structural transformation, diversify our economies and increase our exports, special trade and development-related challenges, such as remoteness from global market and high transit costs, arising from our lack of direct access to the sea constrain our endeavors to meet
the Vienna Program of Action which is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda.

Due to our specific development bottlenecks, our share of global trade remains low. We continue to depend on a few export items with very limited capacity to add manufacturing value. Huge infrastructural gaps that hinder regional integration and slow structural transformation process further undermine our efforts to meet the objectives of the Vienna Program of Action. In addition, lack of adequate finance and technological as well as institutional capacity aggravate our development challenges.

While we recognize that achieving inclusive and sustainable development by addressing our multiple challenges is primarily our national responsibility, a renewed global partnership with our development partners-public and private- would be vital to fully achieve the Vienna Programs of Action. In this regard, coordinated and enhanced international support in areas of manufacturing, trade, and productive capacity that complement national endeavors would highly contribute to meet the objectives of the VPOA. In addition, establishing an effective and efficient infrastructure system and facilitating the smooth and fast movement of goods and services are fundamental to integrate LLDCs into the global market. In this connection, the cooperation and partnership of transit countries would remain absolutely critical.

Mr. Chair,
Since the adoption of the Vienna Program of Action, Ethiopia has integrated and continued its implementation in line with our national development plan and priorities. While we recognize that landlockedness increases our development constraints, we have been taking policy measures that improve our manufacturing base and enhance our connectedness as well as competitiveness. In this respect, achieving inclusive and sustainable industrialization and building resilient infrastructure are among the priorities of the Ethiopian government.

Based on our comparative advantage; we have given special attention to labour intensive and light manufacturing sectors-agro-processing, leather and textile. We have also established industrial parks that simplify access to land, eliminate the challenges in trade logistics and custom service. These policy actions are contributing to enhancing our global competitiveness and participation in the global value chain.

In addition, the Ethiopian government has been making a massive public investment in building infrastructure, with the objective of enhancing our productive capacity and promoting regional integration. Encouraging progress has been registered in expanding the road, railway, and air transport services. We have also been working with neighboring transit countries to establish and maintain effective transit systems on the basis of common interest. Furthermore, recently, we have taken a bold and historic decision
that would, among others, diversify our sea outlets and further promote regional integration.

Despite some progress, we are fully mindful that a lot remains to be done to realize inclusive and sustainable development in Ethiopia as well as in other LLDCs. Therefore, allow me to take this opportunity to reaffirm our commitment and readiness to redouble our efforts to fully implement the VPOA and the SDGs in close collaboration with our development partners.

Let me conclude, Mr. Chair, by welcoming the inauguration of the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries. Our appreciation goes to the Government of Mongolia for hosting and supporting the Think Tank. Undoubtedly, the Think Tank would help all of us not only in finding appropriate solutions for our common challenges but also it would contribute in formulating a common position that we all should promote to amplify our united voice in multilateral forums. Moreover, it would also further enhance the exchange of lessons and best practices among LLDCs as we all continue to implement SDGs according to our national priorities.

I thank you.