Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I wish to express our high appreciation to H.E. Mr. Luis Alberto Castiglioni, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Paraguay, for his excellent stewardship of our Group.

May I also commend the continued support extended by Under-Secretary-General and High Representative Ms. Utoikamanu and her office to the landlocked developing countries.

Mr. Chairman,

I am confident that our annual gathering will serve as an important platform to review the progress made by the LLDCs in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals, exchange views and experiences, identify new initiatives and deepen our collaboration with development partners. It is timely that the Annual Meeting is being held in advance of the comprehensive high-level midterm review of the implementation of the Vienna Program of Action in 2019.

Let me briefly touch upon some activities that Mongolia is taking towards the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and Agenda 2030.

Mongolia’s Sustainable Development Vision 2030 was adopted in February 2016. As to the Vision, by 2030, Mongolia aspires to build multi-sector stable economy resting on strong middle class and supported by stable, democratic governance with solid commitment to the environmental protection.
Moreover, the first-ever law on Development Policy Planning, enacted in November 2015, gives Mongolia a chance to ensure coherence of not only national development plans and programmes, but also alignment of them with the global development agendas, including the Agenda 2030 and Vienna Programme of Action.

In the recent two years, Mongolia concluded several promising agreements with the neighboring countries such as "The Agreement on access to and from the sea and transit transport through China’s territory by Mongolia" and the intergovernmental agreements on the terms for the rail freight transit transportation and on railway transit transportation.

Mongolia is keen to participate in the regional processes and initiatives as well. Recently, the President of Mongolia called upon the commencement of the “North East Asian Super Grid” project which will provide a number of economic, social and environmental benefits, including energy security, job creation and reduction of carbon dioxide emissions to the countries in the Northeast Asian region.

Mr. Chairman,

My Ministry has recently come up with a travel facilitation initiative with a view to creating an enabling environment for the increased trade, investment, connectivity and economic cooperation. It covers countries along the Belt and Road Initiative, i.e. around 70 countries in Asia and the Pacific, Africa and Europe, accounting for 65% of the world’s population and 30% of its economic output.

Mongolia has supported the development of the Belt and Road initiative ever since it was put forward by the People’s Republic of China in 2013 and has agreed to establish the Mongolia-Russia-China economic corridor, a trilateral multifaceted cooperation program that aligns Mongolia’s “Development Road” program to the “Belt and Road” initiative.

In order to better utilize the opportunities offered by the Belt and Road projects, we put forward a Belt and Road travel facilitation initiative, which entails:

- Fast-track lane specifically dedicated to the “Belt and Road” officials, scholars and investors opened at the Chinggis Khaan international airport in Ulaanbaatar and at the railway entry ports.
- On-arrival visas to government delegates and business people provided that prior notifications are given to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia.
- Multiple-entry visas to frequent business travelers with an expedited procedure at Mongolian diplomatic missions located around the world.
Mongolia’s experience in reaching favorable agreements with its neighboring and regional countries in trade, transit and economic cooperation might become useful for our fellow landlocked developing countries.

Mr. Chairman,

Taking this opportunity, I wish to highlight the full operationalization of the International Think Tank for LLDCs which is a realization of our vision to build a platform to generate knowledge and develop analytical tools to overcome our common challenges. The Government of Mongolia together with the Interim Secretariat of the ITT organized the First meeting of the Board of Governors and the Inaugural Conference in May and June in 2018 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, respectively.

In order to support the efficiency and the optimal functioning of the ITT, we have submitted a request on the inclusion of an additional item entitled “Observer status for the International Think Tank for LLDCs in the General Assembly” into the draft agenda of the 73rd Session of the General Assembly. It is my sincere hope that the Group will render its unconditional support for the draft resolution.

We believe that the Observer status will help this first intergovernmental body, dedicated to the LLDCs, function smoothly and engage more effectively on the international arena and support the LLDCs for their implementation of the Vienna Program of Action and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Taking this opportunity, I urge all LLDCs that have not yet ratified the Multilateral Agreement on the Establishment of an International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries to do so.

Finally, let me thank the Group of the Landlocked Developing Countries in New York and its past and present Chairs for your tireless efforts to promote and defend our shared interests.

I thank you.