DRAFT STATEMENT FOR POSSIBLE USE BY
HON. JOSEPH MALANJI, MP, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS DURING THE ANNUAL MINISTERIAL MEETING OF FOREIGN MINISTERS FOR LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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NEW YORK
Excellency Mr. Luis Alberto CASTIGLIONI, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Paraguay, and Global Chair of the Group of LLDCs
Excellences Honourable Ministers
Under Secretary General and High Representative of LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to express my gratitude to the Republic of Paraguay for Convening this meeting upon assuming the Global Chairmanship for the two years of 2018 and 2019. Iam aware of the great task ahead, to continue with the implementation and to embark on the mid term review of the Vienna Programme of Action for the group of Landlocked Developing Countries. Zambia applauds your great commitment in steering the work of this group.

This meeting being held today under the theme: "Revitalising Partnerships to enhance Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for sustainable Development", could not have come at a better time than this. The challenges of the LLDCs are unique for us, the developing countries, without direct access to the sea, since it affects our cost of trade, our access to natural resources of the oceans and the seas, our cost of communication and many other development drivers. It is our firm belief therefore that we all work together to enhance and strengthen our partnerships which are very important for shaping the course of development for LLDCs and transit partners. The multilateral efforts and cooperation to particularly strengthen and emphasize regional projects
support with increased financing that focuses on strategic regional tailored solutions and country specific programmes is necessary.

In the implementation of the priorities of the Vienna Programme of Action, Zambia is making progress in Infrastructure development, by investing significantly in roads, rail and air transportation as well as in energy, water and sanitation and ICT infrastructure. In strengthening regional cooperation in the transport sector for instance, we are using Zambia’s unique geographic position with the eight neighbouring countries surrounding us, to make our country a natural transport hub and transit point within the sub-region and beyond. The policy has been put in place that aims to ensure that Zambia becomes the preferred transit point in the region in line with our Vision 2030 Development Agenda. Some of the projects that we have undertaken are; implementation of the Link Zambia 8000 Road Project aimed at connecting all districts by road and onwards to the neighbouring countries. This project has significantly transformed the country into a landlinked country with a good network to all our eight neighbouring countries. It is also important to point out that some of the roads within the Link Zambia 8000 project are also important elements in regional transport corridors.

Zambia has in collaboration with Transit Countries and other development entities partnered to develop transport corridors such as the Nacala Road Corridor, Dar-es-salaam Road Corridor and the TAZARA Railway Corridor links for Zambia to the Indian Ocean; the Lobito Corridor and the Walvis Bay Corridor links to the Atlantic Ocean. Further,
we are undertaking policy, legal and institutional reforms to facilitate universal access to ICT and promote the use of ICT in business such as e-Commerce. Through the Smart Zambia initiative, the Government is land-linking the country by facilitating ICT development and skills up-scaling for public service workers and the private sector.

To achieve meaningful development, the Government has been working with development partners including the private sector in infrastructure development by improving the trade and investment climate in the country. The reforms have been undertaken to ensure that the easy of doing business, is achieved. For instance, the time taken for business name registration and company incorporation in Zambia was shortened from 21 days to 3 days. To this effect, the Doing Business Index, improved from 80 in 2009 to 98 in 2016. In addition, Innovative financing such as Public Private Partnerships are promoted. We have also undertaken trade reforms aimed at simplifying and harmonizing the tariff structure and removal of quantitative restrictions on imports.

I am pleased to report that we are working to strengthen development cooperation through the country’s foreign policy that has focused on economic diplomacy in national development, with peace and security that is an indispensable condition for the country’s development. Government will also continue to the harness positive global and regional integration and manage its potential risks such as economic and other international shocks.
Mr. Chairman
I also wish to stress that the issues international trade, regional integration and trade facilitation will not be resolved effectively with our national efforts alone. Without partnerships our efforts aimed at making our goods accessible and competitive on the global market will not be successful. Our merchandise trade which accounts for less than 1 percent of the world trade for LLDCs together if left unchecked will continue to push our economies down the rugged underdevelopment road. However, if the issue of trade is addressed, it has the potential to spin our economies and put us on the road to attainment of 2030 Agenda with the required momentum. Besides the issues of trade, is the declining Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). For the last 5 years, the FDI to LLDCs has taken a declining trend. This require a genuine partnerships and deliberate increase of effort by all development and transit partners.

Mr. Chairman,
As we prepare to embark on the Mid Term Review of the Vienna Programme of Action, it should provide an opportunity to introspect and emerge strong and ready to strengthen areas for implementation of priorities in the Vienna Programme of action together with development partners and to realise the potential benefits that lies in forging partnerships with the LLDCs. The regional meetings in this regard, will require to thoroughly review of out performance of our programme of action.
The review should also serve a spring board for regional integration, taking into account the different stages of development of countries involved and design measures that will promote a mutually benefitting regime. The review should also provide an opportunity for LLDCs to share good practices and help build capacity across all members.

It is our since hope that the Mid-Term Review will also look into issues of harnessing potential of the private sector to drive the development agenda forward. A premium should be placed on the fact that the private sector plays a key role in development of all aspects. It is our sincere hope that, the private sector will continue to deliberately expand investments in LLDCs and drive the process of improving production capacities, productivity, technology transfer, skills training and infrastructure development.

The fore going having been said, I am aware that the private sector will need help especially in the area of preparing bankable proposals. The ability to attract resources will depend on the quality of proposals that are prepared. I call upon the UN and the Multilateral Development Banks to help private sector in this regard.

It is our expectation that the mid Term review for the LLDCs will be able revitalise the necessary partnerships that will champion our cause to realise the objectives and targets of the Vienna programme of Action. When we attain to the set goal of the Programme of Action, we will be confident to move towards attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The principle of "Leaving No One
Behind” should be upheld by all partners to ensure that LLDCs are not left behind.

I thank you!