DRAFT STATEMENT BY HON. S. B. MOYO, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE ON THE OCCASION OF THE MEETING OF THE MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE GROUP OF LANDLOCKED COUNTRIES: 28 SEPTEMBER 2018; UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK

The Chairperson, Honourable Luis Alberto Castiglioni

Honourable Ministers,

UN-OHRLSS - Under Secretary-General and High Representative, Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa,

Distinguished Participants,

It gives me great pleasure to participate at this 17th Annual Ministerial Meeting of the group of landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and deliver this statement on behalf of the Republic of Zimbabwe to this distinguished audience. I am confident that under your able stewardship we will be able to advance the development agenda of landlocked developing countries.

Three years into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the theme selected for this year “Revitalizing Partnerships to enhance the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” could not have come at a better time. This meeting provides us with an opportunity to take stock of progress achieved so far, identify gaps and challenges in the implementation of the two ambitious programmes with a view to strengthen partnerships which will help us to accelerate progress.

The theme of today’s meeting is significant to the fight against poverty, hunger and disease, to create for better lives for all men, women and children and for a healthier planet.

Distinguished Participants,
Our strength lies in our collective resolve to bring about effective solutions to the many pressing global development challenges facing us all. This meeting offers an excellent space to reflect on the role that all of us, landlocked, transit countries, development partners and international organisations, can play in tackling challenges faced by LLDCs. While we are a diverse group, we come together with open minds, eagerness to learn, and readiness to make concrete commitments for action.

The 2030 Agenda and the VPoA recognise the catalytic role of partnerships in the implementation of the development agenda. It is my firm belief that all of us here today can contribute to the implementation of our collective development goals. In the same way that we emphasise leaving no one behind in the achievement of the Agenda, we in Zimbabwe believe the collective efforts of all stakeholders will be critical in addressing our greatest challenges. It is only through working together that we will be able to fully face and deal with the complexities of today’s development challenges which more often than not transcend borders in both their impacts and their solutions.

Distinguished participants,

It is almost four years since the Vienna Programme of Action was adopted and three years since the historic adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals. Zimbabwe welcomes the progress reports towards the Sustainable Development Goals and commend the concerted efforts made by the entire world to eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions by 2030.

The Vienna Programme of Action, following in the progress made under the Almaty Programme of Action continues to play a seminal role in creating awareness about the special challenges faced by landlocked developing countries globally and placing their concerns firmly on the global development agenda. This has ensured that there is continued increase in the visibility and recognition of such countries and their special needs at the international level.
However, despite these successes, the LLDCs as a group continue to face daunting developmental challenges, not least due to the constraints imposed by their geographical location. This is evidenced by the fact that despite high growth rates, the share of LLDCs in global trade remains modest and restricted to a few products.

To compound the situation, the little progress achieved to date has been uneven and not shared by all LLDCs. Landlocked developing countries remain fragile and vulnerable to external shocks, not only because of their high transport and transit costs, but also due to their lack of economic diversification, limited productive capacities and low export competitiveness. Many of us have been unable to structurally transform our economies, diversify our production models, and move up the industrial value chain. The global economic and financial crisis together with emerging issues such as climate change, desertification and land degradation have further compounded our developmental challenges.

Distinguished Participants,

Faced with all these challenges, the inspiring partnership initiatives springing up around the world, show that the global community is waking up to the central role that cooperation plays in sustainable development. As landlocked countries, we should recognize this and maximize benefits as the global partnership momentum brings new opportunities to advance the cause of sustainable development in landlocked countries and transit countries, and in all countries across the globe.

It is clear that transit countries are key partners for their landlocked neighbours, as they work together to enhance the efficiency of border crossings. Partnerships with neighbouring transit countries should be enhanced with a view to establishing mechanisms aimed at reducing inland transportation costs. More robust collaboration among customs agencies is essential in this regard. All these measures also aid in enhancing trade among LLDCs themselves and neighbouring transit countries as this has been a missing link.
Undertaking infrastructural development and maintenance is a costly venture which requires stable and long term financing. Most LLDC governments do not have the capacity to finance large scale infrastructural projects on their own and are often unable to attract long term private finance for this purpose. International cooperation in this area is therefore critical, particularly, the role of international financial institutions, regional infrastructure development banks and multilateral development banks. Partnerships also becomes critical in the area of climate resilient infrastructure, that requires the active engagement of all relevant stakeholders. To upscale productive capacities, access to technologies and technical expertise is critical in efforts by LLDCs to achieve value addition. We applaud on-going discussions in various fora, on the technology facilitation mechanism. We also recognize the private sector as an important partner as well, advancing the businesses and technologies that will enable the smooth movement of people and goods.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As poverty eradication remains top priority for all of us, Official Development Assistance (ODA) is critical particularly with special attention to LLDCs, especially the 16 countries from Africa. We note with concern the decrease in ODA to LLDCs with two countries continuing to dominate receipt of almost 30% of total ODA receipts to LLDCs. This is coupled with a similar trend in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows to LLDCs which have been on the decline since 2012, with African landlocked developing countries being the hardest hit.

While we recognise that the development of our countries remains the primary responsibility of our Governments, our efforts continue to be hindered by the lack of adequate financial resources hence the call to development partners to complement our efforts on this critical journey. To achieve the sustainable development goals, LLDCs need to secure access to new and predictable sources of funding without unrealistic pre-conditions. In this vein, we must all work together in mobilizing sufficient, adequate and predictable financial resources for the implementation of the SDGs. Developed countries must continue to honour
their historic obligations and responsibilities, as part of the commitments made in the context of the global partnership for development. Ladies and Gentlemen, without the means of implementation, we will not be able to achieve much.

As we strive to strengthen our domestic resource mobilization mechanisms, combating illegal movements of money or capital from developing countries particularly landlocked African countries is also vitally important. The fight against illicit financial flows should be at the forefront of the international efforts related to development financing. We should also endeavor not only to fight corruption within our own countries but to come up with corruption intolerant systems to ensure efficient mobilization of adequate domestic resources.

Mr. Chairman,

Given its strategic location, Zimbabwe plays a very critical role in facilitation of transit traffic mainly from overseas via South Africa up north to Malawi, Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Zimbabwe continues to implement a number of initiatives in order to facilitate smooth movement of transit traffic. We are actively engaged in the relevant multilateral processes aimed at further development of the North-South corridor.

Following the successful harmonized elections of 30 July 2018 that ushered in the Second Republic, Zimbabwe’s new Administration has laid emphasis on economic growth, and engagement with all countries and the private sector. Zimbabwe is taking steps to realize its new goal of being a middle income country by the year 2030. The successful realisation of our shared Vision 2030 will require concerted efforts and financial discipline in the implementation of radical economic reforms targeted at attracting and facilitating foreign and domestic investments in line with the reality that “Zimbabwe is open for business”.

Through the engagement and re-engagement policy, we are opening a new chapter in our relations with the world, underpinned by mutual respect, shared principles
and common values. We look forward to playing a positive and constructive role as a free, democratic, transparent and responsible member of the family of nations.

Zimbabwe has enormous potential given its generous endowment of natural resources, an existing stock of public infrastructure, and comparatively well skilled human resources. The Government has embarked on a deliberate path to create a conducive investment environment, correct fiscal policies, re-stabilize the monetary system, and resolve arrears to international lenders that would allow for a resumption of development financing.

Distinguished Participants,

It is indeed commendable that through the adoption of resolution 72/232, “Follow-up to the second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries”, the General Assembly has decided to convene a comprehensive high-level midterm review of the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024 in 2019, to assess progress made in its implementation. It is important that consultations in this process are as inclusive as possible in order to gather as many views as possible on experiences on the implementation of specific actions in the six priority areas: fundamental transit policy issues, infrastructure development and maintenance, international trade and trade facilitation, regional integration and cooperation, structural economic transformation and means of implementation.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in Shona we say “Chara chimwe hachitswanyi inda” meaning “One thumb cannot crush a lice”. Together we can achieve much and now is now time to act on our commitment to leave no one behind.

I Thank You.