

Dinner Remarks by H.E. Ms. Inga Rhonda King, President of ECOSOC and Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and Grenadines

- Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu, Under Secretary-General, and High Representative
- The Representative of H.E. Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa President of the 73rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly, Ms. Toni-Shae Freckleton, Senior Adviser, Office of the President of the 73rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly
- H.E. Mr. Julio Cesar Arriola Ramirez, Permanent Representative of Paraguay to the UN, Chair of the LLDC Group
- Ms. Ahunna Eziakonwa, Assistant Administrator, Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa, United Nations Development Programme
- Excellences, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States for inviting me to participate in this retreat being held as part of the preparatory process for the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024.

It is five years since the adoption of the Vienna Programme of Action was adopted to address the challenges faced by LLDCs linked to their remoteness and distances from international markets. These are a barrier to their efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development.

Following the adoption of the Vienna Programme, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with the core principle of leaving no one behind was adopted. The 2030 Agenda places renewed emphasis on countries in special situations, including addressing the special needs of LLDCs.

Progress has been achieved in the priority areas of the Vienna Programme of Action. The LLDCs have also made progress on some of the SDGs. However they remain highly vulnerable, with the challenges of their geography compounded by other pressures, such as climate change, desertification, land degradation and drought.

To achieve the global goals, it is essential that LLDCs are able to improve their productive capacity, including their transit systems and connectivity. This retreat and the Midterm Review of the Vienna Programme need to critically look at areas where there are some opportunities that can be tapped on to accelerate progress.

Greater forging of synergies between the Vienna Programme and the other global development frameworks and processes is very important including - the follow-up processes of the 2030 Agenda; the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing; the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction; the Paris Agreement; the Convention to combat desertification; the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, and Convention on the Law of the Sea. These frameworks already have elements that address the priorities of the VPoA, we need to deepen the interlinkages.

Strengthening of partnerships for the accelerated implementation of the VPoA is crucial. The financing needs for meeting the transport, energy and ICT infrastructure needs of connecting the LLDCs to regional and international markets is substantial. Additional investments are essential. In this regard, national governments, development partners, development banks and the private sector have a significant role to play in scaling up their contributions to sustainable development financing.

Development of greater connectivity has to go hand in hand with increased industrialization that can help the LLDCs to diversify their economies and increase their export potential. This is an issue that is of great interest to ECOSOC including how to harness the power of new technologies to drive industrialization.

Deepening of cooperation between neighbours is important to improve the integration of the LLDCs into regional and international markets. Dedicated support from national and international partners, is important to support the efforts of the LLDCs and their transit neighbours to achieve both the VPoA objectives and the SDGs.

Climate change, desertification and disasters need to be effectively addressed. Recurrent severe weather events and disasters in LLDCs are devastating lives. This year we have already witnessed the impacts of cyclone Idai in Southern Africa. As you know ECOSOC convened a special meeting last month to discuss this very issue. It is clear that we need greater resilience building, redoubling of efforts to climate change and increased investments in disaster risk reduction, including disaster preparedness, early warning and early action.

I want to reiterate that ECOSOC is committed to continuing to address the special challenges of the LLDCs to achieve sustainable development. The Council will work to ensure that due attention is paid to challenges of the LLDCs and to raise the support of the international community to LLDCs.

I thank you.