Opening Remarks
H.E. Ms. Doma Tshering, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Bhutan to the United Nations, Co-facilitator, Midterm Review of VPOA, 8th May 2019

Madam Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu, High Representative and Under-Secretary General for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States,
Your Excellency Ambassador Inga Rhonda King, President of ECOSOC,
Ambassador Julio Cesar Arriola Ramirez, PR of Paraguay and CHair of the LLDC Group

Excellencies, Dear Colleagues,

Our retreat marks an important milestone in our preparations towards the high level midterm review of the implementation of the Vienna Program of Action for the Decade 2014-2024. It is most encouraging to see such keen interest in the process demonstrated by your presence here this morning.

I thank the USG for providing this opportunity, and also preceding speakers for their insightful remarks that set the tone for our discussions.

The VPOA is a landmark document that embodies the commitment of the international community to address the specific challenges faced by landlocked developing countries in their pursuit of poverty eradication through sustainable and inclusive growth. Agenda 2030 and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda further build upon this and promise to leave no one behind.

UNGA resolutions 72/232 and 73/243 provide for a comprehensive high level midterm review of its implementation, as also called for in paragraph 78 of the VPOA.

The HL MTR which will be convened in December 2019, will adopt an intergovernmentally negotiated and agreed outcome in the form of a political declaration.
Ambassador Jan Kickert, Permanent Representative of Austria, and I are most honored to serve as the Co-Facilitators for the intergovernmental negotiations, supporting collective efforts to arrive at a political declaration that will review progress made by LLDCs, transit countries and development partners in the implementation of the VPOA, allow for sharing of best practices and lessons learned, identify obstacles and constraints, and actions and initiatives needed to overcome them, as well as new challenges and emerging issues in order to further accelerate the implementation of the VPOA.

As of now, we have successfully completed two of the three regional preparatory meetings mandated by UN General Assembly. The regional midterm reviews of the VPOA for the Euro-Asia and Africa regions were held in Bangkok on 11-12 February and in Marrakesh on 18-19 March 2019 respectively. The Latin America review meeting will be held from 11-12th June in ECLAC in Santiago, Chile. Between our Co-Facilitating Team, we would have participated in and closely followed deliberations in all three regional conferences.

The deliberations during the past two regional reviews, which focused on each of the six priority areas of the VPOA, were both comprehensive, highly stimulating and generated an excellent range of recommendations. We are confident that the third will be equally informative.

The outcome documents of the three regional reviews, the outcomes of pre-conference events coordinated by the UN OHRLLS, including this retreat, together with the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the VPOA will all serve to inform the outcome document of the high-level midterm review.

Ambassador Kickert, and I, very much look forward to the exchange of views at this retreat, and to the subsequent engagements in preparation for the High Level MTR. As we proceed, we will take into consideration the views that are shared today and we will do our utmost to co-facilitate the process, with a view to ensuring an effective and meaningful outcome document for the High Level Review. We look forward to your active engagement, and support towards that end.

Thank you.