Mr. Chairman
Excellencies
Distinguished delegates

It is a great pleasure for me and my delegation to participate in this Annual Ministerial Meeting of Foreign Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries.

I would like to thank the Chair of the LLDC group, Paraguay, for convening this meeting and the excellent manner in which Paraguay has led the group over the past two years.

I also take this opportunity to extend congratulations and best wishes to the incoming Chair, Kazakhstan, on being elected as the Chair of the LLDC Group for the next two years.

I would also like to express my Government’s appreciation to the UN Under-Secretary General and High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDs, Ms. Fekita and her office for the continued effort in bringing to the forefront the development challenges of our countries.

Mr. Chair

This annual ministerial meeting of our group comes at a crucial time as we have reached the middle of the decade in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. In this regard, we commend the choice of the theme for this meeting which is both timely and appropriate as there is an urgent need to get all our efforts together to ensure that we leave nothing undone in fulfilling the overarching goals we have laid out five years ago.

I am pleased to note that the political declaration to be adopted during the comprehensive mid term review of the VPoA in December this year has been endorsed as a consensus document. The political declaration is not only concise, action oriented, and forwardward looking but also succinctly captures the issues and challenges of LLDCs and highlights the essential areas that should continue to garner focus as we
embark on the implementation of the VPoA. If we are to achieve the objectives of the VPoA in the next half decade, more needs to be done and at a faster pace.

Bhutan is committed to working together and cooperate with other member states to foster convergent views and approaches towards addressing the common challenges faced by all LLDCs. In this regard, it was an honour to serve as one of the co-facilitators appointed by the President of the General Assembly along with Austria to facilitate the intergovernmental negotiating process. We express our appreciation to all delegations for their support and cooperation.

Mr. Chair,

Guided by our development philosophy of Gross National Happiness, Bhutan is on track for the successful implementation of the VPoA. The six priority areas of the VPoA finds resonance with our national development plan and policies towards achieving self-reliance, accelerated by green socio-economic growth through investments in strategic infrastructure and structural transformation.

Notwithstanding the growth and efforts to sustain economic development, Bhutan’s development progress has its share of challenges like many other LLDCs. In the context of Bhutan’s graduation from the LDC group category as well, it is noteworthy that while we have successfully met the graduation criteria for Gross National Income and Human Asset Index, Bhutan has not, through the past two CDP review cycles, been able to cross the threshold for Economic Vulnerability Index, which in fact, is closely linked to the persistent challenges and constraints faced by many LLDCs.

In this connection, I cannot overemphasize the importance of developing efficient, modern, and reliable infrastructure, including ICT and energy infrastructure. Weak and underdeveloped infrastructure continues to pose a major challenge for us. Recognizing its critical importance, we have adopted the development of strategic infrastructure as a key priority in our national plans and remain firm in our belief that this should form one of the main focus in implementation of the VPoA.

Mr. Chair,

Bhutan strongly believes that the implementation of the VPoA constitutes an integral part of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The commitment of the international community engrained in this Agenda is to leave no one behind, including LLDCs. As we have often heard, the progress of those at the bottom of the development ladder will serve as a true measure of the success of our efforts as an international community.
As we arrive at the midpoint of the VPoA decade, allow me to take this opportunity to underscore a few elements that would help us renew our strength and accelerate implementation in the remaining half-decade with the support of our transit and development partners:

a. Regional integration is indispensable to physical and digital connectivity, enhanced trade and FDI. It is essential to bolster integration into regional value chains. International rules and institutions should support regional integration initiatives.

b. STI can play a catalytic role, enabling LLDCs to leapfrog from being landlocked to land-linked countries. Technology transfer and support can drive structural transformation. Development partners should promote experience and technology sharing and local technological capability building, including supporting e-commerce readiness and capability.

c. We need to see renewed and strengthened international solidarity and partnership to strengthen the resilience and response of LLDCs who are vulnerable to the disproportionate impact of climate change.

d. For our efforts in the above areas to be strategic and effective, we need reliable and regular data. Hence, capacity building support to strengthen national statistical systems is therefore fundamental.

Mr. Chair,

We remain confident of your leadership to steer us through this process and assure you of our full support and cooperation as we work towards ensuring the successful implementation of the VPOA.

Thank you and Tashi Delek!

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