REMARKS
BY
HONOURABLE DR. UNITY DOW
MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
AND COOPERATION
OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

DURING

THE MINISTERIAL MEETING OF FOREIGN
AFFAIRS MINISTERS OF LANDLOCKED
DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (LLDCs)

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Mr. Chairman;
Your Excellencies;
Distinguished delegates;

1. At the outset, let me thank Paraguay for convening this important Annual Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Landlocked Developing Countries.

2. I also congratulate Kazakhstan for election as Chair of this Group, as well as other members Bureau for 2020-2021 period. I assure you of Botswana’s full support.

3. We also appreciate the support provided by the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS).

Mr. Chairman,

4. Botswana welcomes this year’s theme: “Midterm Review of the Vienna Programme of Action: Renewed strength to accelerate implementation and transformation in LLDCs”

5. The theme is indeed pertinent, as we approach the Comprehensive Mid-term Review of the Vienna Programme of Action, during the Conference to be held this December.

6. This meeting therefore affords us the opportunity to take stock of the progress made, and to address
challenges we face in the implementation of the Programme.

Mr. Chairman,

7. Our common challenges, by virtue of geographical location, need no further elaboration. As LLDCs our lack of direct link to world markets, gives rise to a number of constraints, such as:
   • prohibitive trade costs, when compared to the coastal economies;
   • inadequate infrastructure, particularly transport and ICT; and
   • requisite funding to meet the commitments of the Programme.

8. These have a bearing on the full implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and in turn, undermine progress in achieving the SDGs.

9. In fact, a 2018 study conducted by the UN Office of Project Services (UNOPS) and University of Oxford revealed that quality infrastructure influences 92% of the targets across the 17 SGD.

10. In order to leverage the potential benefits of sustainable and resilient infrastructure, there is need for enhanced cooperation with transit countries, regional bodies, private sector, as well as development partners.
11. Moreover, in view of the afore-mentioned, there is an urgent need for LLDCs to be fully integrated into the global trading system. This is important, as trade is vital for our economic growth.

Mr. Chairman,

12. We acknowledge that there has been some progress in implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action.

13. I wish to indicate that Botswana continues to make strides in the implementation of the Programme, as fully articulated in our national report submitted earlier this year.

14. Amongst others, we are actively pursuing strategies for regional cooperation on infrastructure development and integration as a means to enhance the ease of access to global markets. This includes projects such as;

- the Trans Kalahari Corridor, which is a highway linking Botswana with South Africa and Namibia; and

- the Kazungula Bridge linking Botswana with Zambia and most of the SADC region. The project also includes One Stop Border Post (OSBP) facilities in both countries.
Mr. Chairman,

15. Regional integration remains imperative for LLDCs. It is in this context that in March 2018, Botswana signed the SADC/COMESA/EAC Tripartite Free Trade Area consisting of 26 countries. We have also signed the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AFCfTA).

16. These frameworks will go a long way in boosting intra-Africa trade, and alleviating the challenges associated with tariff and non-tariff trade barriers. In other words, they will assist in consolidating regional integration and advance economic growth.

Mr. Chairman,

17. It would be remiss if I were to conclude without acknowledging the good work of Bhutan and Austria, as Co-Facilitators of the Political Declaration that will be adopted at the December Mid-term Review.

18. Botswana endorses the draft Declaration, as presented at this meeting.

I thank you for your attention!!!!!