Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to attend this Annual Ministerial Meeting of Foreign Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries, which is being organized by the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Paraguay to the United Nations.

I am pleased to take this opportunity to share some of my perspectives for consideration.

[Overview of Landlocked developing countries progress in Asia and the Pacific]

In all the 6 priority areas in the Vienna Programme of Action, including Fundamental transit policy issues (Priority 1); Infrastructure development and maintenance (Priority 2), (a) Transport infrastructure and (b) Energy and
information and communications technology infrastructure; International trade and trade facilitation (Priority 3), (a) International trade and (b) Trade facilitation; Regional integration and cooperation (Priority 4); Structural economic transformation (Priority 5); and Means of implementation (Priority 6), the Asia-Pacific regional progress has been uneven.

For example, the midterm review has revealed that member States have made progress in the implementation of fundamental transit policy issues (priority 1) and infrastructure development and maintenance (priority 2). However, progress in structural economic transformation (priority 5) is lagging in several landlocked developing countries in our region. In this regard, accelerating structural transformation and mitigating pre-mature de-industrialization, which has been observed in several LLDCs, is critical, especially as this is vital to advance SDG implementation.

In this regard, four of our region’s landlocked countries [Afghanistan, Bhutan, Lao PDR and Nepal] are also designated as least developed countries. These landlocked least developed countries are lacking adequate financial resources [priority 6].

[UN ESCAP engagement to support Asia-Pacific LLDCs]

UN ESCAP in partnership with UNOHRLLS, UNECE and UNCTAD organized the Euro-Asian midterm review of VPoA, which took place 11-12 February 2019 in Bangkok. UN ESCAP member Stated adopted a Resolution 75/1 “Implementation of the outcome of the Euro-Asian Regional Midterm Review of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024” in May 2019.
In particular, I am pleased to inform you that member States requested the UN ESCAP “to continue to provide capacity-building assistance to member States towards the smooth implementation of the six priorities of the Vienna Programme of Action”. I am committed to continue my efforts to take concrete actions in this matter.

We will also intend to transmit the outcome of the Euro-Asian Regional Midterm Review of the Vienna Programme of Action as an input of the Asia-Pacific region to the comprehensive high-level midterm review on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, which will be held in New York in December 2019.

[Way forward]

Let me highlight three key areas of our support to the LLDCs member States in our region:

First, harnessing regional transport connectivity. UN ESCAP lead the Asian transport infrastructure agreements, namely, Asian Highway Network, that continue to underpin operational connectivity, reduce regulatory constraints, costs and delays. Signatories of these agreements offer each other traffic rights for international road transport operations on parts of the Asian Highway routes connecting their territories. In this regard, Mongolia, one of the LLDCs, benefits from the Intergovernmental Agreement on International Road Transport along the Asian Highway Network between the Governments of China, Mongolia and the Russian Federation.
Second, strengthening energy connectivity. UN ESCAP has been playing an important role in supporting energy connectivity in the ASEAN region, especially by creating an enabling investment environment. ASEAN subregional energy connectivity and related energy transition processes are providing policy support in accelerating the development of the ASEAN Power Grid. For example, the Lao PDR, one of LLDCs in ASEAN subregion, are part of this facilitation to transfer and trade of green energy.

Third, pursuing trade facilitation. UN ESCAP supporting policies in accelerating trade facilitation implementation, especially by cutting red tape and automating procedures in the region, which is critical for LLDCs. Making trade easier, faster and cheaper by expanding cross-border trade digitalization and simplifying international trade procedures is key component of this process. The Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific - a United Nations treaty developed by 25 member States, many of them are LLDCs, is also creating countries to overcome barriers to structural transformation.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

To conclude, let me thank the Permanent Mission of Paraguay to organize this meeting. I must assure that UN ESCAP stands ready to support the 12 LLDCs in Asia-Pacific region towards the full and timely implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for the LLDs.

Thank you.