



ITALY

Statement by

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at the High-level Plenary Meeting devoted to the mid-term review of
the Almaty Programme of Action for the Landlocked Developing
Countries

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Check against Delivery

Mr. President,

Allow me to begin by endorsing the statement delivered by the French Presidency on behalf of the European Union.

Italy wishes to thank the Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and the Transit Developing Countries (TDCs) for preparing this Midterm Review of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, both at the national and at the regional level. We also join other delegations in expressing our appreciation to H.E. Ambassador Takasu for successfully facilitating the negotiations on the final document and the Under Secretary-General and High Representative of the Secretary-General, Sidi-Diarra, for the support his office granted to whole process of preparation of the mid-term review.

When the Italian Parliament revised the legal basis for our development cooperation in 1989, it listed among its priorities: "consolidating local development processes in the world's poorest countries and fostering their economic, social and cultural growth". For twenty years, this aim has remained at the heart of our activities. This is why Italy welcomed and continues to endorse the philosophy that led to the adoption of the Almaty Programme of Action.

Between 2003 and 2008 Italy's overall development aid in favour of landlocked developing countries increased by about 70%, for a total of approximately 250 million dollars and last year, we have contributed 50 thousand dollars to the organisation of the two preparatory meetings in Ulan-Bataar and Ouagadougou.

Mr. President,

The obstacles that governments of LLDCs and TDCs have to overcome are related not so much to their geographical location as to complex regulatory procedures, a lack of co-operation in tackling bureaucratic delays, and an underdeveloped logistics sector. Significant efforts have been made in the past five years, thanks to the Almaty framework, but we still have a long road ahead of us.

Regional and sub-regional co-operation are also important means for implementing the Almaty Programme. The relevant regional and sub-regional organizations - especially the ones conducting operational activities on the ground - are important stakeholders. Their continued interest and commitment is essential to achieving concrete progress in the implementation of the five priorities laid down in Almaty.

Italy remains as ready as ever to facilitate this process. We reaffirm our commitment to improve the performance of its bilateral assistance in this sector. At the same time, we are consistently engaged in improving the impact of these activities and in increasing funding for them.

Allow me to mention two major actions by Italy to implement the Almaty goals. First, we made a total contribution of approximately 100 million euros to the Government of Afghanistan for the rehabilitation and the partial reconstruction of the Kabul-Bamyan Highway. This initiative seeks to substantially improve the connection between two major cities, reducing transit costs and times both within Afghanistan and between Afghanistan and neighbouring

Countries. The project will also help improve the operational capability of local institutions in charge of monitoring the quality of extra-urban transportation system.

The second is the rehabilitation of the Toledo-Ancaravi section of the "Oruro Pisiga" highway in Bolivia, which Italy financed with an 18 million euro soft loan. This project constitutes a major expansion of the Bolivian road infrastructure and it will bring much needed economic progress to one of the poorest and most deserted areas of the Country.

Italy is willing to encourage our multilateral partners to step up their involvement in this area. The international financial institutions, in particular, have a real comparative advantage to provide LLDCs with the financial assistance needed to support their costly investments into infrastructure development and maintenance.

The achievement of the Millennium Development Goals requires resource mobilization and experience exchange among all partners, both at the institutional and private levels. Italy is convinced that the contribution of the private sector is crucial to the development of infrastructure and productive capacity and must be increased through the creation of public-private partnerships.

Mr. President,

The incoming Italian G8 Presidency will pay great attention to the ICT for Development. Development of transit transport infrastructure is not limited to the construction and maintenance of physical infrastructure like roads, railways, airports, ports, pipelines, etc. Physical infrastructure needs, instead, to be complemented by an efficient and modern storage and transport organisation, logistics management systems, and integrated information and communication networks.

Bridging the digital divide, promoting "good governance", exchange of experiences and best practices, and proper training and education in landlocked and transit developing countries is consistent with Priority One of the Almaty Programme of Action. In this regard, Italy will promote projects fostering the dissemination of e-Government instruments aiming at improving and speeding up complicated bureaucratic procedures, for instance in the field of customs and logistics.

Italy is keen on discussing with partners further development of these initiatives, and on elaborating strategies for their implementation, involving the private sector and all major stakeholders.

Mr. President,

Italy is ready to do its part to help landlocked and transit developing countries. At the same time we expect developing countries to continue to assume ownership and design appropriate national policies, in the framework of agreed regional initiatives. We are confident that together we will succeed.

Thank you.