



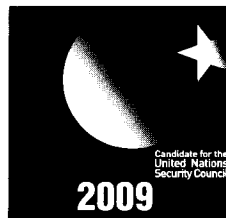
PERMANENT MISSION OF TURKEY TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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**STATEMENT BY
H.E. AMBASSADOR BAKI İLKİN
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF TURKEY
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**HIGH LEVEL PLENARY MEETING DEVOTED TO THE MIDTERM
REVIEW OF THE ALMATI PROGRAMME OF ACTION**

NEW YORK, 2 OCTOBER 2008



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Mr. President,
Distinguished Delegates,

It gives me pleasure to address the General Assembly on the occasion of the high-level meeting devoted to the midterm review of Almaty Program of Action. Seizing this opportunity, I would like to share some of our views on this important topic.

It is clear that the LLDCs still face serious challenges today. And, these challenges are not limited only to the geographical and physical constraints. The LLDCs are also facing certain structural inadequacies. Although these shortcomings do not fully define all the socio-economic development problems of the LLDCs, they still undermine their economic growth.

The Almaty Program of Action (APoA) provides a solid framework for international cooperation aimed at addressing the challenges faced by the LLDCs. Already, there has been a considerable progress in implementing the priority areas of the Program of Action. Yet, we have to continue our collective efforts to create genuine partnerships between the landlocked and transit countries through regional integration schemes. Another important dimension in this regard is promoting closer cooperation between the LLDCs and their development partners, which will pave the way for transport infrastructure development, trade facilitation and market access.

The economic development and growth of the LLDCs on the whole has been promising since the adoption of the APoA. Yet, rising transport costs and persistent structural issues have the potential to slow down this positive trend.

Mr. President,

Let me briefly elaborate on how Turkey does its part to address the challenges that the LLDCs are faced with. In the dictionary of development, the word bridge has a number of meanings. In the case of Turkey, the notion of being a bridge has firstly a geographical connotation. The Anatolian peninsula has been at the epicenter of major trade routes. Starting with the historic Silk Road, Turkey has always been a conduit of close regional transport cooperation and thus trade promotion. This is still very much the case.

We all know that the international trade serves as a powerful engine for development. This applies to all nations but it is certainly vital for landlocked countries. Mindful of this fact, Turkey has committed itself to the facilitation of transport links between the landlocked countries of Asia and their trading partners in Europe. Indeed, with the realization of two railway construction projects – one being the undersea railroad crossing of the Istanbul Strait and the other being Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railroad – the rail link between Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia will have been completed. Turkey also actively participates in multilateral transport arrangements like TRACECA.

Because of its unique geographic location, Turkey is also one of the few countries that are members to both the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UN-ECE) and to the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP). These two important UN bodies have joined forces to harmonize and eventually link the transport networks of two of the most populous continents. Turkey has worked proactively for this historic project to become a reality. In this framework, Turkey is party to the Asian Highway Network (AHN) agreement, Trans-European North-South Motorway (TEM) project, Trans-European Railway Project and is currently negotiating for the extension of the Trans-European Transport Networks to its own territory. Completion of these projects would further facilitate the access of landlocked countries to their important trading partners.

Located geostrategically at the intersection of different continents Turkey serves as a natural transport bridge between the oil and gas rich Caucasian, Central Asian regions and the European markets and thus assisting the Caucasian and Central Asian countries in their economic development efforts.

However, the provision of transit transport facilities is only one dimension of the problems that the LLDCs face. The LLDCs need to further upgrade their transport networks and related infrastructure too. Here, Turkey again plays a part. Through the Turkish International Cooperation Agency (TİKA), Turkey in the last three years either directly undertook or partly financed multiple transport infrastructure projects totaling 19 million USD. We have also been providing various training and education programs for the experts from the Central Asian Republics. And I am pleased to announce today the Turkish Government's decision to contribute 200,000 USD to the trust fund established to facilitate the follow-up activities for the implementation of the Almaty Program of Action.

Mr. President,

Our collective efforts to address the special needs and problems of the LLDCs are indeed vital for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. We will continue to do our utmost in assisting the LLDCs in their development endeavors. In conclusion, I would like to extend our warm thanks to the Permanent Representative of Japan, H.E. Ambassador Takasu, for his diligent work as facilitator in the negotiation process of the Declaration that will be formally adopted at the end of this meeting. I also wish to express our deep appreciation to Under-Secretary-General and High Representative Mr. Diarra and his team for their tireless work.

Thank you.