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Closing Statement by

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the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and
Small Island Developing States**

**Experts Group Meeting on Improving transit cooperation and trade
facilitation for further integration of LLDCs in global trade.**

World Trade Organization, Geneva

18 October 2019

Dear Colleagues,
Distinguished Experts,

I thank you all for your very active participation in the discussions since yesterday on how transit cooperation and trade facilitation can be enhanced for further integration of LLDCs in global trade. I would like to thank you for your contributions that were very concrete, informative, and thought provoking.

To briefly summarize the discussion, we heard that the implementation of the TFA by LLDCs and transit countries is still lagging. It was noted however that LLDCs have made some progress in the implementation of trade facilitation Agreement between 2017 and 2019 as highlighted by the UN Regional Commissions Global Survey.

The importance of coordination both at national level and with neighboring transit countries as well as at regional level was emphasized. It was highlighted that LLDCs need to strengthen national coordination as it was lagging. It was noted that LLDCs had not been able to indicate their technical assistance needs, implying that they require support to identify their technical assistance.

The importance of transparency was highlighted as being fundamental for traders especially for the small and medium enterprises. Publication of trade regulations including fees and charges as well as their periodic review and update were emphasized including their importance to Micro Small and Medium Enterprises. Keeping information updated was highlighted as one of the challenges. We heard about the available technical assistance by WBG and UNCTAD to develop trade information portals.

The use of international and regional standards to simplify and standardize documents and procedures were highlighted as one of key elements to achieving efficient transit. We heard that UN/CEFACT has developed over forty recommendations, most of which target facilitating trade procedures. UNECE indicated that most of these are free and encouraged Members to seek assistance. Simplification and harmonization were highlighted as an important stepping stone to the use of single windows.

We also heard that hard infrastructure is also fundamental in transit and trade facilitation and therefore support for both hard and soft infrastructure should parallel. The discussions also suggested use of corridors to be important for improved transit.

ICT present opportunities to facilitate trade and transit. It eases exchange of information by border agencies including with neighboring countries. We heard

about application of programs such as ASYCUDA transit, technologies for inspections at borders, just to name but a few.

LLDCs, transit countries and sub-regional organizations shared experience on their successes and challenges. We heard that national and regional trade facilitation strategies/programmes have been established. It is evident that there is commitment to implement trade facilitation but resources remain a challenge.

Distinguished Experts,

This is just to mention but a few of the key takeaways from this meeting. As indicated in the opening, this meeting is organized as one of the thematic events of the Midterm Review of the Vienna Programme of Action and recommendations from this meeting are important as we get to the last five years of the implementation of the VPoA.

In conclusion, I once again wish to thank you all for contributing to this important meeting. We will prepare a report of the proceedings and share with you. I wish to once again thank WTO Trade Facilitation Facility for their cooperation and support. I also like to thank the partners who continue to make contribution to the Facility to support developing countries including LLDCs to implement the TFA. I also wish to thank UNCTAD for their collaboration in organizing this experts group meeting.

Last but not least, I would like to thank the interpreters for making our exchanges possible.

Please be informed that all the presentations will be posted on our website in next few days.

I wish you a safe trip back home.

Thank you.