



## **Informal stock-taking meeting of the Economic and Social Council on the Second UN Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries**

**Venue: Conference Room 4, UN Headquarters**

**Date: Tuesday, 13 January 2015**

**Time: 1000 -1300 Hours**

### **Introduction**

The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)—as the principal body for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on economic, social and environmental issues, as well as for implementation of the internationally agreed development goals —will convene an informal stock-taking meeting on the second UN Conference on LLDCs that took place 3-5 November 2014 in Austria, Vienna. This special meeting, organized by the United Nations Office of the High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS (UN-OHRLLS) and the Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination of UNDESA, will be held on Tuesday, 13 January 2015 at 10 a.m. in the Economic and Social Chamber. The meeting will provide an opportunity to deliberate on how the six priorities of the Vienna Programme of Action can be integrated in other processes, including the post-2015 development agenda, Sustainable Development Goals, Financing for Development, the Climate Change Agenda, and the work of ECOSOC.

### **Background**

The Vienna Declaration and the Vienna Programme of Action for the Decade 2014-2024<sup>1</sup> (VPoA, henceforth) were adopted at the second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), underscoring the commitment of the international community to address challenges related to landlockedness, remoteness and geographical isolation. VPoA is an ambitious development agenda that seeks to put LLDCs on a steady path for sustainable, inclusive and more rapid economic growth and development with the stated aim of ending extreme poverty.

The Vienna Conference<sup>2</sup>, attended by high-level officials from 129 UN Member States, including Heads of State and Governments, Ministers, officials, private sector representatives, academia and civil society representatives as well as representatives from the UN system and other international organizations, had two primary objectives: to comprehensively assess progress made under the Almaty Programme of Action (APoA), and to provide a new development blueprint that would guide LLDCs in the next decade.

With the support of their development partners and multilateral institutions, the past decade was a period of notable development progress in LLDCs. In particular, LLDCs made good

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<sup>1</sup> A/RES/69/137

<sup>2</sup> 3-5 November 2014, Vienna, Austria

progress in the realm of infrastructure, including transport, energy and ICTs, national laws and reforms regulating multimodal transport of goods, dry port services, and harmonization of legal frameworks. As a result, LLDCs were enjoying an increased rate of growth, greater participation in international trade, and commendable progress on the social front. In spite of this progress, the review showed that LLDCs were still facing enormous challenges related to landlockedness, geographical isolation and remoteness.

The conference acknowledged that for a majority of LLDCs, social and economic prosperity is hampered by challenges that go well beyond a lack of deep seaports, inherent reliance on neighbouring states for external trade, and unacceptably high costs of transaction in comparison to their maritime neighbours. Besides these impediments, LLDCs are saddled with other growth-limiting conditions, such as: weak and declining productive capacities, ineffective policy set-up and state institutions, weak domestic markets (financial and commodities), overreliance on low-value, high bulk commodities for exports, and high unemployment and incidence of extreme poverty, among others.

In order to comprehensively deal with these challenges, the international community came up with six inter-dependent priorities in the VPoA, namely: (1) **fundamental transit policy issues**; (2) **infrastructure development and maintenance**; (3) **international trade and trade facilitation**; (4) **regional integration and cooperation**; (5) **structural economic transformation**; and (6) **means of implementation**. Each of these priorities contain a set of specific actions to be undertaken by LLDCs and their development partners, including transit neighbours, the private sector, United Nations system entities and other multilateral organizations. Furthermore, VPoA is built on the basis of strong and close collaboration between LLDCs and their development partners in a variety of contexts, including, multilateral, bilateral and the South-South and triangular cooperation.

The six principal thrusts of VPoA identified above underscore a growing understanding of the development challenges that confront LLDCs, and demonstrates a structural shift in the manner in which needed support is provided: from a sectoral to a holistic approach. In the last decade, global support to LLDCs was motivated by the Almaty Programme of Action (APoA) which was a narrow, sectoral programme of the United Nations with a focus on transport infrastructure, international trade and trade facilitation measures. APoA yielded a number of desirable, commendable yet limited outcomes. LLDCs also benefitted from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) and Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI) initiatives, and other global development frameworks.

The VPoA is one of several global initiatives that are aimed at improving the economic and social wellbeing in LLDCs. For instance, LLDCs stand to benefit from the full implementation negotiations that successfully led to a Trade Facilitation Agreement which is a part of a wider Bali Package of the World Trade Organization. The third *Financing for Development* (FfD) conference in Addis Ababa as well as the Sustainable Development Goals is of great importance to LLDCs and other developing countries.

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