

**Declaration of the high-level meeting of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly
on the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action**

We, the Ministers and heads of delegations participating in the High level plenary meeting of the General Assembly on the Midterm Review of the Almaty Programme of Action, held in New York on 2 and 3 October 2008:

PP1 *Recalling* the United Nations Millennium Declaration,¹ in which Heads of State and Government recognized the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries and urged both bilateral and multilateral donors to increase financial and technical assistance to this group of countries to meet their particular development needs and to help them to overcome the impediments of geography by improving their transit transport systems, and resolved to create an environment, at the national and global levels alike, that is conducive to development and to the eradication of poverty,

PP2 *Reaffirming* our commitment to urgently addressing the special development needs of and challenges faced by the landlocked developing countries through the full, timely and effective implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, as called for in the 2005 World Summit Outcome,²

PP3 *Reaffirming* that the Almaty Programme of Action constitutes a fundamental framework for genuine partnerships between landlocked and transit developing countries and their development partners at the national, bilateral, sub regional, regional and global levels,

PP4 *Recognizing* that the primary responsibility for establishing effective transit systems rests with the landlocked and transit developing countries, which need to seek to create conditions in which resources can be generated, attracted and effectively mobilized to address their development challenges, but their efforts need to be given continued international support by the development partners and international and regional organizations in a spirit of shared responsibility; including the role of South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation, also taking into account agreements of regional integration,

PP5 *Also recognizing* that the private sector is an important stakeholder, whose contribution to the development of infrastructure and productive capacity should be increased, including through public-private partnerships,

PP6 *Recognizing also* that cooperation between transit countries and landlocked developing countries results in better transit transport systems. This cooperation between landlocked developing countries and transit developing countries must be promoted on the basis of mutual interest of both landlocked and transit developing countries,

PP7 *Reaffirming* the right of access of landlocked countries to and from the sea and freedom of transit through the territory of transit countries by all means of transport, in accordance with applicable rules of international law,

¹ See resolution 55/2.

² See resolution 60/1.

PP8 *Reaffirming further* that transit countries, in the exercise of their full sovereignty over their territory, have the right to take all measures necessary to ensure that the rights and facilities provided for landlocked countries in no way infringe upon their legitimate interests,

PP9 *Expressing support* to those landlocked developing countries that are emerging from conflict, with a view to enabling them to rehabilitate and reconstruct, as appropriate, political, social and economic infrastructure and assisting them in achieving their development priorities in accordance with the goals and targets of the Almaty Programme of Action, as well as the Millennium Development Goals,

PP10 *Taking note* of the outcome documents of the Thematic Meeting on Transit Transport Infrastructure Development, held in Ouagadougou from 18 to 20 June 2007,³ 10 and of the Thematic Meeting on International Trade and Trade Facilitation, held in Ulaanbaatar on 30 and 31 August 2007,⁴

PP11 *Also taking note* of the regional review meeting for Asia and Europe,⁵ held on 22 and 23 April 2008 in Bangkok, the regional review meeting for Africa,⁶ held from 18 to 20 June 2008 in Addis Ababa, and the regional review meeting for Latin America,⁷ held on 30 June 2008 in Buenos Aires and their respective outcome documents.

1. *Reaffirm* the commitment made in the Almaty Programme of Action of addressing the special needs of the landlocked developing countries, taking into account the challenges confronted by their transit developing neighbours, through measures identified in the five priorities of the Almaty Programme of Action.

GENERAL ASSESSMENT

2. *Acknowledge* that despite persisting problems, landlocked developing countries, as a group, achieved some progress in their overall economic development and growth. They recorded increased growth rates of GDP and foreign direct investment in the past five years; exports surged particularly for oil and other mineral resources.

3. *Express concern* that the economic growth and social well-being of landlocked developing countries remain very vulnerable to external shocks as well as the multiple challenges the international community faces.

4. *Acknowledge* that landlocked and transit developing countries, with the support of their development partners, registered some progress in implementing the specific actions agreed upon in the Almaty Programme of Action. Landlocked and transit developing countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America strengthened their policy and governance, reform efforts. Donor countries, financial and development institutions and international and regional organizations paid greater attention to the establishment of efficient transit systems.

³ A/62/256 and Corr.1, annexes I and II.

⁴ A/C.2/62/4, annexes I and II.

⁵ See E/ESCAP/64/INF/6 of 24 April 2008.

⁶ See E/ECA/Almaty/08 of 30 July 2008.

⁷ See —

5. *Recognize* that, though the difficulties of being landlocked permeate every aspect of the development process and poverty eradication, their negative impact on external trade is particularly severe. While some progress, even though uneven, has been made, landlocked developing countries continue to be marginalized from international trade, thus preventing them from fully using trade as an instrument for achieving their development goals.

6. *Stress* that the higher cost of moving goods across borders for landlocked developing countries puts their products at a competitive disadvantage and discouraged foreign investment, and that landlocked developing countries continue to face challenges in their efforts to establish efficient transit transport systems, such as inadequate transport infrastructure, insufficient carrying capacity at ports, port and customs clearance delays, transit dependence, fees and obstacles owing to cumbersome customs procedures and other regulatory constraints, underdeveloped logistics sector, weak legal and institutional arrangements, as well as costly bank transactions. Also, in most cases, the transit neighbours of landlocked developing countries are themselves developing countries, often of broadly similar economic structure and beset by similar scarcities of resources. These challenges need to be urgently addressed through the acceleration of the implementation of the specific actions under each of the priorities laid out in the Almaty Programme of Action.

FUNDAMENTAL TRANSIT POLICY ISSUES

7. *Welcome* the efforts made by many landlocked and transit developing countries to reform their administrative, legal and macroeconomic policies, based on an integrated approach to trade and transport. Reform measures included the liberalization of transit and transport services, accession to relevant international conventions, establishment of regional inter-modal transport corridors, development of transparent streamlined and common rules and standards that have strengthened private and public sector dialogue to address the bottlenecks that exist at different segments of transit services. Continued efforts need to be made to ensure effective implementation of these positive reforms and to ensure that transport strategies and programmes, particularly where they involve regulation of transport operations or construction of major new infrastructure, take full account of environmental aspects and development needs to ensure sustainable development at local and global levels. The international community, including financial and development institutions and donor countries, should provide greater assistance to landlocked and transit developing countries in this regard.

8. *Recognize* the important role of regional cooperation and integration involving landlocked developing countries and their transit neighbors for the effective and integrated solution to cross-border trade and transit transport problems. In this context, we *particularly welcome* regional initiatives aimed at promoting the development of regional rail and road transit transport networks, such as the agreements on the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway, the NEPAD Short Term Action Plan on Infrastructure, the Sub-Saharan Africa Transport Programme (SSATP), the Initiative for Regional Infrastructure Integration in South America (IRISA), the Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA), the Africa Infrastructure Country Diagnostic (AICD) as well as the Infrastructure Consortium for Africa (ICA).

9. *Recognize* that international conventions on transport and transit, as well as regional, sub-regional and bilateral agreements, ratified by landlocked and transit developing countries are the main vehicles by which the harmonization, simplification and standardization of rules and

documentation can be achieved. We encourage both landlocked developing countries and transit developing countries to effectively implement the provisions of those conventions and agreements.

TRANSIT TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE

10. *Acknowledge* that, in spite of some improvement in transit transport infrastructure development in landlocked developing countries, inadequate and deteriorating physical infrastructure in rail transport, road transport, ports, inland waterways, pipelines, air transport and information and communications technology in many landlocked developing countries, along with few harmonized rules and procedures, little cross-border investment and private-sector participation, are the major obstacles to developing viable and predictable transit transport systems. Physical links of landlocked developing countries to the regional transport infrastructure network fall well short of expectations. Missing links are a major problem and need to be addressed urgently.

11. *Recognize* that the construction of transit transport infrastructure, especially the missing links to complete regional networks, and the improvement and maintenance of existing facilities play a key role in the process to achieve the internationally agreed goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

12. *Encourage* landlocked and transit developing countries to allocate a greater share of public investment to the development and maintenance of infrastructure supported by, as appropriate, financial assistance and investment from donors, international financial institutions and development assistance agencies. We note that private sector participation should also be encouraged in this regard.

13. *Emphasize* that the development and improvement of transit transport facilities and services should be integrated into the overall development strategies of the landlocked and transit developing countries and that donor countries should consequently take into account the requirements for the long-term restructuring of the economies of the landlocked developing countries.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND TRADE FACILITATION

14. *Note* that some progress has been achieved by landlocked developing countries in the area of international trade though limited and uneven.

15. *Express concern* that the share of world merchandise trade of landlocked developing countries has remained small. Most landlocked developing countries are still dependent on the export of a limited number of commodities. Their continued marginalization from the international trading system prevents them from fully using trade as an instrument for achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

16. *Note with concern* that approximately one third of all landlocked developing countries is still outside the rules-based multilateral trading system. Therefore we *stress* that the accession of landlocked and transit developing countries to the World Trade Organization should be further accelerated. In this respect, the accession process for landlocked and transit developing countries should take into account their individual level of development, including special needs and

problems caused by the geographical disadvantage. The development partners should provide assistance in this matter.

17. *Recognize* that one of the main causes of the marginalization of landlocked developing countries from the international trading system is high trade transaction costs. Therefore we *stress* the need for the current negotiations on market access for agricultural and non-agricultural goods to consider giving particular attention to products of special interest to landlocked developing countries.

18. *Reaffirm* that in accordance with the commitments contained in the Doha Ministerial Declaration, in particular paragraphs 13 and 16, and the rules of the World Trade Organization, current trade negotiations should give full attention to the needs and interests of developing countries, including landlocked and transit developing countries.

19. *Note* that on-going WTO negotiations on trade facilitation, particularly on GATT article V on Freedom of Transit, Article VIII on fees and formalities, and Article X on transparency as per the modalities contained in Annex D of the decision of the General Council of the WTO of 1 August 2004 are particularly important for landlocked developing countries to gain a more efficient flow of goods and services as well as the improved international competitiveness that result from lower transaction cost. In this context, technical assistance should be provided to developing countries, more in particular to landlocked developing countries.

20. *Recognize* some progress reached on border crossings coordination, infrastructure investment, facilities for the storing of merchandise, normative frameworks and other facilities that benefit both landlocked and transit developing countries.

21. *Acknowledge* however that a large number of bottlenecks related to trade facilitation persist in many landlocked and transit developing countries. These bottlenecks need to be urgently addressed. They include excessive number of documents required for export/import; multiplication of scheduled and unscheduled roadblocks; lack of adjacent border controls; unnecessary customs convoy; complicated and non-standardized procedures for customs clearance and inspections; insufficient application of information and communications technology; non-transparency of trade and customs laws, regulations and procedures, lack of institutional capacities and trained human resources; underdeveloped logistics services, lack of interoperability of transport systems and absence of competition in the transit transport services sector; slow progress in establishing or strengthening national trade and transport facilitation committees; low level of adherence to international conventions on transit transport.

INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT MEASURES

22. *Acknowledge* the increase in development assistance and debt relief measures in favour of landlocked developing countries. However, we *note* that much of the official development assistance goes to emergency and food aid. The allocation of development assistance to transport, storage and communications has not changed over the past five years, whereas the need for increased financial support for the construction and maintenance of infrastructure remains valid and urgent. In spite of Enhanced HIPC and MDRI initiatives, which provided debt relief to several landlocked and transit developing countries, the debt burden remains high for many of these countries.

23. *Stress* the need to attract private investment, including Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Private sector participation through co-financing can play a catalytic role in this regard. We recall that notwithstanding the increase of FDI flows, private sector involvement in infrastructure development still has a considerable potential.

24. *Acknowledge* also the increased attention and resources devoted to the challenges facing landlocked and transit developing countries by UN System and international organizations. We *recognize* with appreciation the progress made toward developing effective monitoring mechanisms to measure the progress in implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action. We *appreciate* the work undertaken by the UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) on a set of macroeconomic, trade and transport indicators, UNESCAP on the time/cost methodology and the World Bank with its Logistics Performance Index and the Doing Business indicators that provide quantifiable data to measure the progress and emphasize that these efforts should be further pursued.

FUTURE ACTIONS TO ACCELERATE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ALMATY PROGRAMME OF ACTION

25. *Call upon* landlocked and transit developing countries to undertake the following measures to speed up the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action:

- (a) Promote lesson learning from existing regional infrastructure initiatives that aim to encourage integrated cross-border infrastructure investment;
- (b) Further strengthen the legal framework governing transit transport operations including through full and effective implementation of bilateral, subregional and regional agreements;
- (c) Promote inter-railway co-operation with a view to facilitating operation of through trains;
- (d) facilitate road transit operations by harmonizing road transit charges, vehicle dimensions, axle load limits and gross vehicle mass, third party motor insurance schemes, contracts of carriage of goods by road;
- (e) effectively implement the trade facilitation measures including implementation of regional customs transit schemes, reduction/minimization of the number of trade and transport documents, harmonized working hours at national borders, publication of transit formalities and fees and charges, inter-agency coordination of border controls services, establishment of port communities and promotion of their effective operation;
- (f) consider the possibility of negotiating and granting duty free zones at maritime ports, where this has not been done;
- (g) make efforts towards elimination of the practice of customs convoys. For this purpose, negotiate mutually beneficial arrangements to introduce a system of approved secure vehicles for transit operations; where escort is warranted, arrange daily customs escorts;
- (h) take appropriate and effective measures to monitor control agents on the road transport corridors in order to reduce road blocks. In this context, the UN Regional Commissions should assist transit developing countries in addressing the issue of diversion of transit goods to domestic markets;

- (i) improve border infrastructure facilities and introduce one-window and one stop-border system alongside with necessary capacity building programs;
- (j) make full use of available information and communication technology to enhance trade facilitation and facilitate information sharing between and among transport and trade stakeholders;
- (k) widen and deepen the public and private sector cooperation and collaboration and, in this context, expand platforms for public-private sector dialogue, such as trade and transport facilitation committees or corridor management committees;
- (l) mobilize adequate investment from all sources, including private sector investment, for the development and maintenance of transport networks, as well as the construction of missing links;
- (m) where appropriate, use mutually beneficial public-private partnerships for securing additional financial resources and modern technological and management systems;
- (n) keep abreast of changing technologies and management systems which impact on trade and transport. In this context, container capacity expansion is urgent in many maritime ports;
- (o) consider designating a focal point responsible for the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and its coordination at the national level.

26. *Welcome* the proposal to set up in Ulaanbaatar an international think-tank to enhance the analytical capability of landlocked developing countries needed for maximizing the efficiency of our coordinated efforts for the effective implementation of the internationally agreed provisions, particularly the Almaty Program of Action and the Millennium Development Goals. For this purpose, we urge the international organizations and donor countries to assist them in materializing this initiative.

27. *Call upon* donors and the multilateral, regional, financial and development institutions to provide landlocked and transit developing countries with appropriate, substantial and better coordinated technical and financial assistance particularly in the form of grants or concessionary loans for the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action in particular for the construction, maintenance and improvement of their transport, storage and other transit-related facilities, including alternative routes and improved communications, to promote sub-regional, regional and interregional projects and programmes.

28. *Call upon also* the development partners to effectively operationalize the Aid for Trade initiative so as to support trade facilitation measures and trade-related technical assistance, as well as the diversification of the export products through SMEs development and private sector involvement in landlocked developing countries.

29. *Encourage* the international community to enhance efforts to facilitate access to, and encourage transfer of, technologies related to transit transport systems, including information and communication technology.

30. *Further strengthen* South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation with the involvement of donors, as well as cooperation among sub-regional and regional organizations in support of landlocked and transit developing countries towards the full and effective implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action.

31. *Call upon* the relevant organizations of the United Nations system the regional commissions, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, and *invite* other international organizations, including the World Bank, the regional development banks, the World Customs Organization, the World Trade Organization, regional economic integration organizations, and other relevant regional and subregional organizations, to further integrate the Almaty Programme of Action into their relevant programmes of work, taking into account the midterm review, and *encourage* them to continue, as appropriate, within their respective mandates, their support to the landlocked and transit developing countries, inter alia, through well-coordinated and coherent technical assistance programmes in transit transport and trade facilitation. In particular, we:

- (a) *encourage* the UN-OHRLLS to continue to ensure coordinated follow up and effective monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, in line with General Assembly resolution 57/270 B., to step up its advocacy efforts to raise international awareness of the Programme as well as mobilize resources; and to further develop cooperation with the UN System organizations in order to ensure the timely and effective implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action;
- (b) *encourage* the UN regional commissions to continue to strengthen their efforts to work with landlocked and transit developing countries to develop integrated regional transit transport systems, harmonize regulatory requirements and procedures for import/export and transit with international conventions and standards, promote intermodal transport corridors, encourage access to and more effective implementation of international conventions on transit transport, assist in the establishment of national trade and transport facilitation coordination mechanisms and in improving the planning and development of the missing links in regional infrastructure networks, especially in Africa;
- (c) *encourage* the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development to continue to strengthen its technical assistance in the areas of infrastructure and services, transit transport arrangements, electronic commerce; trade facilitation as well WTO trade negotiations and accession. The Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes should, within its mandate, strengthen its analytical work and technical assistance to the landlocked developing countries. UNCTAD should also develop pragmatic tools and investment guides, as well as identify best practices, to assist the landlocked developing countries in their efforts to attract a larger share of FDI flows;
- (d) *encourage* the United Nations Development Programme to enhance its provision of trade-related technical assistance and capacity building programs to landlocked developing countries;
- (e) *invite* the World Trade Organization to continue to provide technical assistance to landlocked developing countries to enhance their negotiating capabilities;
- (f) *invite* the World Bank to continue to give priority to requests for technical assistance to supplement national and regional efforts to promote the efficient use of existing transit facilities, including the application of information technologies and the simplification of procedures and documents,
- (g) *invite* the World Customs Organization and other relevant international and regional organizations to continue to strengthen its provision of technical assistance and capacity

building programs to landlocked and transit developing countries in the area of customs reform, simplification and harmonization of procedures, enforcement and compliance.

32. *Invite* the General Assembly to consider, at the appropriate time, undertaking the final review of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action in accordance with paragraph 49 of the Almaty Programme of Action.

**Organizational arrangements for the high-level plenary meetings devoted to the
midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action
New York, 2 and 3 October 2008**

Information Note

Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 62/204, inter alia, decided to hold two days of high-level plenary meetings devoted to the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action during its sixty-third session in New York, on 2 and 3 October 2008, to be chaired by the President of the Assembly. This note outlines proposed arrangements for the high-level plenary meetings.

Participation

2. Participation in the high-level plenary meetings is expected at the ministerial or highest possible level.

Programme of the high-level plenary meetings devoted to the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action

3. The high-level plenary meeting on the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action will comprise plenary meetings and a high-level panel.
4. The opening of the high-level plenary meeting shall be addressed by the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General of the United Nations. In addition, the President of the General Assembly intends to invite two or three Heads of State or Government to address the opening session.
5. Member States are encouraged to limit their interventions during the plenary meetings to not more than seven minutes. A formal list of speakers will be opened with the General Assembly Branch.
6. The outcome document of the high-level midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action will be adopted at the closing of the high level plenary meeting.

High-level Panel

7. A high-level panel on the "*Role of International Support in establishing efficient transit transport systems to expand trade opportunities for landlocked developing countries*", will be held on 2 October 2008 in the Trusteeship Council Chamber immediately following the opening of the high-level plenary meeting. The panel will be moderated by The High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.
8. Presentations will be made by the Heads of relevant UN Agencies, financial and development institutions, such as UNCTAD, UNDP and regional development banks. The floor will be then open for an interactive, free-flowing discussion. Participants are encouraged to limit their interventions to not more than three minutes. There will be no formal list of speakers. Representatives of the relevant non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and

Social Council, civil society organizations, and the private sector will be invited to participate in the high level panel.

Pre-conference and side events

9. There will be an investment forum on 1 October 2008, from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm and from 3:00 to 6:00 pm in the ECOSOC Chamber, entitled: *“Investing in Landlocked Developing Countries: trends, experiences and the way forward”*, organized jointly by the UN-OHRLLS, UNCTAD and the World Bank. Government representatives and representatives of national investment promotion agencies and the private sector from host and home countries will participate as panellists. The floor will then be open for an interactive discussion.
10. A round table on the following theme: *“Regional dimension for transit transport cooperation”* will take place between 1:15 p.m.-2:45 p.m. on 3 October 2008, to be moderated by the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. Presentations will be made by the Executive Secretaries of the UN Regional Commissions on their efforts to establish efficient transit transport systems in their respective regions.

**High-level plenary meeting devoted to the
midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action
(2 and 3 October 2008)**

Tentative Programme

Thursday, 2 October 2008

10:00 – 11:00 am
(General Assembly Hall)

Opening of the high-level plenary meeting

11:15 am – 1:00 pm
(Trusteeship Council)

Panel: Role of International Support in establishing efficient transit transport systems to expand trade opportunities for LLDCs
Moderator: Mr. Cheick Sidi Diarra, Under-Secretary General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States

Presentation by Mr. Kemal Dervis, UNDP Administrator

Presentation by Mr. Supachai Panitchpakdi, UNCTAD Secretary General

Presentation by Mr. Luis Alberto Moreno, President, Inter-American Development Bank (TBC)

Presentation by Mr. Danny Leipziger, Vice President, Poverty Reduction and Economic Management, World Bank

Presentation by Mr. Modibo I. Toure, Chief of Staff and Director of President's Office, African Development Bank

Presentation by Ms. Thelma Diaz, Resident Director General of North American Representative Office, Asian Development Bank

3:00 – 6:00 pm

Continuation of the high-level plenary meeting.*

Friday, 3 October 2008

10:00 am – 1:00 pm
(General Assembly Hall)

Continuation of the high-level plenary meeting.*

3:00 – 5:30 pm
(General Assembly Hall)

Continuation of the high-level plenary meeting.*

5:30 – 6:00 pm
(General Assembly Hall)

Closing of the high-level plenary meeting

* Statements in the plenary are limited to seven minutes.

2 October 2008

**Statement of Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann,
President of the 63rd Session of the General Assembly,
at the High Level Plenary Meeting on the Midterm Review of the Almaty Programme
of Action**

Excellencies,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Friends all,

I am very pleased to welcome you all to this high-level plenary meeting on the mid-term review of the Almaty Programme of Action. Over the next two days we will focus our attention on the impressive work underway to ensure that landlocked developing countries have transit transport systems to facilitate their access to international trade despite their physical isolation.

As you know, earlier this week the General Assembly concluded its General Debate. I was very pleased that we devoted our time and efforts to two high-level meetings on the special needs of Africa and on the Millennium Development Goals. Both meetings were of particular interest to landlocked countries. It is notable that nine of the fourteen countries with the lowest Human Development Index scores last year are landlocked.

World leaders were in agreement that the turmoil of the world's financial markets must not jeopardize the funding commitments made to Africa and the MDGs. As representatives of landlocked developing countries, you know more than anyone the vulnerability of your economies to erratic markets and the soaring transportation costs. I promise to do all I can as President of the General Assembly to assure the continuing support of the international community for landlocked nations.

We are living in troubled times and billions of people are looking to the United Nations to fulfill the promises of security and well being that they have entrusted to us. As I look at the accomplishments since the 2003 Almaty Conference, I am heartened to see the central and effective role the UN is playing in the implementation of Almaty Programme of Action.

Facilitating negotiations and assisting the implementation of complex development projects is what the United Nations is all about. The success of the Programme can only strengthen the United Nations at a time when it is looking to enhance its participation in international economic policy making.

The 2003 Almaty Conference aimed to forge global partnerships to address the special needs of these countries by tackling their continued marginalization from the world economy in a focused, but holistic fashion.

The resulting Almaty Programme of Action outlines a clear set of priorities for action in transit policy issues, infrastructure development and maintenance, international trade and trade facilitation, and international support measures.

There has been considerable progress since the Almaty Programme of Action was adopted five years ago. Thanks to their cooperative efforts, donor nations, a range of international, regional and subregional organizations and financial institutions have stepped up their targeted assistance and support for the landlocked and transit developing countries.

In and of itself, the decision by the General Assembly to convene the present midterm review of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action reflects the commitment of the international community to the full and effective implementation of the programme.

However, much more needs to be done to achieve the Programme's overarching goal of establishing efficient transit transport systems in all landlocked regions of the world.

Geographical realities coupled with critical infrastructure deficiencies, as well as cumbersome border crossing procedures, continue to pose daunting impediments to the external trade of landlocked developing countries.

Landlocked country export development is severely constrained by rising transit transport costs. These limit the range of potential exports and markets in which goods can be competitively and profitably traded.

Today, high trade transaction costs remain the single most important obstacle to the equitable and competitive access by landlocked countries to global markets.

This midterm review is an extremely important exercise to assess what has been achieved so far and what can be done better. It will guide the second half of the implementation period of the Almaty Programme so that it can more effectively assist landlocked developing countries in their effective integration in the international trading system.

We know that success thus far has depended on a range of partners. They have enabled the establishment of more effective transit transport systems that benefit landlocked developing countries and their transit neighbors in all regions of the world.

The generosity and support of Member States has been and will be crucial to safeguard the progress achieved, and to accelerate progress in the years ahead. In this regard, I would like to express special thanks to His Excellency Yukio Takasu of Japan for his excellent work in facilitating the negotiation process of the outcome document that Member States are expected to adopt tomorrow.

Let us all reaffirm, in the course of this meeting, the crucial importance of these partnerships, with the United Nations systems chief among them. Thank you.

3 October 2008

**Statement of Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann,
President of the 63rd Session of the General Assembly,
at the Closing of the High Level Plenary Meeting on the Midterm Review of the
Almaty Programme of Action**

Excellencies,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Friends all,

I am very pleased that we have concluded this high-level plenary meeting on the mid-term review of the Almaty Programme of Action. As President, I am particularly gratified that this review takes place within the General Assembly framework.

Over the past two days we have been assessing the multi-faceted efforts to ensure that landlocked developing countries have efficient transit transport systems to access international markets. We have adopted the Declaration on the Midterm Review by acclamation. It is a balanced and precise document that provides the guidance that will enhance the rate of implementation of further projects. We all commend His Excellency Yukio Takasu of Japan for his tireless work in facilitating this final document.

Our focus on action-oriented programmes that are both measurable and feasible has grounded this review in terms that will benefit landlocked and transit countries alike. It also serves to inspire greater donor involvement in the range of needed improvements, from trade assistance policy to infrastructure, from technical and financial assistance to monitoring and follow-up.

In particular, the high-level panel on the role of international support for the development of transport systems to enhance trade opportunities provided a dynamic exchange on these complex issues. Stakeholder representatives from landlocked and transit countries, donor countries and regional and international organizations as well as financial institutions provided insights into the key partnerships that are emerging from the Programme of Action. We thank you all for your valuable inputs. We now have a clear assessment of where we stand after five years of work.

The United Nations is all about partnerships. I believe that the work orchestrated by the Almaty Programme of Action is a good example of what we can accomplish when we are guided by clear directives and strong leadership within the context of good-faith cooperation. Clearly, a key element in the success of this review is its emphasis on measurable results and the importance of monitoring progress within the five stated priorities of the Programme.

As the leaders of so many Member States said during the General Debate in recent weeks, there is concern that the current financial crisis threatens to cripple world trade. A global recession would be doubly catastrophic for the least developed countries that are not only poor, but geographically isolated as well.

I reiterate my concern and my promise that the General Assembly will use all its authority to ensure that the commitments of Donor Countries to provide funding and needed technology transfers are honored. I believe there is good will, but we must be vigilant as we monitor progress in the difficult months and years ahead.

If the United Nations is all about partnerships, then let us recognize the central role of solidarity in assisting each other as partners and as countries. We face so many obstacles to realizing the shared goal of ending poverty and sharing prosperity among peoples. The work outlined in the Almaty Review document is ambitious. But inspired by our sense of solidarity with the peoples of these landlocked countries and their neighbours, the way is clear and the possibilities endless.

Thank you.



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

25 July 2008

Excellency,

As you may recall, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 62/204, a high-level plenary meeting devoted to the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action will be held on 2 and 3 October 2008 in New York.

The high-level midterm review will provide Member States with an opportunity to assess the progress made so far in the implementation of the specific actions agreed upon in the Almaty Programme in the areas of fundamental policy issues, transit transport infrastructure and maintenance, international trade and trade facilitation and international support, to identify constraints encountered and to develop a way forward with the single purpose to accelerate the implementation of the Programme in years to come.

The preparatory process for the midterm review is moving ahead. So far two thematic meetings on transit transport infrastructure development and international trade and trade facilitation, and three regional review meetings have been concluded successfully. The midterm progress report by the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action is being finalized for submission to the General Assembly. Intergovernmental consultations on the draft outcome document are underway under the guidance of my facilitator H.E. Ambassador Yukio Takasu, Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations.

Given the importance of the high-level midterm review and the issues at stake, I would therefore encourage your government to be represented at the ministerial or highest possible level.

An information note on the organizational arrangements and the tentative programme for the high-level midterm review meeting are herewith transmitted.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Srgjan Kerim', written in a cursive style.

Srgjan Kerim

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

**Organizational arrangements for the high-level plenary meetings devoted to the
midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action
New York, 2 and 3 October 2008**

Information Note

Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 62/204, inter alia, decided to hold two days of high-level plenary meetings devoted to the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action during its sixty-third session in New York, on 2 and 3 October 2008, to be chaired by the President of the Assembly. This note outlines proposed arrangements for the high-level plenary meetings.

Participation

2. Participation in the high-level plenary meetings is expected at the ministerial or highest possible level.

Programme of the high-level plenary meetings devoted to the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action

3. The high-level plenary meeting on the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action will comprise plenary meetings and a high-level panel.
4. The opening of the high-level plenary meeting shall be addressed by the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General of the United Nations. In addition, the President of the General Assembly intends to invite two or three Heads of State or Government to address the opening session.
5. Member States are encouraged to limit their interventions during the plenary meetings to not more than seven minutes. A formal list of speakers will be opened with the General Assembly Branch.
6. The outcome document of the high-level midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action will be adopted at the closing of the high level plenary meeting.

High-level Panel

7. A high-level panel on the "*Role of International Support in establishing efficient transit transport systems to expand trade opportunities for landlocked developing countries*", will be held on 2 October 2008 in the Trusteeship Council Chamber immediately following the opening of the high-level plenary meeting. The panel will be moderated by The High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.
8. Presentations will be made by the Heads of relevant UN Agencies, financial and development institutions, such as UNCTAD, UNDP and regional development banks. The floor will be then open for an interactive, free-flowing discussion. Participants are encouraged to limit their interventions to not more than three minutes. There will be no formal list of speakers. Representatives of the relevant non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and

Social Council, civil society organizations, and the private sector will be invited to participate in the high level panel.

Pre-conference and side events

9. There will be an investment forum on 1 October 2008, from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm and from 3:00 to 6:00 pm in the ECOSOC Chamber, entitled: *"Investing in Landlocked Developing Countries: trends, experiences and the way forward"*, organized jointly by the UN-OHRLLS, UNCTAD and the World Bank. Government representatives and representatives of national investment promotion agencies and the private sector from host and home countries will participate as panellists. The floor will then be open for an interactive discussion.
10. A round table on the following theme: *"Regional dimension for transit transport cooperation"* will take place between 1:15 p.m.-2:45 p.m. on 3 October 2008, to be moderated by the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. Presentations will be made by the Executive Secretaries of the UN Regional Commissions on their efforts to establish efficient transit transport systems in their respective regions.

**High-level plenary meeting devoted to the
midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action
(2 and 3 October 2008)**

Tentative Programme

Thursday, 2 October 2008

10:00 – 11:00 am
(General Assembly Hall)

Opening of the high-level plenary meeting

11:15 am – 1:00 pm
(Trusteeship Council)

Panel: Role of International Support in establishing efficient transit transport systems to expand trade opportunities for LLDCs
Moderator: Mr. Cheick Sidi Diarra, Under-Secretary General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States

Presentation by Mr. Kemal Dervis, UNDP Administrator

Presentation by Mr. Supachai Panitchpakdi, UNCTAD Secretary General

Presentation by Mr. Luis Alberto Moreno, President, Inter-American Development Bank (TBC)

Presentation by Mr. Danny Leipziger, Vice President, Poverty Reduction and Economic Management, World Bank

Presentation by Mr. Modibo I. Toure, Chief of Staff and Director of President's Office, African Development Bank

Presentation by Ms. Thelma Diaz, Resident Director General of North American Representative Office, Asian Development Bank

3:00 – 6:00 pm

Continuation of the high-level plenary meeting.*

Friday, 3 October 2008

10:00 am – 1:00 pm
(General Assembly Hall)

Continuation of the high-level plenary meeting.*

3:00 – 5:30 pm
(General Assembly Hall)

Continuation of the high-level plenary meeting.*

5:30 – 6:00 pm
(General Assembly Hall)

Closing of the high-level plenary meeting

* Statements in the plenary are limited to seven minutes.