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Statement by

Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu,

High Representative

and

Under-Secretary- General

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

at

**Training Workshop for Policy Makers from LLDCs and Transit Countries,
Strengthening Capacity in Developing Bankable Transport Infrastructure
Projects for Enhanced Connectivity**

6 April 2021 08:30 am NY time

Mrs Alicia Ntebogang Mokone, Permanent Secretary Ministry of Transport of Botswana
Distinguished participants,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I warmly welcome you all to our training Workshop.

I thank the government of Botswana for collaborating with us in organizing this event.

We all, I am sure, would have been much happier meeting in your beautiful capital city of Gaborone but the unprecedented challenge of COVID-19 continues to severely limit movements.

Allow me to also express my appreciation to the representatives of the United Nations system organizations and other international and regional organizations for their active involvement in supporting this important training.

I also thank all of you representing landlocked and transit developing countries and regional economic communities for your commitment on enhancing transport connectivity in your region and for joining the workshop.

Distinguished participants,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is our shared universal framework of action for eradicating poverty, leaving no one behind and achieving sustainable development by 2030.

The 2030 Agenda recognizes that transport connectivity is a key driver for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The transport sector which does not know borders has been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. Passenger and freight transport have slumped. Tourism revenue has dropped. Supply chains are disrupted. Merchandise trade is reduced.

Even before the outbreak of COVID-19, LLDCs faced high transport costs, cumbersome border procedures, and challenges in advancing sustainable transport solutions and closing missing links.

Increasing transport and digital connectivity is crucial for transforming the landlocked countries into land linked countries. A developed transport connectivity system would allow transport modes and infrastructure to be well-interlinked.

The Vienna Programme of Action for landlocked developing countries for the decade 2014 to 2024 is the international community's response to the special needs of LLDCs.

It is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

It is an overarching framework for guiding global, regional and national development efforts in support of the sustainable development aspirations of the landlocked developing countries.

It calls for the promotion of efficient and cost-effective access to and from the sea for LLDCs by all means of transport, on the basis of freedom of transit.

It also calls for the development of enhanced transport infrastructure and increased trade facilitation.

It calls for enhanced levels of cooperation between the LLDCs and the transit countries.

This can create win-win situations, provide for much needed smooth regional connectivity with the ultimate aim to improve transport infrastructure, enhance trade, economic growth and overall sustainable development.

We reached the mid- point of the Vienna Programme of Action implementation in December 2019.

We convened a midterm review.

The Midterm Review analyzed transport connectivity for LLDCs during regional review meetings we held in the Africa, Europe, Asia and Latin America regions together with a global midterm review meeting in New York.

The Midterm Review revealed that some progress has been made. There is progress in the expansion and upgrading of rail, road, ports, and air transport and some missing links had been closed.

However, this progress is not sufficient as limited transport connectivity of LLDCs remains one of the main obstacles to their enhanced trade integration.

The review emphasized the need for improved transport infrastructure in both quality and quantity.

It was noted that improved transport infrastructure is required not only along major transit corridors but also in the rural areas where production takes place.

The need for improvements in customs facilitation and processes with transit countries was also noted. We need streamlined coordination and leverage the advantages of each mode of transport to help reduce transport and trade costs.

The Political Declaration adopted at the Midterm Review highlighted the following action needs:

development of bankable infrastructure and transport development projects;

climate- and disaster-resilient transport infrastructure;

enabling environment for public and private sustainable investment and infrastructure operations; and development and management of well-functioning corridors.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has amplified the need for capacity building on these action areas.

This training is organized to respond to some of these identified needs.

I hope this training initiative gives you an opportunity to look at what it takes to develop bankable transport infrastructure projects; how to better understand the requirements of banks and donors; where to look for funding; how to develop supportive policies, regulatory frameworks and enabling environments to attract more infrastructure financing; and how to develop responses and solutions to the impact of COVID-19 on the transport sector.

I also hope you can learn from each other on experiences of other countries in developing bankable projects.

I am very aware that a three half-day workshop is not sufficient to learn about all the issues in detail. It is more like an appetizer !

However, immediately after this training workshop we plan to establish an online platform where you can continue to exchange data and experiences.

Later this year, we plan to establish a community of practice in the context of the LLDC national focal points initiative.

I hope that in this way you can continue to get structured support of the office in the areas of peer-learning and exchange of best practices.

This training is implemented as part of the project *Strengthening the capacity of Landlocked Developing Countries under the “Belt and Road Initiative” to design and implement policies that promote transport connectivity for the achievement of the SDGs.*

OHRLLS implements the project in partnership with the United Nations Regional Commissions including the Economic Commission for Africa, Economic Commission for Europe, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Economic Commission for Latin America and the African Development Bank in collaboration with other partners that are here today.

The project is funded by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Sub-Fund of the United Nations Peace and Development Trust Fund.

The Government of the People’s Republic of China provided the financial contribution to the United Nations Peace and Development Fund.

The United Nations system and OHRLLS, be assured, will continue to support your efforts in implementing the Vienna Programme of Action, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is our shared commitment to leave no one behind.

I wish you a successful training workshop.

Thank you.