

## **Remarks by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia**

**H.E. Zohrab Mnatsakanyan**

### **at the Ministerial Meeting of the Group of the Landlocked Developing Countries Convened under the Theme “Partnering for Accelerated Implementation of the Vienna Programme for Action and Achieving Sustainable Development in LLDCs”**

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Mr. Secretary-General,

Excellences, dear colleagues,

I would like to thank Minister Tleuberdi, for Kazakhstan’s leadership as Chair of the group of the landlocked developing countries at the United Nations and for your commitment to this very important agenda. I am deeply grateful to H.E. Secretary-General of the United Nations Mr. António Guterres for his continued support and attention to the needs of the landlocked developing nations. In these challenging times for humanity, messages of hope, trust and solidarity are indispensable to steering collective action in response to the unprecedented challenges we are facing. Our profound gratitude also goes to Under-Secretary-General Fekitamoeloa 'Utoikamanu and her Office for their important contribution to the work of the group.

I am pleased to join today’s conversation, as we gather virtually to take stock of the progress and challenges in the implementation of the collective commitments under the Vienna Programme of Action. Six years into its adoption, the VPOA stands as a blueprint for cooperation between the LLDCs, transit countries and the development partners, and continues to call for accelerated action, relevant as ever.

While the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic have affected virtually every corner of our world, countries in special situations, who are most sensitive to global shocks, are particularly prone to disproportionate setbacks and consequences of the fallout caused by the pandemic. The landlocked developing countries, whose developmental aspirations are already adversely affected by the structural constraints, including the lack of territorial access to the sea, geographic remoteness and isolation from global markets, and who, more often than not, have to rely on

their transit neighbours for sea-borne trade, have become particularly vulnerable to the disruptive impacts of the ongoing crisis. Following the global lockdown measures, the landlocked developing countries have been facing even more constraints to their sustainable and inclusive growth and continue to be affected in unique ways. One crucial and pressing priority before the UN and its development system is, therefore, to urgently “unlock” the LLDCs and their trade and productive capacities by way of stepping up efforts to deliver on the key pledge of the VPOA of integrating the LLDCs into the global markets.

The launch of the Roadmap for Accelerated Implementation of the VPOA is an essential step in accelerating concerted engagement of the international community in assisting the LLDCs to mitigate the negative impacts of the pandemic through comprehensive and inclusive recovery efforts and supporting the LLDCs in getting back on track towards the implementation of the sustainable development goals. It will be important to give proper consideration to the implementation of these crucial commitments through consistent monitoring and review, with tangible benchmarks for assessing due progress. Such a follow-up and reporting framework should involve multiple stakeholders, including the transit countries. This is a process that requires full and unconditional commitment by all actors.

Mr. Chair,

In this year of global turbulence, major grievances, anxieties and fears, the international community has a historic opportunity to lay the groundwork for meaningful change and to build back better. The risks posed by the COVID-19 have demonstrated that, for the response and recovery efforts to be effective, they need to focus on tackling inequalities, discrimination and lack of inclusion, otherwise, the gaps are likely to remain and increase. It is important that, together with the disruptions caused by the pandemic, we also look at the pre-existing barriers to development – blockades, unilateral coercive measures are detrimental to sustainable development and inconsistent with the response and recovery efforts. They undermine not only regional development but also peace and security. For three decades, Turkey has been denying the right of Armenia to access to and from sea, by closing its land borders. This hostile siege cannot be justified either by common sense or by international law, as it directly violates not only the relevant international conventions, also, customary law and international agreements.

Armenia is fully committed to effective multilateral cooperation for development at the global, international and regional levels. We continue to view inclusive cooperation between the landlocked and transit countries as an essential prerequisite to removing political barriers for the free movement of people, goods and services, and for the effective realization of the economic and social rights and rights of all populations, including those residing in conflict areas. The promotion of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, gender equality and inclusion, as well as consolidation of democratic values are key priorities for Armenia, predicated on the idea that human rights are universal for all peoples and individuals in all parts of the world, regardless of geography or status.

Ensuring human rights-based and people-centered approach remains an ultimate priority for the response and recovery efforts, to which Armenia is fully committed. Investing in people and embracing the national talent as the driver of smart development defines the nature of Armenia's reform and recovery agenda, with particular emphasis on information and communication technologies, fostering innovation and development of the ICT sector, which is prioritized as an essential tool to lower costs and facilitate access to foreign markets, thus contributing to increase of foreign trade.

In conclusion, Mr. Chair, Armenia remains fully committed to effective multilateral cooperation in support of the six priority areas of the Vienna Programme of Action and the Roadmap for Accelerated Implementation of the VPOA. We look forward to working with all our partners to achieve progress in these critical times.