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**Statement by H.E. Mr. Jeyhun Bayramov
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan**

at the

**22nd Annual Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Landlocked Developing
Countries (LLDCs) under the theme of**

**“From Vienna to Kigali: Building momentum towards a new decade of action for
prosperity and transformation of LLDCs”**

21 September 2023

Mr. Chairman,

Dear Ministers and Esteemed Delegates,

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me commence by expressing our sincere gratitude to Botswana for successful chairmanship. I would like also to greet all participants and High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

As we convene here in New York, we unite under a common cause – to address the unique challenges faced by landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and to foster a global environment of understanding, cooperation, and progress.

Throughout our journey, Azerbaijan has traversed the path of development, overcoming hurdles posed by our landlocked geography. We understand the importance of robust infrastructure, efficient trade corridors, and seamless connectivity.

As a landlocked country the theme of connectivity is extremely important for Azerbaijan. Today transportation routes from Central Asia through the Caspian Sea and further through the Caucasus are becoming particularly important and relevant. Corridors and routes passing through Azerbaijan offer competitive advantages for the transport operators and businesses.

We continue to work with our partners in fostering better connectivity in the region through improved infrastructure and seamless and digitalized transport corridors, facilitate transit

and eliminate the regulatory and procedural barriers to transport and trade. New cooperation formats in close cooperation with Central Asian States and Türkiye was established to ensure sustainable connectivity and to develop Trans-Caspian East-West Middle Corridor as a viable and safe alternative for traditional routes. All these cooperation formats not only positively impact the development of transport connections in the region, but also addressing shared interests in peace, security and prosperity.

This year, **Azerbaijan is chairing the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) under the theme of “2023 – Year of Green Transition and Interconnectivity’** and the **UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) under the theme “Transforming the SPECA Region into a Connectivity Hub with Global Outreach”**. The main themes for both Chairmanships reflects common regional vision for enhanced connectivity – key priority for landlocked countries within these platforms.

Turning Azerbaijan into the transport and transit hub in the region is a priority on our agenda.

In order to leverage our geostrategic position at the crossroads from East to West and from North to South, Azerbaijan's transport policy has been aimed at building a transport infrastructure to facilitate interconnection of the Trans-European and Trans-Asian transport networks, and thus offer the shortest and fastest connection between Asia and Europe. Through the backbone railway line Baku-Tbilisi-Kars, Baku International Sea Trade Port, along with an ambitious investor-friendly Alat Free Economic Zone, Azerbaijan continues its practical contribution to the development of the Trans-Caspian East-West Middle Corridor, as well as, North-South, South-West and North-West trade routes.

Transit cargo flow through existing corridors in Azerbaijan increased by 16% in first 6 months of 2023.

“Digital Silk Way” is another important project enhancing regional connectivity and bridging Asia and Europe through the Trans-Caspian Fiber Optic segment, “Digital Silk Way” is aiming to develop the region’s digital ecosystem and improve access to various digital services for 1.8 billion people in the Central and South Asia regions.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Resolution of the long-lasting conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan opened new opportunities for sustainable transport-transit development and interconnections in the region and beyond. Former occupation was one of the key factors seriously impeding the development of Karabakh and Eastern Zangezur economic regions of my country, thus serious obstacle in unfolding region’s full economic and trade potential.

Building new transport infrastructure in the liberated territories is an integral part of post-conflict reconstruction activities.

2 new airports are operating in the liberated territories and third one is under construction in the Lachin region. The construction of the Horadiz-Agbend railway, which is part of the Zangazur Corridor, is being intensively continued and the works are expected to be completed in 2024. Soonest opening of all communications in the region, including Zangazur Corridor will serve the expansion of international transport links, thus further promoting peace and progress in the wider region.

Dear Participants,

As we enter the final year of the Vienna Programme of Action (VPA) and have reached the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda, we find ourselves at a pivotal moment.

It's imperative to emphasize that the successful and comprehensive execution of all six key areas outlined in the VPA is of utmost importance for realizing the SDGs. Azerbaijan, through this forum, seeks to reaffirm its dedication to ensuring that the Third United Nations Conference in Kigali in 2024 is both productive and successful. Outcome document of the Ministerial review meeting of the VPA for the decade 2014-2024 held last month in Bangkok recalled key points and further action for implementation of the VPA. It is equally important to engage with all stakeholders, including UN agencies, regional and sub-regional bodies, international financial institutions and the private sector to address the needs and aspirations of the LLDCs, including the goals of the VPA.

Azerbaijan is open for a constructive dialogue and cooperation in the LLDC framework with a view to further contributing to the socio-economic prosperity of the region.

Thank you.