

Time Limit: 4 Minutes

**STATEMENT BY H.E. DR. TANDI DORJI, MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF BHUTAN,
TWENTY FIRST ANNUAL MEETING OF THE FOREIGN MINISTERS OF LLDC,
ECOSOC CHAMBER, 1000 - 1300 HRS, 22 SEPTEMBER 2022**

Theme: “Accelerating implementation of the VPOA in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and building momentum towards the third UN Conference on the Landlocked Developing Countries.”

Mr. Chair, Foreign Minister of Botswana, Mr. President of the General Assembly, Madame Deputy Secretary General, Madame President of ECOSOC and Madame USG OHRLLS,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

1. I thank the Chair for convening this meeting and bringing us together to discuss the important matter concerning this special group. The annual meeting provides an important avenue to review the progress of the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action (VPOA) and also review the impact of COVID-19 pandemic and identify necessary actions for sustainable recovery of LLDC.
2. I would like to join other delegations in extending warmest congratulations to you Mr. Chair, on Botswana’s assumption of Chairmanship of our group and also the newly appointed USG and High Representative of UN OHRLLS.
3. The midterm review of the implementation of VPOA, the Secretary General’s 2022 Report and the report on the impact of COVID-19 on LLDCs have all highlighted the limited progress achieved in LLDCs.
4. The past few years have been very challenging for all countries, and certainly, our group of 32 landlocked developing states have, in view of our structural impediments and specificities, suffered disproportionately from successive waves of multifaceted crises.
5. Many of our countries have been challenged in the last few years and are at various stages of recovery. Bhutan on our part will formally reopen our borders and resume tourism activities on 23rd of September. We will all continue to need focused support of the international community to firmly return to the path of development, progress and growth.
6. LLDCs are the most vulnerable to climate change ramifications and the crisis has increased the LLDC’s vulnerability to disaster and reduced climate change adaptation capacity.

Excellencies,

7. In Bhutan, the six priority areas of the VPOA were integrated in the 11th Five Year Plan (FYP) and its 16 National Key Result Areas (NKRA). Likewise the priorities were also captured in the current 12th Five Year Plan under 6 National Key Result Areas contributing towards achieving the VPoA objectives.
8. Bhutan's rank on Trading Across Borders has gone up to 30 from 168 out of the 183 economies in 2012. However, while we are set to graduate from the LDC category, we still have more to achieve in terms of addressing our economic vulnerabilities, primarily through the priority objectives laid by the VPoA. That is why support from UN partners is crucial to graduate sustainably.
9. We have taken a holistic approach in reviving the economy through various monetary and fiscal measures as well as incentives to spur economic activities. Further, the focus of this fiscal year's budget is entirely on economic recovery and will include expanding agricultural production, substituting imports, promoting electric vehicles to reduce import of fossil fuels, diversifying export goods and markets, promoting FDI, strengthening bilateral trade relations, expediting infrastructure development like dryports and industrial estates to name a few.
10. We have initiated development of trade logistics infrastructure such as small, mini and large dry ports along with warehousing and cold storage facilities; accelerated dry port operations and resolved bottlenecks in clearance process. But all this would not have been possible without the cooperation and goodwill of transit countries and other partners.
11. Towards this end, we welcome the PGA's announcement to continue his Advisory Board for LLS, which Bhutan served on during the 76th Session. Relaunching the Group of Friends of LLDC is another important measure. We also support strengthening the resources of OHRLLS in light of the important mandate of saving the 91 vulnerable countries.

Excellencies,

12. Bhutan welcomes the recommendations contained in the SG's report on accelerating the implementation and achievement of VPOA goals and the SDGs.
13. We further call on partners to support enhancing digital infrastructure that is accessible, affordable and reliable which remains a priority for the LLDCs. At the same time, the

question of digital literacy is also a concern. It will determine whether our people are able to seize the opportunities presented by rapid technological advancements, and be participants in the digital transformation, or simply bystanders.

14. While digital transformation of our economies and way of doing business should be encouraged, we must also be mindful that with increasing uptake of technology, we also increase vulnerability to cyber security threats.

Excellencies,

15. Bhutan will accord priority to preparations towards the Third UN Conference on LLDCs.
16. We welcome the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration today, and remain committed to engaging with LLDCs and all partners to ensure accelerated implementation of the VPoA.
17. I thank you.
