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Closing remarks by

Ms. Rabab Fatima

**Under-Secretary- General, High Representative for Least
Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and
Small Island Developing States**

**Secretary-General of the 3rd United Nations Conference on
LLDCs**

at the

**Closing Session of the High-level Africa Regional Review of the
Vienna Programme of Action for the Landlocked Developing
Countries for the Decade 2014-2024**

30 May 2023,

**Phakalane Golf Estate Hotel and Convention Centre
Gaborone, Botswana**

**Honorable Mabuse Pule, Acting Minister of Trade of Botswana
Madam Chair, Ms. Malebogo Morakaladi, Permanent Secretary,
Ministry of Trade of Botswana,**

**Dr. Gladys Mokhawa, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign
Affairs of Botswana,**

Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues,

**I am very pleased to address this closing session of the Africa
regional review meeting of LLDC3.**

**Allow me first to convey, once again, my deep appreciation to the
Government and the people of Botswana for their generous and
warm hospitality here in the beautiful city of Gaborone.**

**I take this opportunity to extend my warmest congratulations to
you, Madam Chair, for so efficiently and ably steering this
meeting.**

**My special thanks to all Bureau members, who played an
instrumental role in ensuring a very successful outcome of this
meeting.**

I am very pleased to see the active participation and deep engagement of the development partners and the transit countries during the last two days.

My heartfelt thanks to them all for sharing their perspectives on the success and challenges of implementing the VPOA, and the priorities for the next POA.

Their continued support and partnership will be critical to overcome the structural impediments of the LLDCs and put them strongly on course to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

I would like to thank the UNECA for co-organizing the meeting with us and commend you for the important work that you are doing in this region.

I also thank our UN colleagues, and representatives of other international and regional organizations for their important contributions.

I would like to specially thank the Resident Coordinator and his team for their strong support and cooperation.

Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues,

The last two days have indeed been intense, but extremely productive. We have had excellent discussions, which are captured in the outcome document that we just adopted.

I thank you for identifying the challenges and key priorities of the LLDCs in the region. I also welcome the new ideas and perspectives that have come out in your deliberations.

Allow me to highlight five key takeaways from the meeting.

First: the progress achieved during the implementation period of the VPOA to build and upgrade transport, energy and ICT infrastructure are encouraging.

Many concrete examples have come up in the discussions. For instance, we heard about the commissioning of the Kazungula Bridge, and upgradation of many airports, seaports, and railways.

The outcome document recognizes the initiative of the Single Africa Air Transport Market, which can play an instrumental role in the opening of the African skies and further development of the air transportation sector in the region. And there are also other important breakthroughs within the region for improvements in the movement of goods and persons in the corridors.

On trade facilitation as well, notable progress has been achieved.

However, much more remains to be done. We must build on the momentum created by these projects and ensure their full and effective implementation to improve connectivity within the region.

It will also be critically important to adopt an integrated approach to link the projects in the pipeline with existing ones, and enhance the scope and scale, where necessary, to ensure maximum impact on the ground.

To that end, my Office will provide further support to the LLDCs for enhanced connectivity and integration within the region and beyond.

Second: the meeting identified the areas where progress was slow. For example, progress towards structural economic transformation, and export diversification in most LLDCs remain far below the potentials. The intra-Africa trade is another area of concern.

It is imperative to undertake concerted efforts and mobilize enhanced support to accelerate progress in these areas.

I am happy to see that the outcome document has provided some practical solutions to overcome the challenges in these areas, including by building productive capacity, focusing on enhanced value addition in the manufacturing and agricultural sectors, encouraging economic and export diversification and promoting formal and decent employment.

I hope that the next POA will consider these specific measures and recommendations to help transform the economies of the LLDCs into higher value-added products and services.

Reinvigorated partnership at all levels will be the sine-qua-non to advance this important agenda.

Third: Another key highlight of the two-day discussion was the challenges that the LLDCs have been facing due to the adverse impacts of climate change as well as the crippling impacts of the multiple and overlapping crises of the COVID-19 pandemic, external debt, and geopolitical tensions.

The compounded impacts of these crises have seriously affected their progress on the implementation of the VPOA, 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and Africa's own Agenda 2063.

More than ever before, it is imperative to develop strategies and institutional capacity within the LLDCs, supported by their development partners, to tackle these overlapping crises and embark on a resilient pathway to recovery and sustainable development.

We need strengthened and innovative support to the LLDCs in the areas of climate adaptation, technology transfer, sustainable

transition to renewable energy, and enhanced risk governance, including for de-risking measures such as insurance.

Of course, means of implementation, including on the need for enhanced financing for development and resource mobilization from all sources will be critical.

The UN Secretary General has long been advocating for development partners to fulfill their ODA commitments, and their commitment of \$100 billion climate finance and enhanced adaption financing.

To rescue the SDGs, he called for an SDG stimulus package to the tune of at least \$500 billion per year.

Stronger support from the development partners, IFIs, MDBs, and RDBs will be critically important in this regard. It will also be essential to unlock the full potentials of stronger engagement with the private sector, especially in the areas of energy

transition, agriculture and food production, risk management, etc.

Finally: your discussions have underscored the immense opportunities presented by the Africa Continental Free Trade Area and the deepening of regional integration and cooperation.

Yet there are many challenges which stand on the way of LLDCs' enhanced connectivity and integration into the global economy and their overall competitive edge in world trade.

The outcome document highlights the importance of overcoming these challenges. We need to adopt a comprehensive approach to promote enhanced regional integration and connectivity and remove the key barriers that impede harnessing the full trade potentials of the LLDCs.

Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues,

As I mentioned in my opening remarks, this meeting is the first preparatory event for the Third United Nations Conference on the LLDCs.

I congratulate you all on an excellent start of our journey, here in Gaborone, towards a successful LLDC-3 Conference and delivering an ambitious and transformative Programme of Action for the LLDCs.

Clearly, we have broad convergence of opinion on many priority areas for the LLDCs in this region.

The outcome document adopted today will provide important guidance and inputs for shaping the discussions and outcome of the other two regional meetings and the next POA for LLDCs.

As you are aware, we are going to hold the Latin America regional review meeting in Asuncion, Paraguay on 27 -28 July 2023.

This will be followed by the Euro-Asia regional review meeting to be held on 23- 24 August 2023 in Bangkok.

And two preparatory committee sessions to be held in New York in February and April next year.

Furthermore, a number of other critical events and processes will be held in the period leading up to the Conference, such as the HLPF, the SDGs summit, COP-28 and the Summit of the Future, all of which will also provide an opportunity to address the challenges of the LLDCs.

As we move forward with the preparatory process, we look forward to collaborating closely with all of you to make the LLDC3 Conference a big success.

Building on our experience of the successful holding of the LDC5 Conference, we will make every effort to ensure a robust multistakeholder engagement in the LLDC3 Conference, including with the private sector.

In this regard, I wish to make an early call to you all to ensure the highest-level participation in the LLDC3 Conference.

[Excellencies] A final round of thank you.

Let me start by thanking our interpreters, who have been with us so patiently for the last two days.

I thank Team OHRLLS for their tireless efforts, dedication, and commitment.

I thank you, once again, Madam Chair, for your leadership and commitment; and my special thanks to your extremely capable team for their hard work and tireless efforts to make this meeting a success and our stay a pleasant and memorable one.

Let me conclude by reiterating that as the Secretary General of the Conference, I, and my entire team, will remain fully committed in the coming months to make the 3rd LLDCs Conference truly successful.

I wish all of you returning home a safe journey back.

I thank you.