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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Meeting of the Revitalized Group of Friends of Landlocked Developing Countries

**Statement by H.E. Alexander MARSCHIK
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Check against Delivery!

Excellencies,

Dear Under-Secretary-General,

On behalf of the Permanent Missions of Austria, India and Rwanda, it is my great pleasure to welcome you to the meeting of the newly revitalized Group of Friends of Landlocked Developing Countries. Thanks for making your way into the United Nations at this early hour.

I am particularly honored to welcome Ms. Rabab Fatima, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, who kindly joins us today to share her insights with us.

Let me warmly welcome Amb. Kelapile, Chair of the Group of LLDCs.

Colleagues, as you know, we are at a crucial moment for the Landlocked Developing Countries. In 2014 we adopted the current Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs and came together for a midterm review in 2019. Already then, we recognized that we were not on track. Progress was not enough for landlocked developing countries to achieve the targets set out in the Vienna Programme of Action.

Today, as the decade since the adoption of the PoA draws to a close, we face unprecedented challenges that none of us could have anticipated in 2014:

- First, LLDCs are among the most vulnerable to climate change.
- Second, LLDCs were particularly hard hit with the socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The global economic conditions - lack of growth, rising energy and food prices, increasing shipping and trade costs, - pose significant challenges for a sustainable recovery of the LLDCs.
- Third, political tensions and conflicts further exacerbate those challenges. The current economic hardships also mean that LLDCs have

less resources to invest in climate adaptation and mitigation measures – a vicious circle.

Indeed, just when we are starting to prepare for the 10-year review of the Vienna Programme of Action the challenges may seem overwhelming. However, in the words of the Secretary-General: “The perils we face are no match for a world united.” And that we are – the LLDCs, their friends and partners – and the UN.

This morning, the 2nd committee will take action on the resolution “Follow-up to the second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries”. The resolution will set out the milestones in preparation for the third Conference of the LLDCs in 2024 in Kigali, Rwanda. Allow me to extend my congratulations to Amb. Gatete for hosting this important conference and to assure him of our full support.

As we set the wheels in motion towards Kigali, all elements of the preparatory process will be important stepping stones for the international community to rally together in solidarity with the LLDCs.

In the next 45 minutes, we will hear from my co-chairs, H.E. Claver Gatete, Permanent Representative of Rwanda, and H.E. Ruchira Kamboj, Permanent Representative of India.

They will be followed by H.E. Collen Vixen Kelapile, Permanent Representative of Botswana, in his function as Chair of the Group of LLDCs.

We then look forward to insights provided by Under-Secretary-General Rabab Fatima. Following her remarks, we will open the floor for your comments.

As we embark on the preparatory process for the Conference, I look forward to your engagement to ensure we make full use of the coming months and

to ensure the best possible outcome for the LLDCs. I thank you once again and pass the word to H.E. Claver Gatete for his introductory remarks.