

## **Meeting of Landlocked Developing Countries' Foreign Ministers**

United Nations General Assembly | 23 September 2020 | 8:00am – 11:00am

Theme: Partnering for accelerated implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in LLDCs.

*Remarks by Mr. Patrick Obath, ICC Executive Board*

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Excellencies,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The International Chamber of Commerce – the institutional representative of over 45 million businesses – stands in solidarity with all governments in the effort to protect lives and livelihoods in the context of COVID-19.

We are truly humbled by the invitation to address you today...

and can assure you of our deep commitment to supporting the implementation of the *Roadmap for Accelerated Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action*.

We commend the Office of the High Representative for its agility in developing such a pragmatic, targeted and actionable Roadmap...

and would like to offer just two observations to inform today's discussions.

**The first is an urgent plea from the real economy to the governments of the world's largest economies...**

**for decisive and comprehensive action to ensure that all governments of Landlocked Developing Countries have the necessary means to deal with both the human and economic effects of the pandemic.**

In this context, we remain deeply concerned that many governments appear to lack the fiscal space to provide essential stimulus to support local businesses and workers through the crisis.

Recent polling of our network has indicated that around a third of businesses fear that they will be forced to permanently close before the end of the year...

without a sudden rebound in demand or – more likely – emergency public support.

Your Excellencies,

We simply cannot risk the long-term economic scarring that would be caused by business failures at such a scale.

Nor can we risk the sovereign debt position of some LLDCs further compounding the economic hardship brought by the novel coronavirus.

In this context, we urge G20 Governments to commit, without delay, to three actions:

1. to extend the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) 2021;
2. to expand its scope to provide the necessary relief to all countries in need; and
3. to establish strong mechanisms to ensure full participation by private creditors.

Your Excellencies,

**My second observation is to respectfully encourage the Office of the High Representative and all LLDC governments to pursue implementation of the Roadmap mindful of a vital lesson from the coronavirus crisis:**

**the deep interdependence between business, governments and society.**

This, to my mind, calls for a new spirit of international cooperation... built on partnerships that fully leverage the networks, resources and skills of the private sector – at both the global and local level.

We believe we have found a successful model in this regard in the **Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation.**

The Alliance, now in its fourth year of operation, works in tandem with governments to harness local private sector knowledge to identify insidious bottlenecks to trade and co-create solutions that work for the real-economy – not just on paper.

The Alliance is already working in two LLDCs – Malawi and Zambia – to develop a modern licensing framework for customs clearance agents that will reduce the time and cost of trade with these countries.

Given the potential for trade facilitation reforms to power the recovery from COVID-19 – and the laudable focus on this foundational agenda in the new Roadmap...

we encourage any government that is looking for support to implement targeted trade facilitation reforms to contact the Alliance, housed within ICC, to discuss how we may partner with you.

Partnerships like the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation show us that real impact can be achieved when we work together to co-create outcomes greater than we can achieve acting alone.

Your Excellencies,

Please count on ICC as a trusted partner in delivering on the promise of the Roadmap and in ensuring that, in the wake of COVID-19, we can recover better together.

Thank you.