

Annual Ministerial Meeting of Foreign Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDC)

His Excellency Mr. Mukhtar Tleuberdi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Global Chair of the Group of LLDCs,

Honorable Ministers of Foreign Affairs and High-level Officers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great honor and pleasure to participate in the Annual Meeting of Foreign Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries with you today.

IsDB has 12-member countries in the LLDC group, representing more than a third of the whole group in terms of country membership, and nearly 50% of the group's total population. 7 of these member countries are in Asia, and 5 are in sub-Saharan Africa.

As highlighted in the IsDB 10-Year Strategy, President 5-Year Program, and our recently approved Regional Cooperation and Integration Strategy, the promotion of regional connectivity and member countries' integration into global markets is among the IsDB Group strategic priorities.

In this regard, IsDB's holistic making markets work for development model is strategically relevant for the landlocked economies as well as their neighboring economies including non-IsDB member countries.

The IsDB's approach to promotion of regional connectivity has two interlinked and mutually supportive elements. The first is the development of inter-country corridors; while the second is aligning physical connectivity with "soft" aspects of regional integration.

Regarding hard infrastructure connectivity, priority is given to the connection of landlocked economies to international ports and trade networks. These priorities are set out in harmony with the existing regional cooperation programs such as CAREC for Central Asia.

Just to give a few concrete project examples, IsDB has approved and implemented USD 454 million for completion of the missing links along the Trans-Saharan Road Corridor in Africa, and USD 371 million for the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway corridor, connecting landlocked Central Asian countries to the Middle East.

Regarding the "soft" infrastructure aspects, IsDB is completing the commercialization studies on the above projects to promote trade and reduce transportation costs.

Within this context, the COVID-19 crisis is now reshaping these needs in many ways and adding complexity to the already-existing challenges of landlocked countries.

Recognizing these emerging challenges, IsDB has acted swiftly to support its member countries by approving a USD 2.3 billion Strategic Preparedness and Response Program (SPRP). The program takes a holistic three track approach, which we call 3-R: “Response, Restore and Restart”. These are designed to assist member countries’ efforts in preventing, containing, mitigating and recovering from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

An important lesson we can learn from the COVID-19 crisis is that the current challenges are beyond the capacity of any one country. Cooperation and solidarity among countries is the only way to deal effectively with these challenges. Multilateral cooperation can help us take advantage of the existing opportunities and guard against vulnerabilities.

Under the overall umbrella of SDGs, IsDB is committed to continue its support to LLDCs in line with the priorities set out in the Vienna Program of Action to focus our joint efforts

With these final observations, I wish the meeting a great success and look forward to fruitful discussions. Thank you so much.