

## MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

### Annual Ministerial Meeting of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries

New York, 25 September 2019

**We**, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), have met at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, on 25 September 2019, on the occasion of the 74<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, and have held our deliberations under the theme " *Midterm review of the Vienna Programme of Action: Renewed strength to accelerate implementation and transformation in LLDCs* ",

*Taking note* that we are meeting in the run-up to the Comprehensive midterm review of the Vienna Programme of Action to be held in New York in December 2019 and will represent a great opportunity to renew partnerships and strengthen concerted global actions in support of the landlocked developing countries,

*Recalling* the UN General Assembly resolutions 72/232 and 73/243 that called for convening of a Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA) no later than December 2019,

*Recalling also* the overarching goal of the VPoA of addressing the special development needs and challenges of LLDCs arising from their landlockedness, remoteness and geographical constraints in a more coherent manner and thus contributing to an enhanced rate of sustainable and inclusive growth, which can contribute to the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty,

*Welcoming* the progress made by LLDCs in implementing the Vienna Programme of Action,

*Concerned* however that one third of the LLDCs' population is still living in extreme poverty and the pace of growth in LLDCs is still weaker than desirable and it is not enough to achieve the VPoA targets and Sustainable Development Goals by LLDCs.

*Underlining* the importance of building productive capacity and deepened regional integration to enhance the development of LLDCs;

*Underscoring* that effective implementation of the VPoA is crucial for the attainment of the SDGs and effective partnerships between LLDCs and transit countries are important and necessary to drive the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the VPoA forward,

*Reiterating* that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, including the means of implementation, are universal, indivisible and interlinked,

*Reaffirming* our commitment to the full, timely and effective implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action in synergy and coherence with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 to achieve a transformative and inclusive sustainable development in LLDCs,

*Welcoming* the following; the outcomes of 2019 Follow-up and review of the Financing for Development; the 2019 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development under the Auspices of the General assembly; Climate Action Summit 2019, and Second United Nations High-level Conference on South-South cooperation,

*Also Welcoming* the outcomes of the regional review meetings of the Comprehensive Midterm Review of the Vienna Programme of Action - Euro-Asia region held 11 and 12 February 2019; Africa region held 18-19 March 2019, and Latin America region held 11 and 12 June 2019.

Declare as follows;

1. **Take note** of the Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs for the Decade 2014-2024;
2. **Further take note** of the national and regional reports on the midterm review of the VPoA and the progress achieved by LLDCs on the implementation of the VPoA and on the SDGs since 2014, building on the Almaty Programme of Action; Express our appreciation on the progress made by landlocked and transit developing countries, with the support of development partners, during the past five years in implementing the priorities of the VPoA, as evidenced by the adoption and implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and some improvement on trade facilitation; some expansion in transit transport infrastructure development; increased efforts to improve access to energy and ICT; and an increase in official development assistance, as well as support provided by United Nations organizations and international institutions;
3. **Express concern** that the progress achieved over the past five years towards the implementation of the VPoA by LLDCs, transit developing countries and development partners is not enough to achieve the VPoA targets and Sustainable Development Goals by LLDCs and therefore **call upon** all LLDCs, transit developing countries, development partners, United Nations System, the private sector and other stakeholders to further strengthen their efforts to accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in LLDCs in the remaining five years of its implementation;
4. **Further express concern** that according to the Secretary General's report, the LLDCs' share of global merchandise exports decreased from 1.19 per cent in 2014 to approximately 0.98 per cent in 2018 against the objective of the Vienna Programme of Action of substantially increasing exports from the LLDCs.
5. **Reiterate** the importance of fostering strong synergy and coherence at all levels in the implementation, follow-up, and review of the Vienna Programme of Action with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Addis Ababa Action Agenda and other development processes including the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the Nairobi Maafikiano;
6. **Note with concern** that lack of adequate financial resources, limited technical capacity; lack of up to date and reliable data are some of the constraints faced by LLDCs in their efforts to implement the VPoA and underscore the importance of raising considerable resources to accelerate the implementation of the VPoA and achievement of the SDG targets by 2030 by LLDCs;

7. **Underscore** the principle of national ownership and we commit to make concerted efforts to mobilize additional domestic public resources to further accelerate the implementation of the VPoA;
8. **Encourage** development partners to align their support to LLDCs to VPoA priorities and priorities identified in LLDCs national sustainable development strategies and we further call on them to enhance official development assistance to LLDCs in predictable, reliable and sustainable manner. We welcome the contribution of the South-South Cooperation to the development of LLDCs and stress that South-South Cooperation is a complement to, and not a substitute for, North-South cooperation;
9. **Underscore** the critical role of the UN Resident Coordinators in ensuring that the goals and priorities set out in the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs and the SDGs are mainstreamed into national development plans and strategies in LLDCs and transit countries;
10. **Urge** LLDCs and transit countries in cooperation with international and regional organizations to promote development of regional integrated infrastructure and connectivity, and close missing links in order to reduce the cost of doing business and increase intra-regional trade and to help turn LLDCs into land-linked countries;
11. **Urge** LLDCs and transit countries to increase intraregional trade integration by strengthening productive linkages; supporting the development of supply chains within the region; improving the quality and effective implementation of regional integration agreements; bringing greater synergy and complementarity among various regional and sub-regional cooperation frameworks; and ratify and implement regional agreements;
12. **Welcome** the entry into force of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) and encourage Africa LLDCs and transit countries to endeavor to ratify the AfCFTA without delay which would address the inherent non-tariff and tariff barriers to intra- Africa trade;
13. **Stress** that investing in quality, accessible, affordable, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including transport, energy, water and sanitation for all, is vital for achieving sustainable development. We call upon bilateral and multilateral development partners to scale up assistance towards the development and maintenance of sustainable and resilient infrastructure in LLDCs. We call on the UN system and other relevant international and regional organizations to enhance their technical support to LLDCs to develop sustainable infrastructure;
14. **Reiterate** our call for support to the LLDCs and transit countries in developing bankable implementable infrastructure projects that are financially viable, environmentally friendly and accepted by the local communities;
15. **Strive** to achieve policies, regulatory and institutional frameworks that promote sustainable energy transition, ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all. We encourage LLDCs and transit countries to scale up projects on cross border inter-connectors and improve transformational energy access. We call for innovative

partnerships between development partners, UN system and other international and regional organisations to support accelerated universal access, renewable energy and energy efficiency development;

16. **Recognize** that digital transformation is a driving force of global, innovative, inclusive and sustainable growth and can contribute to reducing inequality and achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We aim to foster favorable conditions for the development of the digital economy by creating appropriate enabling environment including the necessary policies, legal and regulatory framework to support ICT development in particular the development of broadband including enhancement of digital skills, promotion of digital inclusion, increased adoption and utilization of ICT applications and services and to close the digital divide especially in areas that promote trade, improve trade logistics, and enhance productivity and structural transformation;
17. **Concerned** that LLDCs' share of global merchandise trade has declined in the first years of the implementation of the VPoA and remains below one per cent of the global levels and undiversified. We reaffirm our commitment to continue to intensify our efforts to build productive capacities, pursue structural economic transformation, industrialization, value-addition and encourage export diversification;
18. **Urge** LLDCs, in collaboration with development partners and international organisations, to identify and provide targeted incentives to specific (sub-)sectors and/or firms with higher value-added production, diversification and/or export potential and create backward and forward linkages among manufacturing, agriculture and services sectors by linking SMEs to the supply chains and production networks. We also urge LLDCs to develop and implement quality, effective and targeted industrial policies;
19. **Call** upon development partners to provide stronger support to LLDCs to build their trade and supply-side capacity including through enhancing Aid for Trade. We further call on the UN system and other international and regional organizations to enhance support to LLDCs to build their productive capacity;
20. **Stress** that national efforts of LLDCs need to be supported by an enabling international economic environment and financial, technical and capacity-building assistance towards building their productive capacities, enhancing diversification and value-addition, implementing industrial policies, development of private sector, and fostering structural economic transformation;
21. **Underline** that a rules-based, non-discriminatory and equitable trading system is essential in preserving the interests of the poorest and most vulnerable economies including the LLDCs. The proposed reforms of the WTO must therefore promote inclusiveness and non-discrimination, build trust and address the inequalities and help spur growth and development;
22. **Note** with concern the increase in the adoption of protectionist measures by major trading partners. This situation can further marginalize LLDCs from global trade. We call on the WTO Members to preserve the multilateral trade system and resist all forms of protectionism to promote common prosperity;
23. **Note** further that five LLDCs are in the process of WTO accession and recognize that the accession process is however, resource-intensive, and it is crucial that the financial and

technical assistance needed by acceding LLDCs is provided in a timely and efficient manner. We urge WTO Members to take into account the challenges faced by acceding LLDCs and further urge the international community to enhance their support to facilitate the accession of the countries;

24. **Congratulate** the Government of Kazakhstan and welcome its hosting of the 12<sup>th</sup> World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference in Astana on 8-11 June 2020. The Ministerial Conference should deliver a development-oriented outcome including a deliverable in favor of the LLDCs.
25. **Encourage** LLDCs and transit countries that have not yet ratified the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and have not yet notified their capacity needs to do so and take advantage of the technical assistance opportunities. We also urge development partners, the private sector and UN system and other international and regional organizations to enhance technical and capacity building support in areas identified by LLDCs and transit countries as needing support to accelerate the implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement;
26. **Underscore** the significance of international transport corridors for reducing trade costs and promoting regional sustainable development, and request for strengthening of the role of economic corridors, corridor management organizations, sub-regional and inter-regional arrangements;
27. **Call** on the UN system and other relevant international and regional organizations to provide further policy, analytical and technical support towards the development, functioning and management of corridors.
28. **Commit to** continue to build conducive business environment for private sector development. We call on development partners and international organizations to provide assistance to LLDCs to further strengthen their business environment including access to trade finance and build the capacity of the Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises to participate in international trade;
29. **Further** commit to continue promoting conducive policies to attract foreign direct investment that leads to increased trade as well as sustainable development of LLDCs. We call on development partners to provide greater support to the foreign direct investment - seeking efforts of LLDCs. We also call on the UNCTAD, UN-OHRLLS, UNIDO, United Nations Commission on International Trade Law, and other international and regional organisations to provide capacity building support to LLDCs to develop more focused policies, strategies and mechanisms;
30. **Recognize** that the growth in e-commerce provides international trade opportunities including new market opportunities for LLDCs. We call on UN-OHRLLS, UNCTAD, ITU and partners to undertake studies on how to promote e-commerce in LLDCs;
31. **Recognize also** that integration of LLDCs into the global and regional value chains can facilitate export diversification and industrial development. We call on WTO, UNCTAD, UNIDO, Common Fund for Commodities, World Bank, UNDP, ITC, UN-OHRLLS, regional economic commissions, and development partners, to provide assistance to LLDCs to strengthen their capacity to participate in regional and global value chains;

32. **Reaffirm** our commitment to build regulatory and institutional frameworks to strengthen our services sector and we call on international organizations to support LLDCs to develop their services sectors;
33. **Concerned** that LLDCs continue to be disproportionately affected by the adverse impacts of climate change, desertification, land degradation, drought, melting glaciers, floods, including glacial lakes outbursts and other natural disasters due to their location, level of development, and greater reliance on climate sensitive sectors like agriculture. We stress the importance of continued support from international cooperation on adaptation and mitigation efforts and on strengthening resilience. We further stress the necessity of adequate and predictable financial resources from a variety of sources, including public and private ones, and stress that LLDCs should be accorded greater access to the UN Green Climate Fund and technical assistance to have beneficial access to the Fund;
34. **Recognize** LLDCs' efforts to promote building of resilient societies through Disaster Risk Reduction. We call upon development partners, UN system and other international and regional organizations to support LLDCs' to develop and implement national climate change strategies as well as drought and disaster risk mitigation, preparedness and resilience policies and strategies, including early warning and early action systems;
35. **Invite** climate finance providers to improve access for the LLDCs and we encourage the allocation of more resources to ex-ante instruments for building resilience, including new financing approaches which incentivize disaster risk reduction;
36. **Recognize** that large data gaps persist in the LLDCs, particularly as concerns disaggregated data, and that significant efforts are required to strengthen national statistical systems. We call on increased support of all types and from all sources, including capacity-building and technical support to LLDCs, to strengthen their national statistical systems;
37. **Look** forward to the convening of the 2019 UN Climate Change Conference in Chile, UN Second Global Sustainable Transport Conference in China, the 15th UNCTAD Quadrennial Conference in Barbados, and the World Investment Forum in United Arab Emirates in 2020. We recognize the importance of these meetings to LLDCs and stress that the outcomes of these meetings should take into account the LLDCs issues;
38. **Recognize** the significant potential of multilateral development banks and other international development banks in financing sustainable development and providing know-how to the LLDCs and call on them to enhance their support especially towards infrastructure development;
39. **Encourage** the International Think Tank for LLDCs to undertake research and capacity development for the LLDCs and to strengthen research collaboration with relevant international organizations including UN-OHRLLS, UNCTAD, UNDP, WTO and others, and with research institutions, think tanks, and other stakeholders on all the 6 priority areas of the Vienna Programme of Action and foster coherence in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action with the Sustainable Development Goals;
40. **Call upon** the Member States, United Nations system organizations and other stakeholders to provide voluntary contributions to the International Think Tank;

41. **Urge** all LLDCs that have not yet ratified the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of an International Think Tank for LLDCs to do so;
42. **Stress** that UN-OHRLLS, as the focal point, in accordance with the General Assembly resolution, should undertake the necessary preparations, mobilise and coordinate the active involvement of the United Nations system organizations to ensure inclusive participation;
43. **Emphasize** that the outcome of the midterm review should be ambitious, action oriented, and concise and make renewed efforts to accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development including eradication of poverty in LLDCs to ensure that no one is left behind;
44. **Commit** to participate at the highest possible level during the Comprehensive Midterm Review of the Vienna Programme of Action;
45. **Encourage** active participation at the highest level possible of all States Members of the United Nations, in particular transit developing countries and donor countries, as well as of the United Nations system and international and regional organizations and other relevant stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector in the High-level Comprehensive Midterm Review;
46. **Request** the Secretary-General of the United Nations to undertake all necessary measures to provide necessary resources to carry out the tasks related to the preparation of the Midterm Review of the Vienna Programme of Action;
47. **Invite** development partners and the international financial and development institutions to make voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund established by the Secretary- General to support the activities related to the follow-up and the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action;
48. **Welcome** with deep appreciation the generous contributions toward the convening of the midterm review received from the Governments of: The Republic of Austria, The Peoples Republic of China, The Republic of India, The Republic of Kazakhstan, and The Russian Federation;
49. **Appreciate** the important role played by UN-OHRLLS in coordination and follow-up on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, including coordination of the preparatory process for the midterm review;
50. **Express** our sincere recognition to the Government of the Republic of Paraguay, for the efforts undertaken in coordinating the Group's activities in its capacity as the Chair of the Group of LLDCs;
51. **Congratulate** the newly elected 2020-2021 Bureau under the Chairmanship of Kazakhstan and commit to work closely with them to advance our development agenda;
52. **Look** forward to a successful High-level Comprehensive Midterm Review on 5-6 December 2019, in New York, in December 2019.