# Report of the 21st Annual Ministerial Meeting of Landlocked Developing Countries

**Held on 22 September 2022**

**ECOSOC Chamber**

**10:00 am - 1:00 pm**

***Theme: Accelerating implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and building momentum towards the Third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries***

**Executive Summary**

On the 22nd of September 2022, the Foreign Ministers of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) held their 21st Annual Meeting in person for the first time since 2019 at the United Nations Headquarters (ECOSOC Chamber). H.E. The Honourable Lemogang Kwape, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Botswana chaired the meeting in his capacity as the Global Chair of the Group of LLDCs.

The meeting was held under the theme *"Accelerating implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and building momentum towards the Third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries"*. The agenda of the meeting was to discuss the progress made by LLDCs in the implementation of the Vienna Program of Action and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, challenges faced by LLDCs notably in the areas of transport, trade, and climate change, the socio-economic impact of COVID-19, the measures taken by LLDCs to minimize the pandemic's effect, boosting economic growth and building back better, ways to creatively cooperate to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs and the Vienna Programme of Action under the Roadmap initiative, and building momentum towards the Third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries.

Participants expressed that the LLDCs are facing growing challenges, such as the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has set back progress on sustainable development in the LLDCs. Others challenges include high inflation and increasing energy and food prices, deepening debt distress, conflicts and geopolitical tensions, natural resource dependency and climate crisis that is hampering sustainable recovery efforts, high transport and shipping costs and non-tariff barriers that continue to undermine export competitiveness in LLDCs.

Some delegations also noted the rising security crisis. For example, Burkina Faso indicated that the recurrent terrorist attacks in the Sahara zone is compromising the effective implementation of the VPoA. Tajikistan highlighted that extremism and terrorism are affecting the country.

Ministers called for increased collective efforts and cooperation to LLDCs and the will of all stakeholders. Support is expected from donor countries, transit countries, the UN System and the private sector and other stakeholders in the form of enhanced financing, investment, technical assistance, technologies, and capacity building. They called for increased multilateral support from transit countries, donor countries and other stakeholders. They stressed that long-term and sustainable solutions for LLDCs need to be supported by solidarity, science,

technology and increased development cooperation. LLDCs require increased ODA including Aid for Trade, market access and fairer access to that support. The role of the United Nations in supporting the LLDCs to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals was highlighted to be critical.

With regards to the Third UN Conference on LLDCs, Ministers called for timely preparations of the Third UN Conference on LLDCs, ahead of 2024 and stressed the need for active participation in the preparatory process and attendance at highest possible level.

In the run up to the Conference, Ministers highlighted the importance of reactivating the Group of Friends of LLDCs and they underscored the need for continuation of the President of the General Assembly's Board of Advisers on LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

Ministers also emphasized the critical need to strengthen OHRLLS by allocating more resources in order for it to effectively carry out its mandate to the LLDCs.

Roadmap for accelerated implementation of the VPoA
They welcomed the progress made in the implementation of the Roadmap for Accelerated implementation of the VPoA and called for enhanced support towards its implementation.

The meeting adopted a Ministerial Declaration that recognized that sustainable, inclusive, people-centered and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and other related future crises should complement and enhance the continued progress towards implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, noted with concern the adverse global economic conditions that are constraining LLDCs to recover from the socioeconomic impacts of COVID and acknowledged that gaps remain and more needs to be done to achieve the objectives of the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA).

It welcomed the Awaza Summary Statement of the Ministerial Transport Conference of Landlocked Developing Countries that was held in Awaza, Turkmenistan on 15 and 16 August 2022, which calls for actions to enhance transport connectivity of LLDCs and accelerate the implementation of the (VPoA). It further welcomed the decision of the General Assembly in its resolution 76/217 to hold the Third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries in 2024 and requested the General Assembly to take decisions at its 77th Session on all the organizational details and the scope and terms of reference of the Conference.

The Declaration also encouraged LLDCs, transit and partner countries to actively engage in the negotiations of the modalities for the third United Nations Conference on LLDCs that will take

place in the Second Committee during the main session of the 77th Session of the General Assembly, and called upon the Secretary-General and the Member States to strengthen the OHRLLS including by allocating additional post and non-post resources to the subprogramme responsible for landlocked developing countries to enable it to effectively carry out its mandate including, to enable it to provide substantive support to LLDCs in their pursuit to meaningfully engage in the intergovernmental discussions and implement the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs and the 2030 Agenda.

The meeting was attended by Ministers and representatives of LLDCs, transit countries, and development partners, UN agencies and other regional and international organizations.

**A. Introduction**

The Government of the Republic of Botswana and Global Chair of the LLDC Group with the support of United Nations Office of the High-Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) organized the Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Landlocked Developing Countries that was held on 22nd September 2022, in the ECOSOC Chamber. The Meeting was held in the sidelines of the General Debate of the United Nations General Assembly at its 77th session.

## B. Attendance

| **LLDCs and Transit countries** | |
|---|---|
| 1. Armenia | 2. Lao People's Democratic Republic |
| 3. Austria | 4. Lesotho |
| 5. Azerbaijan | 6. Malawi |
| 7. Bhutan | 8. Mongolia |
| 9. Bolivia | 10. Nepal |
| 11. Botswana | 12. Niger |
| 13. Burundi | 14. Paraguay |
| 15. Burkina Faso | 16. Rwanda |
| 17. China | 18. Sweden |
| 19. Eswatini | 20. Tajikistan |
| 21. Ethiopia | 22. Turkey |
| 23. India | 24. Uganda |
| 25. Italy | 26. Uzbekistan |
| 27. Kazakhstan | 28. Zambia |
| 29. Kyrgyz Republic | 30. Zimbabwe |
| **International Organizations** | |
| 31. The Office of the Special Adviser for Africa (OSAA) | 32. The International Think Tank for LLDCs (ITT LLDC), |
| 33. World Customs Organization (WCO) | 34. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) |
| 35. International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) | 36. UN-OHRLLS |
| 37. DCO | |

## C. Opening Session

**H.E. Lemogang Kwape, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Botswana and Global Chair of the LLDC Group** welcomed and warmly greeted all participants.

The Chair noted that 2022 is a crucial juncture for the LLDCs, as we approach the last two years of implementation of the VPoA and simultaneously embark on preparations for the Third United Nations Conference on LLDCs to be held in 2024.

He remarked that while progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 was already mixed before COVID-19, the pandemic exposed and exacerbated the vulnerabilities of our Group of countries in areas that are key to the full achievement of the VPoA, itself.

He expressed concern that our group of countries continue to face obstacles in meeting the target to vaccinate 70% of our population by mid-2022 as outlined in the WHO Global COVID-19 Vaccination Strategy. He noted that, whereas scientific progress and cooperation had allowed for timely manufacturing of the vaccines, it is disturbing to note that by end of April 2022 only 26% of our population as LLDCs was fully vaccinated.

He indicated that, furthermore, LLDCs were constrained to recover from the impacts of the pandemic due to adverse global economic conditions, including stalled growth, surging inflation, rising energy and food prices, supply chain disruptions and elevated shipping and trade costs; and the impact of climate change and its variability. It is therefore important for our group of countries to continue to leverage on the cooperation of the United Nations system and other international organizations as well as all partners to provide enhanced support that advances sustainable development progress in LLDCs -- based on the spirit of unity, solidarity, multilateralism and international cooperation.

The Chair expressed that, as we approach the conclusion of the VPoA, we must draw lessons from its evaluation and ensure that the successor LLDCs Programme of Action is not a missed opportunity to mobilize increased global commitments, enhanced partnerships and additional solutions to address the current and emerging challenges. Doing so will enable our group of countries to effectively integrate into the global trade system, achieve sustainable development and advance recovery from COVID-19.

The Chair remarked that, as Chair, Botswana will lead efforts to immediately embark on an intentional journey towards the timely preparations of the Third UN Conference on LLDCs, ahead of 2024.

He indicated to the President of the General Assembly that the Group would be grateful if the PGA can organize a dedicated high-level event, focusing on some key priorities of LLDCs as part of preparations for this important Conference. Then, the Chair made a similar request to the President of ECOSOC. Furthermore, he noted the importance of reviving the Group of Friends of LLDCs.

In addition, the Chair indicated to the President of the General Assembly that the LLDCs also look forward to fully engage with the PGA on the continuation of the Board of Advisers on LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, and consideration for its further enhancement.

The Chair said to the Deputy Secretary General that through her the group of countries wished to thank the Secretary-General for his declared commitment to focus on the plight of the LLDCs. He welcomed the SG's very clear message of 'rescue or turbocharging of the SDGs'

towards accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda. He remarked that the group expects that the same language of determination should also translate into tangible impact to fully implement the VPoA and formulation of its successor Programme.

The Chair appreciated the strong support that the High Representative and her team provide to the LLDCs. In his view, the simultaneous and back-to-back convening of the upcoming mandated conferences for LLDCs, LDCs and SIDS and the potential growth in the demands for OHRLLS' services will challenge the current capacity of the Office. In that regard, the Chair indicated to the Deputy Secretary-General, that the Group strongly encourages the Secretary-General to entrust the High Representative for OHRLLS to re-examine the needs of the Office with a view to further strengthen it to effectively carry out its mandate.

The Chair added his voice of encouragement for expedited efforts to mobilize voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund for LLDCs, LDCs and SIDS. He expressed that, while he counts on the partners, he strongly recommends that the LLDCs, LDCs and SIDS groups under OHRLLS mandate should consider making token contributions themselves as a show of commitment.

In that regard, he concluded his remarks by announcing a pledge of $10,000.00 from the Government of Botswana to the Trust Fund, as support for LLDCs activities.

**H.E. Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, President of the 77th Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA),** commended the Government of Botswana and its Permanent Mission in New York for their dedication to improving the lives of citizens in LLDCs. He highlighted the importance of the meeting to discuss LLDC issues, adding that the "diagnosis" of the issues – linked to the complexity of the crises we are living in – was recognized, but it was time to speak about "the therapy". In this regard, he highlighted the need for: long-term and sustainable solutions that are supported by solidarity and science; increased development cooperation; increased regional agreements to strengthen tourism and other industries; investments to improve transport infrastructure; regulated markets to increase the accessibility of resources; and long-term agreements rooted in science, innovation and trust.

UNGA President Körösi further remarked that with the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA) coming to an end in 2024, there is a need to focus on: developing cooperative management of water and land resources; boosting regional scientific cooperation to form joint transport systems; enhancing joint disaster risk reduction planning and disaster response agreements and capabilities; creating joint education and capacity development programs benefitting LLDCs; and bolstering benefit sharing schemes and financial mechanisms to invest in regional water, food, and climate resilience. Noting that there is very limited time to prepare for the Third UN Conference on LLDCs in 2024, he called on meeting's participants to share with him their viewpoints and advice on how to move the agenda forward for the 450 million people across the 32 LLDCs. He invited them all back to discuss in October.

In her statement, **Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, United Nations Deputy Secretary-General** thanked the Chair for inviting her to the meeting. She noted that challenges for developing countries, especially Landlocked Developing Countries, are surging. These include high inflation and increasing energy and food prices, deepening debt distress, the continuing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and conflicts. All these challenges have come on top of a relentless global climate crisis.

She noted that LLDCs are confronted with the very real risk of falling short of the targets under the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. But this failure is not inevitable. With global support and cooperation, the tide could be turned. She highlighted four key priority areas.

The first was enhanced connectivity. She remarked that the physical and non-physical connectivity constraints are unique factors that distinguish LLDCs from other vulnerable economies. She affirmed the need to close physical transport infrastructure gaps to enhance regional and international transport connectivity across these countries. Restrictions imposed during the pandemic demonstrated the need to find long-term solutions to get trade moving.

The second priority area for LLDCs that she highlighted was climate change mitigation and adaptation. She stated that LLDCs need significantly higher levels of — and timely access to — international support and financing for climate change mitigation and adaptation and they needed the support now.

The third point that she spoke about was enhanced structural economic transformation and improved diversification. She noted that greater efforts are needed to support LLDCs to produce higher value-added products, manufactured goods and exports of services. Yet none of these aims can be achieved if LLDCs remain excluded from the financing they need to survive today's multiple crises and to lay the foundation for a more resilient, diversified, and sustainable future.

Finally, she noted the importance of ensuring that no LLDCs are forced to invest in debt service payments, instead of the health of their people and societies. She stated that nine LLDCs are at a high risk of debt distress, while two are already in debt distress. Unless urgent action is taken, more will encounter the same fate, with enormous consequences for the region and the entire world. She highlighted the importance of long-term debt sustainability through debt restructuring, and by ensuring LLDCs can access low-cost, concessional finance, at ultra-long-term rates. She finished her statement by noting that the decision of the UN General Assembly to organize the Third United Nations Conference for LLDCs in 2024 offers a vital opportunity to take stock of progress.

**H.E. Ms. Lachezara Stoeva, Permanent Representative of Bulgaria to the United Nations and President of the Economic and Social Council** stated that the theme of the meeting summarizes the current top priorities of the group and that the ECOSOC, as the United Nations

Principal Organ dedicated to development matters, has an instrumental role to play in policy discussions concerning Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs).

She expressed that the priorities she set for her ECOSOC Presidency can play a role in addressing these important issues. For instance, she would like ECOSOC to help bridge the "great finance divide". This divide has sharply curtailed the ability of many developing countries to recover from the pandemic and invest in recovery and social development. Heavy emphasis should be put on the financing needed by LLDCs to invest in a sustainable recovery towards the SDGs and building the transport, energy and ICT infrastructure they badly need.

She added that another priority she set is to ensure that ECOSOC and the HLPF provide solid, evidence based, innovative and actionable policy guidance to curb and address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the SDGs. LLDCs were disproportionately affected by the pandemic. In this regard, the HLPF Ministerial Declaration called for adequate global and regional value chains and transport systems, including to and from landlocked developing countries

The President of ECOSOC commended the 7 Members of the LLDC group that presented their National Voluntary Review (VNRs) at the 2022 HLPF.

She expressed that she is aware that the Ministerial Declaration contains a call to the President of ECOSOC to make contributions to the preparatory process for the Third Conference. She assured that she attaches great importance to this request, and that she will work in coordination with the other Principal Organs to fulfill this mandate.

Finally, in her role as Chair of the Second Committee, she encouraged smooth negotiations on the resolution on the modalities of the Conference.

## D. Overview of progress in implementing the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs as well as the Roadmap on the Accelerated Implementation of the VPoA and impact of COVID-19

In her statement, **Ms. Rabab Fatima, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative on Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States** congratulated Botswana for the accession to the LLDCs Group Chairmanship. She also thanked H.E. Ambassador Collen Vixen Kelapile, Permanent Representative of Botswana to the UN, for his stewardship of the Group in New York. She expressed her deep appreciation to the representative from Kazakhstan for their leadership of the Group in the past two years and during a challenging time. She expressed gratitude to all representatives from transit countries and development partners for attending the meeting. Ms. Rabab also expressed gratitude toward the strong support expressed by the President of the General Assembly and the President of ECOSOC.

When giving the update on the implementation of the VPoA, the High Representative highlighted that COVID-19 pandemic has set back progress on sustainable development in the LLDCs. She emphasized that the weak and slow recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic had been hampered by the food crisis, rising energy costs, and acute shortage of development financing. She highlighted some of the key indicators as highlighted in the 2022 report of the Secretary General. She indicated that poverty was on the rise in the LLDCs, with 25 per cent of the population living below the poverty line of $1.90 per day. She noted that unemployment had increased from 4.6 per cent in 2015 to 5.7 per cent in 2021 and that food security remained a challenge. She also indicated that LLDCs' external debt had increased significantly with nine LLDCs at a high risk of debt distress, and two are in debt distress. She noted that that transport infrastructure and maintenance were inadequate in LLDCs, and internet usage rate was only 34.7 per cent in 2021, far below the world average of 63 per cent. She emphasized that LLDCs remain marginalized from global trade and that the COVID-19 related travel restrictions further compounded the situation. She noted in that the VPoA's objective of significantly increasing LLDCs' participation in global trade remains largely unmet. She further noted that the LLDCs' exports were largely undiversified.

The High Representative highlighted that whilst there were significant challenges, progress was achieved in some areas. She noted that the proportion of the population with access to electricity and the Official Development Assistance to LLDCs had increased Foreign direct investment flows to LLDCs increased by 31 per cent, from $14.1 billion in 2020 to $18.5 billion in 2021 and that LLDCs received $40.8 billion in remittances, an increase of 8.8 per cent from 2020. The High Representative emphasized that the progress made was not sufficient to achieve the objectives of the VPoA within the next two years. She underscored the need for innovative ideas as well as the full and collective commitment by all stakeholders including LLDCs, transit countries, development partners, the UN system, and the private sector. She highlighted that the upcoming Third UN Conference on LLDCs in 2024 offers an important opportunity to build back better. She noted that while ODA has been increasing, it was focused on a small subset of LLDCs. She emphasized the need to expand ODA as well as Aid for Trade to LLDCs and enhance access.

She also emphasized the role of the United Nations in supporting the LLDCs to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and noted the responsibility of UN-OHRLLS in mobilizing the whole system to support the LLDCs. She recalled the Roadmap for Accelerated implementation of the VPoA which was adopted by the LLDCs Ministerial Meeting in 2020. She noted that it contained more than 430 initiatives being implemented in LLDCs, covering the six priority areas of the VPoA. She reported that about a quarter of the activities in the roadmap have been reported as completed and that the completed activities have resulted in strengthening LLDCs' capacities, and increasing knowledge on transit, trade and infrastructure development; energy and ICT; structural economic transformation; cooperation between LLDCs and transit countries; and climate change, among so many other issues. She highlighted that more still remains to be done and that the role of transit countries was vital. She noted that the decision by the WTO to convene an annual dedicated session focusing on transit was an important opportunity.

She reported that UN-OHRLLS in close collaboration with the UN Development Cooperation Office had established the LLDCs National Focal Points network and that the aim was to enhance national level implementation of global agreements in line with national priorities. She emphasized that the National Focal Points could help bring much needed coherence and coordination at all levels.

Briefing the meeting on the upcoming activities undertaken by her office, High Representative indicated that a top priority for UN-OHRLLS was to work on the preparatory process of the Third United Nations Conference on LLDCs. She informed that the process would include regional review meetings, national level reviews, pre-conference thematic events and substantive work and reports. She indicated that the recent Ministerial Transport Conference of LLDCs held in Turkmenistan, was an important example of preparatory work. She emphasized that national level experiences were important as they serve as the foundation of the next programme of action, and she encouraged the LLDCs to prepare national reports that comprehensively assess implementation of the VPoA.

She recalled that during the recent meeting of the Group at Ambassadorial level, a close collaboration with development partners was key. She highlighted that she welcomed the decision made by the Group to reactivate the Group of Friends of LLDCs. She also thanked Chair for underlining the need to mobilize resources for the Trust Fund, and she expressed great appreciation towards the announcement by Botswana to contribute to the Trust Fund.

On other upcoming activities, organized by OHRLLS she informed that, in collaboration with the Chair and the International Think Tank for LLDCs, OHRLLS was organizing an LLDC dedicated session during the WTO Public Forum on "Enhancing integration of LLDCs into global trade for sustainable COVID-19 recovery: The role of digital technology". OHRLLS was also organizing an Inter-Agency Consultative Group Meeting on the Follow-up and Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action to be held later in the year. She also indicated that OHRLLS would continue to undertake analytical work in support of advocacy and capacity building activities for the LLDCs. She assured the meeting that OHRLLS shall continue to amplify the LLDCs' voice and highlight their challenges and priorities at every opportunity, including at the relevant intergovernmental processes, and UN system-wide coordination mechanisms. She emphasized that OHRLLS would work closely with LLDCs in the upcoming global meetings of importance to LLDCs, to be held in 2022 and 2023 and these included COP27, in November – and the 5th UN Conference on LDCs to be held in March 2023 to be held in Doha. She encouraged the delegations to also be involved in the ongoing negotiations on the international legally binding instrument under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (BBNJ). She emphasized that LLDCs, should not be left behind in the exploitation of the resources regarded as common heritage to mankind. In closing, she

reaffirmed her commitment, and that of her office to continue to support the Chair, the Bureau and the Group to generate stronger global partnerships for the LLDCs.

## E. BRIEFING ON THE OUTCOME OF THE MINISTERIAL TRANSPORT CONFERENCE OF LLDCs held on 15 and 16 August 2022 in Turkmenbashi, Turkmenistan.

In his statement, **H.E. Mr. Rashid Meredov, Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan** provided a briefing on the outcome of the ministerial transport conference for LLDCs that was held on 15 and 16 August 2022 in Turkmenbashi, Turkmenistan. He noted that the Conference was jointly organized with the Office of the High Representative under the theme "Ashgabat Process: Financing for Better Connectivity". More than 20 Ministers and Vice Ministers of transport from LLDCs, transit countries, and development partners and over 30 international and regional organizations including United Nations system agencies, development banks, regional and subregional organizations, think tanks and the private sector participated in the conference.

Minister Meredov highlighted some of the key elements in the Awaza Summary Statement, which accumulated the positions stated by the ministers, background documents and the proceedings of the Conference sessions. He noted that the outcome document underscores the important role of enhanced transport connectivity for sustainable recovery of LLDCs from COVID-19 pandemic and makes a call to enhance transportation linkages and accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action in the remaining period. The Awaza Summary Statement notes the importance of holding of regular high-level international meetings within the framework of the Ashgabat process on sustainable transport, launched at the First Global Sustainable Transport Conference. In this regard, it notes the necessity to hold regular multilateral consultations, capacity building and training activities on transport, customs, visa and other trade and transport facilitating issues.

Minister Meredov also noted that the Summary Statement calls for greater collaboration on increasing investment for key infrastructure projects, as well as foreign direct investment, and facilitating the use of transport data, information and communication technologies in transport and transit systems. The Statement underlines the strong links between transport and trade agendas, and the fundamental importance of the World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade Facilitation as well as other international and regional trade and transport-related conventions, regulations, and agreements for LLDCs, transit countries and their trade partners. The Awaza Summary Statement emphasizes the need to assist LLDCs in accelerating the transition to low-carbon energy sources and technologies, bearing in mind that climate change can disrupt transit trade and interconnected supply chains.

Finally, he pointed out that the Summary Statement encourages LLDCs and their partners to take a very active role in the preparation process and attend the Third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries in 2024 at the highest possible level. He stressed the need to ensure the implementation of the Awaza Statement by including all the actions into one Road Map document. He proposed to have a Preparatory Meeting for the Third LLDCs Conference in the first half of 2023 and indicated that Turkmenistan is ready to provide the necessary support in hosting this event.

## F. General Debate

Ministers and high-level officials representing landlocked developing countries delivered statements during the interactive debate.

In his statement, **H.E. Mr. Mukhtar Tleuberdi, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan** noted that as we approach the last two years of the Vienna Programme of Action and the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda, the full and effective implementation of all six priority areas of the VPoA is critical to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He indicated that Kazakhstan is concerned with the limited progress achieved in LLDCs as highlighted in the 2022 Secretary-General´s report on the implementation of the VPoA. He emphasized that while drafting the new Programme of Action to be adopted at the Third UN Conference, consideration should be made of the fact that the LLDCs are behind in achieving the VPoA. He underscored that the new programme of action should become the roadmap for the LLDCs' common sustainable development given the geographical limits of landlockedness.

He pointed out that Kazakhstan believes that having a Roadmap for accelerated implementation of the VPoA is critical to ensure visible results on the ground. He indicated that the Ministerial Declaration to be adopted in the meeting welcomes the already achieved progress under the Roadmap and proposed to extend the Roadmap till the end of the next Programme of Action to be adopted in 2024 and underscored the need to continue mapping and report on the more than 430 important activities in one living document. He concluded by underscoring that as countries facing specific challenges imposed by common geographical condition, they must continue to act in unity to garner greater international support to promote a sustainable recovery in the years going forward.

In his statement, **H.E. Saleumxay KOMMASITH, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lao PDR** expressed that being both LDC and Landlocked country, the Lao PDR has unavoidably been heavily affected by the impact of the pandemic in many areas.

He further expressed that the Lao PDR has set an ambitious goal to transform itself from a landlocked into a land-linked country. In alignment with the VPoA's priority areas, notable investment has been made in improving infrastructure connectivity which includes, among others the Laos-China high speed railway and highway projects, under the Belt & Road Initiative, which has proved to be a transformative breakthrough in enhancing regional trade integration and connectivity. In addition, the Lao PDR has recently launched the operation of dry ports and logistics parks to further enhance more seamless transport services in order to facilitate and reduce transport-related costs, increasing competitiveness for regional trade and foreign direct investment, all of which are part of the national development strategy.

He indicated that, despite important progress made in the implementation of the VPoA during the past eight years, much more remains to be done. In particular, external resources are required to fill in the remaining gap and greater attention must be given to scaling up trade facilitation, improving digital and energy connectivity, and enhancing trade diversification through the promotion of productive capacities, industrialization and structural economic transformation, among others.

On this note, he considered that it is highly important to accelerate progress towards the priority areas of the VPoA and other infrastructure development initiatives, including mobilization of greater support from development partners, international financial institutions and the private sector. Therefore, the Lao PDR called upon the international community to provide enhanced financing, investment, technical assistance, transfer of technological knowledge, capacity building. Importantly donor countries should honor their ODA commitment.

**H.E. Mrs. Battsetseg Batmunkh, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia** started her statement by thanking the Chair and congratulating Ms. Rabab Fatima on her appointment as the High Representative. She noted that the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, as well as the current triple crisis of food, energy and finance are exacerbating inherent vulnerabilities of the LLDCs. At present, out of more than 540 million people living in 32 LLDCS, only 26 percent are fully vaccinated and one quarter of them are living in poverty. The prevalence of undernourishment in LLDCs is two times (22 percent) higher than the world average (10.8 percent).

She remarked that energy prices are still high, above pre-conflict levels and energy markets are under stress, as the heating season approaches in the northern hemisphere. The combined effect of health pandemic and global economic recession is likely to impede not only implementation of the SDGs and Vienna Programme of Action, but also certain achievements of the past development.

However, speedy recovery, building back better and continuing progress in the LLDCs will depend on right policies and concerted efforts. The efforts will require enhanced and perhaps targeted support from development partners, transit countries, South-South partners, private sector, and foundations, as well.

H.E. Mrs. Batmunkh remarked that the Government of Mongolia is working hard to build back its economy from COVID-19 crisis while implementing Agenda 2030 for SDGs and Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs together with the Vision 2050, Mongolia's long-term development policy document. LLDCs' persistent efforts for diminishing trade barriers and developing road transport, and energy infrastructure and connectivity overall have been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, there is the need to promote efficient and cost-effective access to and from the sea for LLDCs by all means of transport, on the basis of freedom of transit. She particularly affirmed the importance of air transport for LLDCs.

She referred to the visit of the UN Secretary-General to Mongolia that took place on 8-12 August 2022. During the visit, it was agreed that Mongolia and UN development cooperation will be further extended and upgraded to the next level. She took note of the important role the International Think Tank for LLDCs and urged fellow LLDCs that have not yet ratified the Multilateral Agreement on the Establishment of the International Think for LLDC to do so at the earliest convenience. She concluded her remarks by stating that there was an expectation that the Third Conference on LLDCs will formulate and adopt a renewed framework for international support to address the special needs of LLDCs, and to strengthen partnerships between LLDCs, transit countries and their development partners.

**Honourable Ms. Matšepo Molise- Ramakoae Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Relations of the Kingdom of Lesotho** expressed her unwavering support to the

chair and congratulated the USG on her appointment as the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. She expressed her delegation's readiness to support USG especially in the lead up to the 3rd UN Conference on LLDCs.

Honourable Molise- Ramakoae noted that the COVID-19 had exacerbated the dire situation in LLDCs and had also reversed the gains made in meeting the priorities of the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA) for LLDCs. She further noted that the situation was even worse for LLDCs which are also LDCs and located in Africa as they were the hardest hit owing to the fragility of our health systems and limited social support and protection measures as well as lack of financial resources to address all these challenges. She expressed concern that the recent Secretary General's Report on the implementation of the VPoA reveals that the rising energy and food prices, supply chain disruptions and elevated shipping and trade costs are an impediment to LLDCs to recover from the socioeconomic impacts of COVID- 19 pandemic. In this regard she emphasized the need for the Group to make concerted efforts to foster renewed and strengthened partnerships for the full and timely implementation of the VPOA as well as building back better in recovering from Covid-19. She welcomed the efforts by Office of the High Representative and that of the Chairperson to resuscitate the Group of Friends of LLDCs which would be helpful in the acceleration of VPoA implementation. She also noted that the UN System remains one of our strongest pillars in supporting the implementation of the VPoA, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and COVID-19 recovery. She therefore called on the UN System organization to further accelerate the implementation of the Roadmap for Accelerated Implementation of the VPoA adopted 2 years ago.

Regarding the Third United Nations Conference on LLDCs, she expressed Lesotho's commitment to be involved in all the preparatory stages that will lead to the successful outcomes of the Conference in 2024. She highlighted that Lesotho looked forward to a renewed framework for international support including developed states, transit countries and development partners that will address our recovery from Covid 19, rising inflation, food insecurity, adverse impacts of climate change and all other trade and transit related vulnerabilities that endanger our development prospects. In closing she emphasized the need to for OHRLLS to be capacitated and thus called for the strengthening of the OHRLLS to provide the required support to LLDCS in its quest to implement the Vienna Programme of Action and the new programme of Action for LLDCs in 2024.

In his statement, **H.E. Ambassador Julio César Arriola**, **Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Paraguay** stated that, adding to the ongoing pandemic, the current situation in Ukraine strains the global supply chain and threatens food security worldwide. He indicated that these events disproportionately affect LLDCs.

He underscored the importance of international cooperation and the exchange of information and best practices to tackle the challenges that affects LLDCs in common.

He indicated that Paraguay prioritizes sustainable development and regional integration and highlighted the Bi-Oceanic corridor project that Paraguay is building and that will benefit not only Paraguay but all the neighboring regions. He reaffirmed that this is an effort to overcome the obstacles of landlockness.

The Foreign Minister expressed the interest of Paraguay in hosting the Regional Review Meeting for Latin America as part of the preparatory process for the Third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries.

Finally, he highlighted the role that OHRLLS plays in favor of the 91 most vulnerable countries and made a call to strengthen the Office through allocation of more resources to better fulfil its mandate.

**H.E. Mr. Sirojiddin Muhriddin, Minister of the Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan**, noted that crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic have exacerbated the specific development challenges faced by LLDCs. He noted the importance of enhancing regional integration and cooperation through regional infrastructure and the harmonization of regional policies. Emphasizing the adverse impacts of climate change, H.E. Mr. Muhriddin noted that around 1000 glaciers disappeared and that 35% of glaciers in the country are being degraded. He announced Tajikistan's plans to declare 2025 the International Year for Preservation of Glaciers" and to establish an International Fund for Glacier Preservation to be hosted under the UN. He reminded participants that as co-chair of the UN 2023 Water Conference, Tajikistan was looking forward to bringing together the voices of the LLDC group on water.

H.E. Mr. Muhriddin also highlighted extremism and terrorism as important issues for his country, and he invited delegations to attend the 'Conference on International and Regional Border Security and Management Co-operation to Counter Terrorism and Prevent the Movement of Terrorists' hosted by Tajikistan (in Dushanbe) on 18-19 October 2022.

In his statement **H.E Dr. Frederick M. Shava, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of the Republic of Zimbabwe** indicated that Zimbabwe's National Development blueprints have largely reflected much of the fundamental priorities identified in the VPoA, including, inter-alia, the issues of transit policy, infrastructure development and maintenance, international trade and trade facilitation, regional integration and cooperation and structural economic transformation. He noted that Zimbabwe has harmonized its transit policies in compliance with the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) protocols on transit trade, transit facilities and third-party motor vehicle insurance schemes.

Minister Shava noted that Zimbabwe is also establishing one-stop-border-posts to facilitate smooth transit of both people and goods across the country's borders. A study of one of the completed border posts, the Chirundu One-Stop-Border-Post, has shown that its establishment induced between US$2.2 and US$3.1 million of Zimbabwe's annual exports to Zambia. In the area of infrastructure development and maintenance, he pointed out that Zimbabwe is currently upgrading and modernizing its road infrastructure along the major trade corridors that serve East and Southern Africa, linking it to the North-South transport Corridor in order to reduce transit time and costs, and also to improve competitiveness.

Minister Shava informed that Zimbabwe has undertaken many and varied reforms to promote and facilitate investment including: Establishment of the Zimbabwe Investment and Development Authority (ZIDA): A One-Stop-Investment Services Centre; Promulgation of a Special Economic Zones (SEZ) law which designates areas to be SEZs, and define the sectors of investment in these areas; and other measures that include the robust fight against corruption,

the provision of investment security, and the promulgation of other investor friendly legislations.

The minister noted that Zimbabwe continues to put in place legislation and incentives to encourage beneficiation and value addition, to strengthen the country's productive capacities. The deliberate efforts on beneficiation and value addition are targeting all key sectors including agriculture, mining and food processing, among others. He welcomed the policy briefs from OHRLLS and the UNCTAD, on enhancing productive capacities and transforming LLDC economies. He highlighted some areas where he called on the international community, with the UN and its agencies at the centre, to mobilize adequate support to LLDCs and enable them to reach sustainable human development. These include: devising innovative approaches for economic diversification to build resilience in order to "build back better" with enhanced FDI and other investments; giving higher priority to productive capacities, diversification of economies, increase value-addition to exports and assist LLDCs in further integration into global and regional value chains accompanied by clear indicators to help formulate more realistic policies; support infrastructure development and providing advisory services at the request of LLDCs to seek approaches to trade and development; building institutional and human capacity to meet the changes demanded in the 21st century, especially focusing on skills-building for women and youth; ensuring that the changing digital landscape works equally for all by bridging the divide and intensification of discussions in the WTO E-Commerce Work Programme to ensure that LLDCs build inclusive digital transformation ecosystems that enhance productive capacities and foster greater trade.

He concluded his statement by calling on partners to help put in place a tracking mechanism that would assist in reviewing the progress that both the LLDCs, and the development partners, have managed to achieve in the implementation of VPoA priorities.

**H.E. Dr. Tandi Dorji, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Royal Government of Bhutan** noted that the midterm review of the implementation of the VPoA, the Secretary General's 2022 Report and the report on the impact of COVID-19 on LLDCs have all highlighted the limited progress achieved in LLDCs. He noted that the past few years have been very challenging for the LLDCs because of successive waves of multifaceted crises. He noted that Bhutan will formally reopen its borders and resume tourism activities on 23rd of September. He also informed that LLDCs are the most vulnerable to climate change ramifications and the crisis has increased their vulnerability to disaster and reduced climate change adaptation capacity.

Minister Dorji indicated that in Bhutan, the six priority areas of the VPoA were integrated in the 11th Five Year Plan and its 16 National Key Result Areas. Likewise the priorities were also captured in the current 12th Five Year Plan under 6 National Key Result Areas contributing towards achieving the VPoA objectives. He pointed out that Bhutan's rank on Trading Across Borders has gone up to 30 from 168 out of the 183 economies in 2012. However, while Bhutan is set to graduate from the LDC category, the country still has more to achieve in terms of addressing our economic vulnerabilities, primarily through the priority objectives laid by the VPoA and that is why support from UN partners is crucial to graduate sustainably.

He mentioned that the country had taken a holistic approach in reviving the economy through various monetary and fiscal measures as well as incentives to spur economic activities. He also alluded that the focus of this fiscal year's budget is entirely on economic recovery and includes

expanding agricultural production, substituting imports, promoting electric vehicles to reduce import of fossil fuels, diversifying export goods and markets, promoting FDI, strengthening bilateral trade relations, expediting infrastructure development like dryports and industrial estates to name a few. He also highlighted that Bhutan had initiated development of trade logistics infrastructure such as small, mini and large dry ports along with warehousing and cold storage facilities; accelerated dry port operations and resolved bottlenecks in clearance process. But all this would not have been possible without the cooperation and goodwill of transit countries and other partners.

Minister Dorji welcomed the PGA's announcement to continue his Advisory Board for LLS, which Bhutan served on during the 76th Session, and relaunching the Group of Friends of LLDCs is another important measure. He indicated their support to strengthening the resources of OHRLLS in light of the important mandate of saving the 91 vulnerable countries.

He further called on partners to support enhancing digital infrastructure that is accessible, affordable and reliable which remains a priority for the LLDCs. At the same time, he noted that digital literacy is important. He advised that while digital transformation of LLDCs' economies and way of doing business should be encouraged, we must also be mindful that with increasing uptake of technology, we also increase vulnerability to cyber security threats.

In concluding his statement, he underscored that Bhutan will accord priority to preparations towards the Third UN Conference on LLDCs, and welcomed the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration.

**H.E Honorable Mr. Stanley K. Kakubo, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Zambia** started by thanking the Chair for organizing the meeting and also thanked UN-OHRLLS and Turkmenistan for organizing the recent Ministerial Transport Conference for LLDCs. He noted that the Conference was significant as it came up with important recommendations that will accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA) and also provided a preparatory platform for the Third United Nations Conference on LLDCs. The Ministerial Transport Conference for LLDCs noted the critical challenges that LLDCs are facing including stalled growth, surging inflation, rising energy and food prices, supply chain disruptions and elevated transport costs that are constraining LLDCs to recover from the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 pandemic. LLDCs continue to struggle with low rates of vaccination against COVID-19, climate change vulnerability, unsustainable debt and natural resource dependency.

H.E. Mr. Kakubo noted that Zambia like other LLDCs faces various challenges which are directly related to the country's inherent lack of territorial access to the sea. In comparison to coastal neighbours, this scenario increases transaction costs for imports and exports, and has consequently eroded the country's competitive edge, slowed economic growth and negatively affected the capacity to promote sustained socio-economic development. However, Zambia remains committed to implementing the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA) and has made progress in the execution of its six priority areas.

He indicated that Zambia is happy with the way that the UN-OHRLLS is collaborating with other entities in the United Nations system and other international organisations such as the World Bank, WTO, WCO and International Road Union. He exclaimed that it was their hope that in the post Covid-19 era, Zambia should be given the necessary support to actualize the

Agreements for development of transport corridors and infrastructure. On their part, they are willing to leverage on Public – Private Partnership (PPPs) to develop ICTs and the much-needed physical infrastructure.

He noted that Zambia remains resolute to working with neighbouring countries for the smooth implementation of agreed legal frameworks, transit rules and policies as well as the simplification and harmonization of rules and regulations. Zambia commits itself to the ideals of the Group of LLDCs and looks forward to working with all stakeholders in preparing for the Third United Nations Conference on LLDCs to be held in 2024.

**H.E. Mr. Zheenbek Kulubaev, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic** stated that current international tension undermines world economy's recovery from coronavirus pandemic and has also led to food security and many other challenges. He called for much closer cooperation in trade, transport and other critical areas with direct engagement of the High Representative Office in order to ensure comprehensive fulfillment of the Vienna Program of Action and its Roadmap for the Accelerated Implementation.

He indicated that the Kyrgyz Government remains focused on infrastructure projects that will boost international trade, investment, transit and tourist opportunities for Kyrgyzstan. One of those projects is the railroad China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan that will turn the Central Asian region into a vital hub of the world trade. We welcome a recent signing by the parties of the trilateral cooperation memorandum in the ancient city of Samarkand.

He indicated that his country, is a mountain country, is keen on boosting hydropower and other renewable energy production industries. For example, Kyrgyzstan is currently in talks with its neighbors - Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan - on co-investing into construction of Kambar-Ata hydropower plant that will enhance energy security and address water shortages for irrigation purposes in the three countries.

On a related note, he informed that Kyrgyzstan is also promoting interests of the mountain landlocked developing states. Last year Kyrgyzstan initiated adoption of the UN General Assembly resolution announcing the year twenty twenty-two as International Year of Sustainable Mountain Development. This year Kyrgyzstan proposes the world community to pass a UN General Assembly resolution and implement a Five-Year Action for the Development of Mountain Regions in order to foster broader and inclusive international cooperation. He invited all to co-sponsor and support this resolution.

In her statement, **Ms. Rebeca Grynspan, Secretary General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development** exclaimed that she hoped this meeting would have come at a better time for the world. But it does not. She noted that since 2020, no country, and especially no Land-Locked Developing Country, has had a rest from being in emergency mode. And things are getting worse. First, A public health crisis has led to a socioeconomic crisis, which is now rapidly turning into a debt and finance crisis, where up to 60% of low-income countries, and 30% of middle-income countries, are near debt distress. Second, climate change is hitting us harder every year, piling up costs at a time where countries lack the fiscal space to cope with disasters, let alone invest in their own long-term development. Third, prices for key commodities are at multiple times the average of the previous decade. Inflation has returned to all countries; but in developing countries, inflation is being turbocharged by depreciation, as a result of a stronger dollar, fueled by rising interest rates.

She further continued that People are suffering, with the number of the food insecure tripling in three years to almost 350 million, the extremely poor growing by more than 70 million in just the first three months of this year. And trade, which many took for granted, can no longer be taken for granted – airspaces are closing, pipelines are being redrawn, maritime routes are taking the long road… geopolitics, not economics, is now in the driving seat of globalization.

She outlined a series of priority actions for developing countries to address challenges. First, reversing the marginalization of LLDCs in global trade, investments, and output. Trade with LLDCs shrunk more than double the decline of the global average during the pandemic, especially in the services trade. High trade costs both transport and non-tariff barriers continues to undermine export competitiveness in LLDCs. This situation makes LLDCs disproportionally exposed to adverse global conditions, such as rising food and energy prices. Second, closing the trade deficit, which has compounded the countries' ability to finance their development ambitions and meet their debt repayment obligations. Third, fostering productive capacities and structural economic transformation must be at the center of national, regional, and global policies, with a strong focus on infrastructure and transport systems. Fourth, engaging all stakeholders, including ODA providers, and other developing countries in the context of South-South cooperation, so that they strengthen and broaden their partnerships with LLDCs. And, fifth, lastly, closing the Digital divide in LLDCs. The pandemic demonstrated the importance of digital technologies and accelerated their adoption. However, in 2021, internet usage rate in landlocked developing countries was only 35 per cent, far below the world average of 63 per cent.

She concluded by remarking that UNCTAD has been a longstanding partner to the LLDCs, providing analytical and technical assistance in areas such as export diversification, trade negotiations, trade and transport facilitation, investment promotion, debt management, science and technology and e-trade readiness. Following the Bridgetown Covenant, UNCTAD will continue contributing to the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. UNCTAD is ready to provide substantive support for the Third International Conference on LLDCs to be convened in 2024 and to commit to support the implementation of its outcome.

In her statement, **H.E Honourable Ms. Nancy Tembo, M.P., Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Malawi** stated that with only two years before the end of the Vienna Programme of Action, it is imperative to meet today to devise means of accelerating our implementation before the year 2024. LLDCs must take stock of implementation progress of the goals that were set out in 2014, particularly in view of the impacts of COVID-19 and climate disasters that have dwarfed gains in the past two years.

Over the past eight years, not so much has changed for Malawi and other Land Locked Developing Countries in spite of extensive efforts. To date, Malawi is still grappling with challenges due to its status as a Land Locked Developing State, which have recently been worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic.

She further noted that The Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA) whose objectives include: efficient access to the sea by the LLDCs; reduced high transport and trade costs; development of transit transport infrastructure networks; strengthening regional integration; and harmonization of border transit procedures; and promotion of increased participation in trade by the LLDC's; has been instrumental in informing Malawi's efforts particularly during the

health crisis. Through the provisions of the programme of action, they aligned and prioritized the national development framework to the development of infrastructure with the aim of achieving full connectivity for facilitation of international trade.

She concluded by exclaiming that it was their hope that through joint efforts Malawi will reduce challenges that it faces due to its status as a landlocked developing state. In that regard, they call upon friends, development partners and investors to partner with them towards the implementation of plans that they have embarked particularly in the revitalizing of the railway line which will substantially reduce transportation cost and transit time for people and goods from and outside Malawi.

**Dr. Kunio Mikuriya, World Customs Organization Secretary General** thanked the Chair and UN-OHRLLS for inviting to participate in the meeting. He noted that WCO had been contributing to the LLDC matters from the outset and that they believe that LLDCs should be the biggest beneficiaries of trade and transport facilitation efforts. He recalled his addressed at the First UN Conference on LLDCs held in Almaty, Kazakhstan in 2003 where he stressed the importance of using international standards, such as the WCO's "International Convention for Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures," known as the Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC) to enhance connectivity at borders. He informed that the WCO's vision "Borders divide, Customs connects," and thus the WCO develops standards for Customs procedures, promote Customs cooperation and provide capacity building support to Member Customs.

He informed that WCO supports customs in ensuring revenue collection, trade facilitation and protection of borders from illicit trade. He noted that the support for the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action or VPoA was natural to WCO since all 32 LLDCs were its members. He further noted that since 2014, progress has been achieved as evident by the increase in the number of Contracting Parties to the RKC from 15 to 23, reaching 72% of LLDCs. He informed that in addition to the RKC provisions on Customs transit and the Transit Handbook, the WCO had developed the Transit Guidelines in 2017 and the Compendium of best practices in transit in 2020. He noted that the Transit Guidelines answers the question "HOW" to implement efficient and effective transit regime and the Compendium of best practices illustrated in practical terms how individual Members have implemented the guiding principles for efficient and effective transit regimes outlined in the Transit Guidelines.

He gave examples of good practices contained in the Compendium such as the Regional Electronic Cargo Tracking System deployed in Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda and the DRC and the initiative for interconnectivity of Customs IT systems in West Africa. He emphasized that the WCO provides support not only in transit policy area, but also in the area of deployment of technology, including Information and Communication Technology. He informed that the WCO had continued to work on various aspects of transit and recently launched its Railway Guidance which was aimed at harmonizing the Customs procedures in railway transportation. Regarding capacity building he informed that the WCO's priority had been providing support to Customs Members in implementing the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement through the WCO Mercator Programme. Regarding digitalization, he informed that WCO has more access to data, including those related to border-crossing that Customs collects from traders and Customs seizure records on illicit trade and in that regard WCO launched the Data Strategy to provide useful information to governments and business. He highlighted that one existing

example was the Time Release Study (TRS) that Customs and its partners could identify bottlenecks at borders and find ways to reduce delays by analyzing data.

He emphasized the need to undertake TRS along transit corridor of LLDCs. He highlighted that the WCO had been working on how best to manage risks of ecommerce as it was showing exponential growth. He further highlighted that another area of their focus was how best Customs could contribute to Sustainable Development Goals by greening supply chains, including controlling environmentally hazardous goods and supporting circular economy. He indicated that the implementation of international standards and the use of technology depends on human resources and thus the WCO's capacity building support was increasingly centered on institutional development of Customs, including gender equality and diversity. He emphasized that these new focus areas and the lessons learned from the implementation of the VPoA would form the basis for reviewing and renewing the framework for international support for LLDCs. In closing, Dr. Mikuriya highlighted that WCO was committed to joining other partners in support of LLDCs in line with the SDGs and beyond.

In his written statement, **H.E. Ambassador Albert Shingiro, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation of the Republic of Burundi**, thanked the LLDC Chair for the quality of the preparatory documents and for sharing those sufficiently ahead of time to enable governments to review and make recommendations. H.E. Ambassador Shingiro highlighted the enormous environmental and economic challenges his country faces, including those created by the impacts of climate change and the health crisis. He remarked that LLDCs have, on average, transport costs that are twice as high as transit countries and have longer transportation time, which undermine the competitiveness of LLDCs, discourage investors, slow economic growth, and limit the capacity of these countries to achieve sustainable development.

H.E. Ambassador Shingiro remarked that the presence of Ms. Rabab Fatima, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS at the meeting, showed the commitment of the United Nations to the cause of LLDCs, adding that LLDCs expected strong support from her in their "daily struggle towards development". He noted that, in return, LLDCs should create favorable conditions in its policies for the implementation of at least one of the six priorities of the VPoA. In this regard, he noted that the Government of Burundi has made efforts to address challenges related to landlockedness through the development and maintenance of infrastructure (priority 2), and through regional integration and cooperation (priority 4). As such, he reported that a mega regional railroad project linking the capital Bujumbura to the Port of Dar-es-Salaam and continuing to the city of Kindu in the Democratic Republic of Congo was underway. The project would link the Atlantic and Indian oceans and would have a significant impact on the economies of the countries involved.

H.E. Ambassador Shingiro invited the United Nations to redouble its efforts to support LLDCs, and called for reducing non-tariff barriers, multiply one-stop shopping at borders, reduce air transport costs and multiply services by national companies in order to facilitate inter-African travel. He also called on partners to assist Burundi in its projects, specifically a tripartite project to open up Burundi in line with the National Strategy of Regional Integration.

In his statement, **H.E. Freddy Mamani, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Plurinational State of Bolivia** stated that his country was stripped of its coastline, by force of

an invasion and that the hopes that sooner than later dialogue and diplomacy can succeed in repairing the injustices of the past.

He remarked that his population still suffers the negative impacts derived from confinement, since it generates damages to all economic and social sectors affecting our development. Despite these limitations, Bolivia is moving forward.

He indicated that, although Bolivia's prospects are positive, the persistence of the Covid-19 pandemic in a world without equity has laid bare the limitations that landlocked countries have when it comes to taking action to protect their populations. An example is the inequity in immunization. This shows that the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action roadmap will require greater solidarity on the part of all States.

DFM Mamani highlighted the progress made in the Ministerial Declaration of Landlocked Developing Countries. It will contribute to strengthening our joint work on Climate Change and Oceans, to consolidate common positions in the General Assembly, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, including its Paris Agreement, and the Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Finally, he expressed his belief that it is of vital importance to deepen timely mechanisms for reducing inequality gaps in all dimensions affecting landlocked developing countries. This has to be a central theme in our future deliberations towards the Third LLDC Conference in 2024.

**Mr. Bharat Raj Paudyal, Foreign Secretary for Nepal** commended the Chair for convening the meeting and for the stewardship of the Group during the tough times. She congratulated Ms. Rabab Fatima on the assumption of her responsibilities as Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS. She also thanked USG and her team for their continued efforts in promoting the issue of LLDCs. He highlighted that the pandemic was on its third year and that the geopolitical tensions were on the rise. He noted the deepening disruptions to global supply chains and bleak prospects of social and economic recovery. He emphasized that the LLDCs, which were faced with pre-existing development challenges relating to trade, transport, and connectivity were the hardest hit by the crises. He further emphasized that the COVID-19-related restrictive measures have negatively affected LLDCs' trade and increased the already high trade and transportation costs.

He highlighted that climate change, biodiversity loss, and natural disasters also added to the woes of the peoples and economies of LLDCs. Against the afore mentioned challenges, he highlighted the following: First, green, and resilient recovery from the pandemic must be LLDCs' top priority and therefore there was need to expedite action on vaccines, to prioritize investment in people; and to overhaul social support systems. He emphasized the need to chart out sustainable pathways to deal with the long term economic, social, and developmental consequences of the pandemic. Second, he noted that the VPoA was coming to an end and therefore there was need to gear for the next Conference on LLDCs. He emphasized the need to focus on unfinished business, with more resolve and solidarity. He further emphasized the need to do so in tandem with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Third, he emphasized the importance of physical and digital connectivity to link LLDCs with global markets and value chains. He noted that the Ashgabat Process was an important drive for ensuring sustainable transport solutions for LLDCs. He emphasized the need to for

concerted actions to build resilient infrastructure, build productive capacities, diversify trade, and transforming of the LLDCs economies.

Fourth, he noted that it was time to recalibrate and strengthen the foundation of global cooperation for LLDCs and thus emphasized the need for enhanced support from transit countries and development partners. He stressed that the developed countries must fulfil their ODA commitments in support of the development efforts of LLDCs. He further stressed that measures must be taken to ensure that LLDCs get a fair share of FDI, aid for trade, and technology to complement their national development efforts.

Finally, he highlighted that LLDCs were at the sharp end of climate change and that its severe impact was felt on the mountainous countries. It has disproportionately affected the lives and livelihoods of the mountainous people and even endangered their identity and civilization. He stressed the need for bold climate action to help the vulnerable communities and build climate-resilient development pathways. He called on the large emitters to fulfill their climate commitments, including with credible action on climate financing.

Mr. Bharat Raj Paudyal informed that Nepal was implementing the fifteenth development plan that fully internalized the aspirations and objectives of SDGs and VPoA. He emphasized that since Nepal was graduating from the LDC category by 2026, building strong connectivity through resilient infrastructure was their top priority. He highlighted the need for greater support from the transit countries and the development partners towards their national efforts. In conclusion, he stressed that to change the LLDCs' fate of remoteness and geographical isolation the vision and promise of connectivity must be backed up by concrete actions and solutions and that the time to act was now. He expressed Nepal's commitment to do its part to realize the collective goals and objectives of the LLDCs' Group.

In his written statement, **H.E Mr. Saidou Zongo, Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Cooperation and Burkinabe Abroad, Burkina Faso**, noted the need to strengthen the human, logistical and financial capacities of many LLDCs as the COVID pandemic has exposed the challenges faced by these countries due to their geographical situation.

Providing an assessment of his country's progress on transport, H.E Mr. Saidou Zongo noted that his country increased the asphalt network by more than 50%, built juxtaposed checkpoints at the borders with the Republic of Togo and the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire (with the support of regional organizations) and set up weighing stations on the main corridors. The significant changes made to regional, departmental and rural roads have helped to raise the level of internal trade. However, Burkina Faso's rail network is weak and most air traffic takes place in the country's two main cities, Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso. As for the road network, it is subject to several constraints in terms of cost control, competitiveness, road safety, quality of services, vehicle overloading, and consistency of regulatory frameworks.

H.E Mr. Zongo remarked that LLDCs, many of whom are in a vulnerable and fragile situation, are faced with high transportation costs, climate change, and limited access to COVID-19 vaccines, with some being affected by the destruction of crossing infrastructure by armed terrorist groups. As such, the COVID-19 pandemic has reduced road transport services, significantly disrupted supply chains for essential commodities, and diminished the tourism activities on which some LLDCs depend. In addition, tariff and non-tariff barriers have eroded

the substantial comparative advantages of LLDCs, which have been adversely affected by rising prices for basic commodities and energy resources. To add to these issues, the security crisis specifically linked to the recurrent terrorist attacks in the Sahara zone is compromising the effective implementation of the VPoA as efforts made to open up the region, reduce transport costs and build road infrastructure are mostly directed at combating the terrorist hydra.

To address these challenges, H.E Mr. Zongo asked to: develop and improve the quality and number of transnational and intercontinental road infrastructure; promote a more inclusive and participatory trading system at regional and global levels; build more resilient economic systems by diversifying our economies; develop production and processing capacities for raw materials to increase the value added of LLDC exports; promote triangular cooperation and public-private partnerships to mobilize the resources needed to build infrastructure; comply with current legislation on transit in order to facilitate the movement of goods to the LLDCs; and ensure compliance with the texts relating to checkpoints in transit countries in order to avoid additional hassles. H.E Mr. Zongo further called for the support of the UN system and technical and financial partners to accelerate the implementation of the VPoA and asked to capitalize on the achievements of the VPoA for the next LLDC Conference.

**H.E Mr. Marco Giungi, Minister Plenipotentiary, Head of the Multilateral Directorate General for Development Cooperation of the Republic of Italy**, highlighted the importance of access to the sea for national development, adding that the lack of access to the sea is a disadvantage that must be addressed. He remarked that multiples crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the food crisis, just to name a few, affect LLDCs' progress. He further outlined multilateralism and partnerships as crucial to advance towards the 2030 Agenda.

H.E Mr. Giungi reported that six LLDCs are among top countries supported by Italy in terms of development cooperation, and he stressed the importance of infrastructure to access the sea, among key issues to consider.

In her statement, **Ambassador Esen Altuğ, Director General for Multilateral Economic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Türkiye** expressed that the socio-economic crises caused by COVID-19 have placed a disproportionate impact on countries with special circumstances, particularly LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

She remarked that the impacts of climate change, increased commodity prices, rising geopolitical tensions, and now global food insecurity further endanger development prospects. These challenges pose a major threat to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

She highlighted that due to their lack of direct access to the sea, LLDCs face multiple developmental challenges at once. They are highly reliant on their neighbors and have to pay relatively higher costs for trade. Undiversified economies and export markets, logistical difficulties, as well as low foreign direct investment further exacerbate LLDCs' challenges. Global challenges need global and coordinated responses. No country can and should be left to shoulder such a burden alone.

She indicated that the enhanced synergy between the 2030 Agenda and the Programme of Action for LLDCs will support efforts in achieving the SDGs. LDC5 Conference in 2023 and

the Third UN Conference on LLDCs in 2024 will present further opportunity for reviewing the progress and scaling up international efforts on sustainable transport infrastructure.

She concluded by inviting Landlocked Developing Countries that also fall into LDC category to benefit from the services of the Technology Bank for LDCs located in Türkiye.

In his statement, **H.E. Mr. Yashar Aliyev, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the United Nations** expressed that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a severe impact on development of LLDCs, and it hindered implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. He added that in the post-COVID era we will need stronger solidarity and coordination to tackle our geographic vulnerabilities and improve self-resilience of LLDCs.

He indicated that the recent geopolitical and economic challenges around the world significantly affect Eurasia's transportation landscape by changing the roles and positions of its participants. New realities necessitate the enhanced role of Azerbaijan as a regional hub. Located at the crossroads of North-South and East-West transport corridors, Azerbaijan is becoming a transit country with a strategically central place between Europe and China.

Ambassador Aliyev expressed that economic transition stands high on Azerbaijan's development agenda. Azerbaijan strives for transforming itself into one of the leading innovative countries to scale up implementation of national sustainable development and transformation goals through advanced technologies. To this end, the Azerbaijan Affiliate of the Fourth Industrial Revolution Centers' Network of the World Economic Forum was established last year as the first relevant center in their region. They launched Azerbaijan Digital Hub project to advance high-end ICT infrastructure and services.

He indicated that the end of the long-lasted conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and new geopolitical situation emerged after restoration of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, pave the way for renewed regional cooperation and sustainable development through normalization of relations. These developments create promising opportunities not only for Azerbaijan, but also for the whole region and well beyond to develop key trans-regional and regional initiatives and attract FDIs. He expressed his belief that the opening of communications will be a significant factor of normalization and will play its positive role in building sustainable peace and stability in the region and beyond.

In his statement, **Mr. Hans-Joachim Almoslechner, Deputy Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations**, noted the critical challenges that LLDCs are facing including stalled growth, surging inflation, rising energy and food prices, supply chain disruptions and elevated transport costs that are constraining LLDCs to recover from the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 pandemic. LLDCs continue to struggle with low rates of vaccination against COVID-19, climate change vulnerability, unsustainable debt and natural resource dependency.

He indicated that to ensure that we do not lose sight of the goals we set for us all, but which are of particular importance to the LLDCs, enhanced international support towards the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, COVID-19 recovery as well as climate change is fundamental. He shared that being a landlocked country, Austria fully supports and stands in solidarity with the LLDCs. He noted that in 2014, Austria hosted the Second UN conference on landlocked developing

countries in Vienna; and together with Bhutan, they co-facilitated the Outcome Document of the Midterm Review of the Vienna Programme of Action, which was adopted in December 2019.

He noted that his country welcomes the Roadmap for Accelerated Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs, which was adopted at the Ministerial Meeting in 2020 and the priority areas outlined in that document. He indicated that it was our joint responsibility as international community to ensure that we leave no one behind. Referring to the General Assembly's decision in its resolution 76/217, on the convening of the third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries in 2024 he noted that Austria fully recognizes the importance of the upcoming Third UN Conference of Landlocked Developing Countries. He concluded by indicating that if it is so decided by the group, Austria stands ready to host the Third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries in Vienna in 2024.

In his written statement, **the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Armenia, Mr. David Knyazyan** expressed that effective response and recovery require tackling inequalities, discrimination and lack of inclusion. Removal of the political barriers to the free movement of people, goods and services, in particular in terms of realization of the economic and social rights and the right to development of all peoples is a prerequisite for the promotion of LLDCs integration into global markets.

He indicated that Armenia attaches special importance to the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. They have recently embarked on the reform of their National Action Plan for the implementation of the VPoA - a comprehensive set of actions and measures, with a strict timetable for implementation, aimed at integrating the six priority targets of the Programme into the national policies and strategies and, thus, contributing to the implementation of the VPoA at the national and regional levels.

The DPR expressed that in recognition of the need for better regional and international connectivity, strenuous efforts are being made to upgrade state roads. In this regard, the construction of the North-South highway – a high-priority strategic programme for Armenia - is a vivid example. This project will not only ensure easier traffic from the North to the South of Armenia but will also significantly contribute to connectivity between the Persian Gulf and the Black Sea, thus becoming an important transit hub at the intersection of West Asia and East Europe.

He added that, as a landlocked country with borders from the East and West in blockade for the last three decades, Armenia is vitally interested in opening all the regional communications and promoting connectivity in line with the norms of international law and with full respect for state sovereignty. The unblocking of regional communications in the South Caucasus and the realization of the project "Armenian Crossroad" will have a crucial impact not only on the countries of the South Caucasus but on the wider region.

In a written statement, Ambassador DAI Bing, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Chinese Mission to the UN congratulated the Chair for the successful convening of the Annual Ministerial Meeting of Foreign Ministers of LLDCs. He expressed China's appreciation to the efforts and achievements of LLDCS to the implementation of the VPoA. He noted that the ongoing global pandemic put challenges to the world economy, particularly to LLDCs, and the

international community should strengthen cooperation to support LLDCs in meeting challenges and accelerate the implementation of the VPoA and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

He emphasized the following solutions: i) The need to uphold the core values and fundamental principles of the multilateral trading system to promote trade liberalization and facilitation. And the need to provides good external environment and guarantee to help LLDCs better integrate into the international trade system; ii) The need to strengthen international cooperation and adhere to the main channel of North-South cooperation. The developed countries should fulfill their ODA commitments, developing countries should actively engage in South-South and triangular cooperation, while international financial institutions and the private sector should strengthen collaboration, with the joint effort that could help LLDCs to accelerate the implementation of the VPoA; and iii) The need to promote connectivity and improve transport infrastructure in LLDCs to overcome geographical constraints and unleash potentiality in international trade. He noted that under the framework of "One Belt One Road", China focuses on the construction of transportation infrastructure. He highlighted that a series of practical cooperation has been carried out in LLDCs.

He reported that connectivity was listed as a priority in the global development initiative proposed by President Xi. He further reported that the high-level dialogue on global development brought pragmatic measures such as promoting digitalization in the international customs and supply chain, which will effectively promote the interconnection in developing countries and accelerate the implementation of SDGs. He noted that China supports the convening of the Third UN Conference on LLDCs in 2024 and expressed China’s willingness to work with the international community, prepare for the conference and build consensus on helping LLDCs achieve sustainable development.

Since the list of speakers could not be exhausted, the Chair apologized to those who could not deliver their statements and kindly requested them to submit their statements in writing so they can be reflected in the report of the meeting.

**G. Consideration and Adoption**

There were no objections to the ministerial declaration. H.E. The Honourable Lemogang Kwape announced that the ministerial declaration was adopted.

**H. Any Other Matter, Closing Session**

H.E. The Honourable Lemogang Kwape thanked everyone for the full participation in the meeting and adjourned the meeting.

**Annex 1**

# MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

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

## New York, 22 September 2022

**We**, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Landlocked Developing Countries, have met at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on 22 September 2022, at the margins of the 77th session of the United Nations General Assembly to provide strategic guidance for the accelerated and full implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, and have held our deliberations under the theme "***Accelerating implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and building momentum towards the Third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries"***,

***Recalling*** the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, adopted in December 2014, which is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and provides a comprehensive plan of action to address the special challenges and needs of landlocked developing countries arising from their landlockedness, remoteness and geographical constraints in a more coherent manner and thus to contribute to an enhanced rate of sustainable and inclusive growth, which can contribute to the eradication of poverty by moving towards the goal of ending extreme poverty,

***Recalling*** *also* the Political Declaration of the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, adopted by the General Assembly on 5 December 2019 in which it reaffirmed its commitment to the full, effective and timely implementation of the VPoA,

***Further recalling*** the Roadmap for accelerated implementation of the VPoA that we adopted on 23rd September 2020 at the margins of the high-level week of the 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly and recognizing its importance in accelerating the implementation of the VPoA and building back better from the COVID-19 pandemic,

***Recognizing*** the importance of unfettered, efficient and cost-effective access for landlocked developing countries to and from the sea, on the basis of freedom of transit and other related matters, in accordance with the applicable rules of international law,

***Recognizing*** *also* that high transport and trade transaction costs remain a major stumbling block for landlocked developing countries to achieve their trade and development potential,

***Recalling*** the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the Paris Agreement under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and the New Urban Agenda,

***Underscoring*** that full, effective and timely 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 accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the VPoA as well as COVID-19 recovery,

***Reaffirming*** our commitment to implement the Vienna Programme of Action in synergy with the 2030 Agenda and the other development frameworks as we progress through the Decade of Action and delivery for sustainable development,

***Emphasizing*** that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development,

***Recognizing*** that the COVID-19 pandemic and the significant adverse social and economic effects it has posed globally, and in particular recognizing that the LLDCs are amongst the hardest hit owing to their geographical and structural vulnerabilities, fragility of their health systems, limited social protection coverage, financial and other resource constraints, including limited fiscal and policy space due to debt distress as consequence of the pandemic, and vulnerability to external shocks,

***Recalling*** General Assembly resolution 76/217 of 17 December 2021 on the Follow-up to the second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries in which the Assembly took the decision in accordance with paragraph 66 of the Political Declaration of the High-level Midterm Review on the Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024, to hold the third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries in 2024 with the mandate to undertake a comprehensive review of the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and to formulate and adopt a renewed framework for international support to address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and to strengthen partnerships between the landlocked developing countries and transit countries and their development partners,

***Recalling also*** General Assembly resolution 75/322 of 30 December 2020 on the Quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system that calls upon the United Nations development system to support the full and effective implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024, in line with the Political Declaration of the High-level Midterm Review on the Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing

Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 and the Roadmap for accelerated implementation of the VPoA,

***Recognizing*** that sustainable, inclusive, people-centered and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and other related future crises should complement and enhance the continued progress towards implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals,

***Welcoming*** the outcomes of the 2022 Follow-up and review of the Forum on Financing for Development and the 2022 Ministerial Declaration of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development that *inter alia* called for further strengthening of international solidarity and cooperation for combating and recovering from the pandemic, including through ensuring that no one will be left behind in the recovery from the pandemic, improving access to quality, safe, effective and affordable vaccines, therapeutics, diagnostics and other health tools, including through the rapid scaling up and expansion of vaccine production globally, and providing economic and social support and protection measures, starting with the most affected people and people in vulnerable situations,

***Reaffirming*** that gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls will make a crucial contribution to the achievement of the Vienna Programme of Action and to progress across all the Sustainable Development Goals and targets,

**Welcoming** the adoption of the Doha Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries for the decade 2022-2031 which represents a new generation of renewed and strengthened commitments between the LDCs and their development partners, including the private sector, civil society, and governments at all levels,

Adopt the following declaration;

1. **We take note** with appreciation of the Report of the Secretary-General A/77/269 on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs for the Decade 2014-2024;

2. **We are deeply concerned** that the unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on LLDCs is being further augmented by worsening global economic conditions. LLDCs are confronted with high inflation, slowing economic growth, persisting poverty, high inequality, unsustainable consumption and production patterns, disruptions in global value and supply chains, increase in food and commodity prices and the serious rise in global food insecurity that further endanger development prospects and are contributing to a divergence in recovery. We call upon the international community to enhance international cooperation to address these urgent

challenges, including by preserving and strengthening global value and supply chains, in particular for essential goods and services such as food;

3. **We also express deep concern** that only 26 per cent of the LLDC population was fully vaccinated at the end of April 2022, compared to 59 per cent worldwide in particular due to insufficient access to vaccines amid the spread of new and more transmittable variants. LLDCs did not achieve the target to vaccinate 70 per cent of the population by mid-2022 as outlined in the World Health Organization Global COVID-19 Vaccination Strategy and therefore call **we call on** development partners, the United Nations, International Financial Institutions, and other international organizations to support LLDCs with the resources to respond to COVID-19 and take the necessary steps to ensure equitable access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all, including strengthening national health systems and laboratories, enhanced public education, purchasing of required medical supplies such as oxygen delivery systems and ventilators. **We call** on the international community to support LLDCs with capacity building to ensure that in addition to immediate needs, the capacity of LLDCs to respond to future health crises is also strengthened;

4. **We call** on the Secretary-General, in close collaboration with the World Health Organization, to continue to take the necessary steps to effectively coordinate and follow up on the efforts of the United Nations system to promote and ensure global access to medicines, vaccines and medical equipment needed to address COVID-19 and other major diseases;

5. **We welcome** the initiatives which aim to accelerate development and production of and equitable access to COVID-19 diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines to all countries including Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A) and its COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility, the COVID-19 Technology Access Pool (C-TAP) and other initiatives, and **call upon** the public and private sectors to fill the funding gap of these initiatives;

6. **We welcome also** the Ministerial Decision on the TRIPS Agreement and support ongoing discussion at the World Trade Organization on how the multilateral rules-based trade system can contribute to enhancing access to equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. **We call** on WTO Members to expeditiously conclude the discussions to further contribute to global efforts to enhance access to affordable essential medicines, vaccines, personal protective equipment and medical equipment to effectively address COVID-19;

7. **We stress** that as we head into the final stretches of the 2030 Agenda and the Vienna Programme of Action, efforts towards both need to be reoriented to incorporate the long-term impact of COVID-19, building of more equal, inclusive and sustainable institutions and the nurturing of resilient economies. Towards this end, a transformative recovery aimed at reducing vulnerability to future crises and ensuring that LLDCs can

make the necessary progress towards achieving the SDGs and respond to the ambition and the urgency of the Vienna Programme of Action is paramount. **We renew** our commitment to accelerate the implementation of the VPoA;

8. **We 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, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction;

9. **We recognize** the central role of the United Nations system in supporting the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as catalyzing and coordinating the global recovery in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, based on unity, solidarity, multilateralism and international cooperation. **We encourage** Member States, the United Nations system organizations, as well as the private sector, civil society organizations, individuals and other relevant stakeholders to implement their collective commitment to multilateralism and to the United Nations in supporting the LLDCs;

10. **We recognize** that, although GDP grew 4.6 per cent in LLDCs in 2021, the vulnerability of LLDCs and the adverse global economic conditions constrain their ability to fully recover from the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. **We call** on the relevant UN organizations, development partners to support LLDCs efforts to diversify their economies and enhance resilience towards future disasters and shocks including through achieving structural economic diversification;

11. **We express concern** that the proportion of people covered by at least one social protection benefit is significantly lower in LLDCs at 19.6 per cent compared to the global average of 46.9 per cent. We commit to supporting the scaling up of effective social protection systems along with government spending on key services in order to safeguard the poor and vulnerable during the current and future crises. **We call** on development partners, the United Nations, and other international organizations to support LLDCs to expand social protection programmes and strengthen social safety nets to help prevent vulnerable groups from falling deeper into poverty and **we call** on international financial institutions, multilateral organizations and regional banks to provide quick balance-of-payment and budget support with limited conditionalities to LLDCs so as to enable them to respond adequately to this pandemic;

12. **We express deep concern** that a growing number of people are currently facing food insecurity due to rapid increase in food prices and shortages of food supplies and fertilizers around the world. This crisis follows already elevated levels of food insecurity and economic difficulties during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this regard, **we call upon** the international community especially our development partners to enhance their financial and in-kind support and the United Nations and other international and

regional organizations to provide humanitarian and technical support towards food security and livelihoods;

13. **We are 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 disasters due to their location, level of development, and greater reliance on climate sensitive sectors like agriculture. **We call** on Member States, as well as relevant regional and international organizations to continue to support climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts and strengthening resilience. **We further call** on the UN Climate Change Conference (COP 27) to consider the impact of climate change on LLDCs in the deliberations and outcome**;**

14. **We invite** climate finance providers to improve access for 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 and sustainable reduction of LLDCs' vulnerabilities to climate change and natural disasters;

15. **We commend** the 24 LLDCs who have committed to halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation by 2030, endorsing the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use and we encourage other LLDCs to take action towards addressing these issues;

16. **We welcome** the Bali Agenda for Resilience which recognizes the contribution of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction to the review of the Vienna Programme of Action for the Landlocked Developing Countries and the development of its successor agreement and makes commitment to ensure risk reduction is embedded across key intergovernmental agreements that focus on most vulnerable countries;

17. **We recognize** LLDCs' efforts to promote building of resilient societies through Disaster Risk Reduction and 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 and to integrate risk management into national development plans;

18. **We emphasize** that water is critical for sustainable development and the eradication of poverty and hunger and is indispensable for human development, health and wellbeing and a vital element of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and other relevant goals in the social, environmental and economic fields;

19. **We look forward to** the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, "Water for Sustainable

Development", 2018-2028 to be held in 2023 in New York**,** co-hosted by the Governments of Tajikistan and the Netherlands;

20. **We note** that LLDCs depend on their transit neighbors to access seaports as well as global markets and that the continued imposition of border restrictions due to COVID-19 is greatly impacting the movement of goods and services to LLDCs. **We call** on LLDCs and transit countries to work together to ensure smooth functioning at borders and in transit to facilitate the flow of essential goods, including through the enhanced use of digital applications and contactless procedures. **We reiterate** that the use of border measures designed to tackle COVID-19 has to be transparent, targeted, proportionate, and consistent with WTO rules;

21. **We commend** the progress that has been made by LLDCs and transit developing countries in ratifying and implementing the World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade Facilitation, the revised Kyoto Convention, the TIR Convention and other relevant international conventions**. We remain concerned** that implementation of such agreements and initiatives has been negatively impacted by measures introduced by transit countries and LLDCs such as curfews, border measures aimed at curbing the spread of COVID-19. This also threatens the progress that has been made by LLDCs and their transit neighbours in improving transit along some transport corridors, including in reducing travel time and corresponding costs along corridors. **We therefore call upon** LLDCs and transit countries to further enhance implementation of their obligations under all relevant international, regional and bilateral agreements to improve transit in a manner consistent with their trade and development objectives and **we call on** development partners, private sector and relevant international and regional and sub-regional organization to enhance support to LLDCs and transit developing countries to implement these agreements; and **call upon** LLDCs and transit countries to make additional efforts to reduce travel time along the corridors and to adopt an integrated and sustainable approach to the management of international transport corridors;

**22. We express deepest concern** over supply chains and international maritime transport disruptions which have far reaching impacts including soaring freight rates, and plummeting service reliability and thereby exacerbating the historically high trade cost in LLDCs. We are recognizing the magnitude of the challenge and **call on** all relevant stakeholders to work towards enhancing efficiencies in the transport maritime transport sector, in the transit transport and also help shipping and ports navigate through the crisis supply chains. **We call** for building supply chain resilience including through building resilient ports and transport systems, accelerate the implementation of trade facilitation measures and digitalization;

23. **We are further concerned** that, according to estimations, on average LLDCs pay more than double what the transit countries incur in transport costs and take a longer time to

send and receive merchandise goods from overseas markets. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these challenges;

**24. We note** with concern the 2022 Secretary General's Report on the implementation of the VPoA for Landlocked Developing Countries for the decade 2014-2024 which states that the adverse global economic conditions, including stalled growth, surging inflation, rising energy and food prices, supply chain disruptions and elevated shipping and trade costs, are constraining LLDCs to recover from the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 pandemic. **Furthermore, we regret that** while the pandemic-related border restrictions and lockdowns constrained the transport of food, **and that** the increased world market prices resulting from the conflict in Ukraine also affect LLDCs that depend on imported foodstuffs and fertilizers;

25. **We reaffirm** our commitment to develop quality, accessible, affordable, reliable, sustainable and resilient transport infrastructure as an integral element of the COVID-19 recovery efforts, including regional and transboundary infrastructure, to enhance our connectivity to regional and global markets and support a sustainable and inclusive recovery and resilience of our economies;

26. **We welcome** the outcome of the Second United Nations Global Sustainable Transport Conference held in hybrid format in Beijing, China, from 14 to 16 October 2021 and its key recommendations for action by the United Nations system, governments, businesses, scientists, civil society, and others which include the need to invest in transport corridors to improve hinterland connectivity, build integrated transport systems with high inter-connectivity and cost-effectiveness that were geared towards establishing more comprehensive transportation corridors using low carbon, green technologies and recognized that financial and technical cooperation and support by developed countries remain crucial for developing countries to build better connectivity, especially first and last mile connectivity; to maintain existing infrastructure; and to invest in capacity-building for inclusive, green, and accessible transport systems in developing countries;

27. **We also welcome** the Awaza Summary Statement of the Ministerial Transport Conference of Landlocked Developing Countries that was held in Awaza, Turkmenistan on 15 and 16 August 2022, which calls for actions to enhance transport connectivity of LLDCs and accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and **call** for consideration of the Statement as input to the preparatory process of the Third United Nations Conference on LLDCs to be held in 2024;

28. **We stress** that the magnitude of the resources required to invest in quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure development and maintenance remains a major challenge and requires the forging of international, regional, subregional and bilateral cooperation on infrastructure projects, the allocation of more resources from national budgets, the effective deployment of international development assistance and

multilateral financing, as well as strengthening of the role of the private sector, including international project finance, public-private partnerships and other non-traditional forms of finance. **We recognize** the important role of the United Nations development system, the World Bank and other multilateral institutions in addressing the capacity and funding gaps in sustainable and quality infrastructure investment, working through existing initiatives and we resolve to take steps to utilize all infrastructure financing sources;

29. **We reiterate** our call for enhanced 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 and we call on the UN system and other relevant international and regional organizations to enhance their technical support to LLDCs to develop sustainable infrastructure;

30. **We underscore** the significance of international transport and economic corridors for reducing trade costs and promoting regional sustainable development, and recognized the need to build integrated transport systems with high inter-connectivity and cost-effectiveness that were geared towards establishing more comprehensive transportation and economic corridor and request for strengthening of the role of corridor management organizations and other sub-regional and inter-regional arrangements and upon the LLDCs and transit countries, in a coordinated manner, to develop and upgrade international transport and transit corridors encompassing all modes of transportation, such as inland waterways, roads, rail networks, ports and pipelines;

31. **We 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;

32. **We note** that the air transport industry has been hit hard by COVID-19 and LLDCs have still not been able to fully recover in this regard. **We call** upon the international community including the UN system and other international and regional organizations to provide support towards building back better the air transport industry since air transport provides LLDCs with direct access to international markets;

33. **We strive** to achieve policies, regulatory and institutional frameworks that promote sustainable energy transition, ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all, with a focus on providing affordable access to sustainable energy for the poorest and scaling up projects on cross border inter-connectors and improving transformational energy access. **We call** for innovative partnerships between development partners, UN system and other international and regional organizations to support accelerated universal access, renewable energy and energy efficiency development;

34. **We recognize** that the COVID-19 pandemic brought to the fore the importance of digital transformation and connectivity for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and for COVID-19 recovery including through, enabling the delivery of essential services while complying to social distancing protocols, remote learning, telemedicine, e-commerce, virtual meetings and working, accessing government services and non-physical transit and customs procedures. **We remain concerned** that digital divides and inequalities continue to worsen. LLDCs face fundamental challenges including inadequate infrastructure, limited internet access, high cost of broadband, inadequate digital skills and regulatory and data policies. We aim to continue to foster favorable conditions for the development of the digital economy by creating appropriate enabling environment including the necessary policies, legal and regulatory frameworks to support the development of information and communications technologies **(**ICT) and we call for strengthened international cooperation to support LLDCs by increasing financial contributions towards investment in ICT infrastructure including increased public private partnerships and support from the development partners to enable LLDCs to reap the full potentials of the digital technologies and e-commerce. **We also urge** the strengthening of digital literacy and skills, as part of efforts to bridge digital and knowledge divides, as a prerequisite for inclusive participation in the digital economy;

35. **We take note** of the report of the Secretary-General entitled "*Our Common Agenda* " and look forward to further discussions on the proposed Global Digital Compact at the Summit of the Future in September 2024 through a technology track involving all stakeholders: governments, the United Nations system, the private sector (including tech companies), civil society, grass-roots organizations, academia, and individuals, including youth;

36. **We welcome** "The Partner2Connect Digital Coalition" launched by The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in close cooperation with the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology, and in line with the UN Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation, to foster meaningful connectivity and digital transformation globally, with a focus on but not limited to hardest- to-connect communities including in LLDCs. **We call** on enhanced support towards mobilize resources needed to meaningfully connect the most vulnerable;

37. **We note** that most of the special development challenges of LLDCs are trans-boundary and the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the need for deepened regional integration in order to fully address them. **We urge** LLDCs and transit countries in their regions to increase their cooperation and regional integration by strengthening transport, energy and digital infrastructure connectivity; supporting intraregional trade and the development of regional value chains; improving the quality and effective implementation of regional integration agreements; and **we call** upon the UN system, in particular the regional commissions, regional and international development partners, and other international organizations to strengthen their technical, financial

and capacity building support to LLDCs and transit countries to enable them to advance their regional integration efforts;

38. **We are concerned** that the VPoA specific objective of substantially increasing LLDCs exports remains a challenge as their share in global merchandise exports remains below one percent and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened this. **We call** on our development partners to step up mechanisms supportive of LLDCs' efforts to build their trade and supply-side capacities, such as Aid for Trade, increased market access, productive capacity building and technical assistance. **We further call** on the relevant UN System organizations and other international organizations to enhance their capacity building and technical assistance support towards enhancing the LLDCs' participation in international trade including in global and regional value chains that account for almost 70% of total trade;

39. **We recognize** that merchandise exports from LLDCs remain undiversified and are heavily skewed towards natural resource commodities, and the COVID-19 pandemic further stalled progress towards structural change. We, therefore, reiterate that export diversification is critical for LLDCs for long-term economic development, employment creation, moving up the value chain and reducing their vulnerability to external shocks;

40. **We underline** that greater integration of LLDCs into world trade and global as well as regional value chains is vital for increasing their competitiveness and diversification and ensuring their economic development, and invite UN-OHRLLS, UNCTAD, UNIDO, UNDP, United Nations Regional Commissions, Common Fund for Commodities, World Bank, World Trade Organization, UNDP, International Trade Centre, and other partners to provide assistance to LLDCs to strengthen their capacity to participate in regional and global value chains;

41. **We stress** that a universal, rules-based, open, transparent, predictable, inclusive, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization is essential in preserving the interests of the poorest and most vulnerable economies including the LLDCs. **We call on** the WTO Members to take into consideration the special needs of LLDCs in their rules making and implementation;

42. **We call on** the WTO to continue to formulate pragmatic, effective and holistic solutions to support trade in health, and to support open, diversified, secure, and resilient supply chains in the manufacture of COVID-19 critical goods and vaccines and their components;

43. **We note** that LLDCs as a group still lag behind in the implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and LLDCs have notified about 31 per cent of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement measures as requiring assistance to fully implement. We 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. These include human resources and training, legislative and regulatory frameworks, ICT and infrastructure and equipment;

44. **We welcome** the decision of the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC12), which was held in Geneva on 12-17 June 2022, under the Chairmanship of Kazakhstan, and established a dedicated session focusing on transit issues during the WTO Trade Facilitation Committee to be held annually until the next review of the Trade Facilitation Agreement is completed in 2026, offers a unique opportunity to find solutions to achieving efficient and resilient transit. We call on LLDCs with the support of relevant UN organizations to propose tangible solutions for consideration and adoption by the committee;

45. **We note** that LLDCs depend on their transit neighbors to access seaports as well as global markets and that the border restrictions due to COVID-19 and the disruptions in the supply chains is greatly impacting the movement of goods and services to LLDCs. COVID-19 disruption has highlighted and amplified the vulnerabilities of global supply chains, including the transportation networks. These trends are happening against a backdrop of heightened climate change mitigation and adaptation requirements, as well as energy transition pressures, disruptive natural disasters and weather patterns, uncertain pandemic and vaccination paths, diverging economic recoveries and heightened geopolitical threats. Against this background, we call for building supply chain resilience including through building resilient ports and transport systems, accelerate the implementation of trade facilitation measures and digitalization. LLDCs and transit countries to work together to ensure smooth functioning at borders and in transit to facilitate the flow of essential goods, including through the enhanced use of digital applications and contactless procedures. **We reiterate** that the use of border measures designed to tackle COVID-19 has to be transparent, targeted, proportionate, and consistent with WTO rules;

46. **We recognize** that COVID-19 has led to a surge in e-commerce and 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 provide technical assistance to promote e-commerce in LLDCs including through capacity building and advice on improving digital infrastructure;

47. **We stress** that building productive capacities is a core requirement for achieving sustainable industrial development and structural transformation and export diversification and encourage LLDCs to mainstream the building of productive capacities in their national development strategies. **We further 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, and fostering structural economic transformation;

48. **We note** that the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures taken to mitigate its impact have had particularly negative consequences on service sectors such as tourism, retail, and hospitality, some labor-intensive sectors, small and medium-sized enterprises and the informal sector resulting in higher unemployment, particularly amongst vulnerable segments of society. **We therefore call on** development partners and international organizations to provide assistance to LLDCs to establish initiatives to support SMEs such as through provision of enhanced finance and access to credit, capacity building and employing ICTs and innovation in business operations that may help in building the resilience of LLDCs' economies in the post-COVID-19 era;

49. **We emphasize** that building a conducive business environment for private sector development is one of the most important requirements for promoting sustained economic growth, developing an industrial base, attracting investment and bringing about structural transformation, and **we commit** to continue to foster an enabling legal and regulatory environment for private sector growth;

50. **We reaffirm** that science, technology and innovation have a critical role in achieving structural transformation, the SDGs as well as COVID-19 recovery. **We commit** to formulating effective policies on science, technology and innovation and promote research, innovation, skill and capacity-building initiatives and technology development and adaptation towards advancing innovation-driven economic transformation and development, efficient transit and transport systems, electronic commerce, energy generation and storage, value-addition and economic transformation and **call on** development partners, the United Nations system and other stakeholders to support our efforts;

51. **We commit** to working together with our development partners to seize the opportunities offered by technologies to help us address the COVID-19 crisis, including by scaling up collaboration on essential medicines, vaccines and innovations in health systems;

52. **We recognize** that significant additional domestic public resources supplemented by international assistance as appropriate, will be critical to realizing sustainable development and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda acknowledge the centrality of domestic resource mobilization underscored by the principle of national ownership. We also recognize that, while LLDCs have made considerable efforts to mobilize domestic resources and attract private investment, further progress is needed, and underlines the importance of strengthening domestic enabling environments and call for enhanced support to build the revenue collection capacity of LLDCs;

53. **We welcome** the growth in official development assistance in 2020 and reaffirm that official development assistance is crucial for LLDCs in accelerating implementation of the VPoA and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and call upon development partners and the international community to mobilize additional development finance from all sources to support LLDCs' recovery efforts from the COVID-19 crisis and build long-term resilience;

54. **We are deeply concerned** about the impact of high debt levels on LLDCs' ability to invest into implementation of the VPoA and 2030 Agenda as well as to deal with the impact of COVID-19. We encourage creditors to take bolder actions to support LLDCs with debt relief in order to free up liquidity and invest more in their health systems and economic recovery including through suspending debt repayments to international creditors. This may include debt-to-health and debt-to-nature swaps channeling additional funds to health system and environmental protection and financing regional development projects in exchange for debt relief;

55. **We commend** the G20 for its Common Framework for Debt Treatments beyond the Debt Service Suspension Initiative. However, in light of the continuation of the pandemic and significant economic headwinds that are persisting, we urge for the reinstatement of debt servicing suspension for countries at risk of debt distress. This is especially critical for LLDCs to address immediate challenges, particularly with regard to procurement of vaccines and providing safety nets for the vulnerable segments of their populations. **We underscore** the need for long-term support to improve debt sustainability and to create financing space for investing in a sustainable recovery;

56. **We commit** to continue promoting conducive policies to secure financing and attract diverse sources of investment, including foreign direct investment, that lead to increased trade, economic diversification, structural change as well as sustainable development in LLDCs. **We call** on development partners to provide greater support to the investment seeking efforts of LLDCs especially the investment needed to recover better from the COVID-19 pandemic. **We also call** on the UNCTAD, UN-OHRLLS, UNIDO, United Nations Commission on International Trade Law, and other international and regional organizations to provide capacity building support to LLDCs to develop more focused policies, strategies and mechanisms;

57. **We welcome** the vigorous measures taken by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank Group, regional development banks and other multilateral and bilateral development to provide emergency health support, debt relief and other economic assistance to help countries respond to COVID-19, and **call for** greater prioritization of assistance to LLDCs. We also stress that assistance is targeted to addressing LLDCs' challenges that have been aggravated by COVID-19, such as commodity dependency, high trade costs, trade facilitation, inadequate infrastructure, climate change, among others;

58. **We call upon** countries of the South in the spirit of solidarity and South-South Cooperation, to strive to increase financial and technical assistance to LLDCs towards the effective implementation of the VPoA and recovery efforts from COVID-19 and **stress** that such support is a complement to, but not a substitute for, North-South cooperation;

59. **We are deeply concerned** that illicit financial flows from LLDCs continue to result in huge losses in tax revenues and we call for technical and financial support to LLDCs to build capacity to implement existing instruments, to establish policy oriented anti-corruption and anti-money laundering solutions, and assist them on asset recovery and return, and changes to the rules to close gaps, vulnerabilities and loopholes;

60. **We commit** to strengthening our national statistical capacities to address the gaps in data on the VPoA and the 2030 Agenda in order to provide high-quality, timely, reliable, disaggregated data and statistics and to fully integrate the Goals and targets in our monitoring and reporting systems. **We call for** increased capacity-building and technical support to LLDCs, from all sources, to strengthen their national statistical systems;

61. **We call** on the UN system to focus its activities in support of LLDCs to facilitate a sustainable economic and social recovery that leaves no one behind and enable them to overcome the persistent consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and to make substantial progress in implementing the VPoA and in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals;

62. **We invite** the UN system to incorporate within its planned activities to examine the long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on LLDCs, identify lessons learned from past and present epidemics and pandemics and recommendations for improving future preparedness for epidemics and pandemics;

63. **We welcome** the progress achieved by the Secretary-General in the repositioning of the United Nations development system and look forward to the timely implementation of outstanding mandates pertaining to the repositioning of the regional assets and the multi-country office review, under national ownership and leadership. Given the cross-boundary nature of the development issues of LLDCs, **we would like to stress** that the regional assets are reformed in such a way that they are better able to support the special development needs of the LLDCs;

64. We recognize progress made in mainstreaming the goals and priorities set out in the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs into the United Nations development system's integrated policy and operational support to Governments, and we **request** relevant entities of the United Nations development system, in consultation with host Governments and in line with national policies, priorities and needs, to address the

special development needs and challenges of LLDCs in the common country analysis and in the United Nations planning and programming documents, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework;

65. **We welcome the** establishment in 2022 of an LLDCs' National Focal Points network comprised of capital-based national focal points to facilitate the strengthening of coherence and coordination of the implementation and follow up of the Vienna Programme of Action, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and other global frameworks including the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement at the national level. **We also note** that it will foster peer-learning and exchange of best practices on LLDCs-related issues and will be instrumental in the preparations for the upcoming Third UN Conference on LLDCs. **We call on** UN-OHRLLS with the support of other relevant UN organization to strengthen the technical capacities of the LLDCs National Focal Points to ensure their meaningful contribution to the implementation of the VPoA and contribution to the formulation of the next programme of action and its implementation;

66. **We underscore** the need to give due consideration to the issues and concerns of LLDCs in all relevant major United Nations conferences and processes and the relevant work of the United Nations development system, and call for the elaboration of information specific to LLDCs in a disaggregated manner in all major United Nations reports where appropriate;

67. **We agree** on the need to consolidate our positions in the discussions on climate change and formalize our Group of LLDCs under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process, in order to enhance our coordination, project a strong voice and work with relevant Stakeholders to advance the interests of LLDCs in climate related issues, especially with regard to vulnerability, mitigation and adaptation to climate change;

68. **We take note** of the work of the Inter-Agency Consultative Group for the LLDCs, led by the Office of the High Representative and the coordinated support that it is providing to the LLDCs; **We underline** its prominent role as the main global platform for inter-agency coordination and cooperation on support for landlocked developing countries and call to further enhance coordination, collaboration, efficiency, and coherence among member entities in a way that recognizes their respective mandates and roles, considers comparative advantages, and maximizes their resources and expertise;

69. **We are strongly committed** to lead the accelerated implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the Roadmap in collaboration with the transit countries and with the support of our development partners;

**70. We welcome** the progress reported towards the Roadmap for Accelerated Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, with more than 430 initiatives reported so far in the Roadmap, which provides evidence of significant efforts

undertaken by UN and other international and regional organizations to support the LLDCs. **We recognize** that several of these initiatives had now been implemented and had led to positive outcomes such as: improving connectivity and digital inclusion; enhancing customs clearance and the treatment of goods; enhancing cooperation between countries; strengthening resilience to the adverse impacts of climate change; and improving the health response to COVID-19 through the procurement of medical equipment and vaccines;

71. **We reiterate** our call to UN system organizations, other international and regional organizations and other stakeholders to enhance support towards its implementation;

72. **We recognize** the importance of the Roadmap in accelerating implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and enhancing coordination. **We encourage** that the next programme of action for LLDCs should also therefore establish a similar mechanism to translate its own agreed measures and commitments into concrete deliverables.

73. **We recall** that the area of the seabed and ocean floor and the subsoil thereof, beyond the limits of national jurisdiction, as well as its resources, are the common heritage of mankind, the exploration and exploitation of which shall be carried out for the benefit of mankind as a whole, irrespective of the geographical location of States. **We call on** the United Nations system and the International Seabed Authority to support the LLDCs in awareness raising, capacity-building, technology transfer, and the sharing of experiences to facilitate the participation of LLDCs in the ocean economy and in ocean related norm setting discussions including in the ongoing discussions on the intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the onservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). **We urge** LLDCs to fully engage on Ocean issues including the negotiations on BBNJ to safeguard their interests in the Ocean economy. **We urge** LLDCs that have not yet done so to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS);

74. **We recognize** the critical importance of the work of the International Think Tank for LLDCs in improving research and capacity development for the LLDCs and in promoting networking and collaboration among researchers and research institutions for the benefit of the LLDCs. We call upon relevant international and regional organizations including UN-OHRLLS, UN-ESCAP, UNCTAD, UNDP, WTO and others relevant stakeholders, including research institutions, think tanks, to strengthen collaboration on research and capacity building with the International Think Tank for LLDCs on all the 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;

75. **We take note with appreciation** of the contributions made by the host country Mongolia and other LLDCs who are party to the Multilateral Agreement for the

Establishment of an International Think Tank for LLDCs and **call on** development partners, Member States that are party to the Agreement, United Nations system, other international organizations and other stakeholders to provide voluntary contributions to the International Think Tank. **We urge** all LLDCs that have not yet ratified the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of an International Think Tank for LLDCs to do so;

76. **We call upon** Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, major groups and other donors to contribute in a timely manner to the trust fund in support of activities undertaken by the Office of the High Representative to support the implementation of the VPoA and to support the preparatory processes towards the Third UN Conference on LLDCs;

77. **We stress** that, in accordance with the mandate given by the General Assembly, the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States should continue to ensure the coordinated follow-up to, effective monitoring of, and reporting on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, the Political Declaration of its midterm review and the Roadmap for the accelerated implementation of the VPoA. It should also continue to undertake advocacy efforts at the national, regional and global levels raising awareness on the special needs of LLDCs, build multi-stakeholder partnerships, and mobilize international support and resources in favour of the LLDCs;

78. **We welcome** the appointment of Ms. Rabab Fatima as the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and **we request** the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS) to continue to work on its mandate in support of the LLDCs;

79. **We look** forward to the convening of the following upcoming global conferences UN Climate Change Conference COP27 (6-18 November 2022) to be held in Sharm El Sheik, Egypt; and the second part of the 5$^{th}$ UN Conference on LDCs (5-9 March, 2023) to be held in Doha. **We recognize** the importance of these meetings to LLDCs and stress that the outcomes of these meetings should take into account LLDCs issues;

80. **We welcome** the decision of the General Assembly in its resolution 76/217 to hold the Third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries in 2024 with the mandate to undertake a comprehensive review of the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and to formulate and adopt a renewed framework for international support to address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and to strengthen partnerships between the landlocked developing countries and transit countries and their development partners. **We attach great importance** to the Conference and its preparatory process and are committed to fully participate and

contribute to its success, and **we call on** the relevant stakeholders to fully engage and contribute to the review process of the VPoA and formulation of the new programme of Action;

81. **We request** the General Assembly to take decisions at its 77th Session on the Third UN Conference on LLDCs with all organizational details and the scope and terms of reference of the Conference, including its duration; national and regional reviews; preparatory committee meetings and the contributions by the United Nations Development System and other international organizations including the World Bank Group, the IMF, WTO, WCO and Regional Development Banks. In this regard, **we encourage** LLDCs, transit and partner countries to actively engage in the negotiation of the modalities for the third United Nations Conference on LLDCs that will take place in the Second Committee during the main session of the 77th Session of the General Assembly;

82. **We encourage** an evidence-based bottom-up approach in preparing for the Conference, in which national level experience, best practices and lessons learned in the implementation of the VPoA should serve as a key building-block for the next programme of action;

83. **We commit** to prepare national reports that comprehensively assess the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action highlighting achievements, best or effective practices, the major challenges experienced and suggest recommendations for the new programme of action. The national reports will feed into the preparatory process including the regional and global reviews;

84. **We further commit** to participate at a high political and technical level in the Regional Review meetings and thematic meetings that will take place in the lead-up to the Third Conference, and that constitute the base of the preparations for the global review;

85. **We request** the Secretary-General to mobilize the international community including the UN system to support the Third UN Conference on LLDCs and secure a large number of participants at the highest political level, including Heads of State and Government in the Conference to be held in 2024;

86. **We request** the Presidents of the 77th and 78th Sessions of the UN General Assembly to make substantive contributions to the preparatory process of the Third UN Conference on LLDCs, including by organizing a dedicated high-level event of the General Assembly focusing on the key priorities of LLDCs in preparation of the outcome of the Conference. **We also request** the Presidents of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to make similar contributions to the preparatory process of the Third UN Conference on LLDCs;

87. **We underscore** the important role of the Group of Friends of LLDCs and call for their active participation and support in the preparation for the Third UN Conference on LLDCs and at the Conference;

88. **We strongly encourage** the Secretary-General and the Member States to strengthen the OHRLLS including by allocating additional post and non-post resources to the subprogramme responsible for landlocked developing countries to enable it to effectively carry out the mandate including, to enable it to provide substantive support to LLDCs in their pursuit to meaningfully engage in the intergovernmental discussions and implement the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs and the 2030 Agenda;

89. **We express** our deep appreciation to the Government of Botswana for its able chairmanship, tireless efforts and excellent leadership provided to the landlocked developing countries as the Global Chair of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries and **look forward** to its continued efforts to the promotion of the interests of the landlocked developing countries.

Annex 2

**Group of Landlocked Developing Countries: composition by region (as of September 2021)**

**Africa**

1. Botswana
2. Burkina Faso
3. Burundi
4. Central African Republic
5. Chad
6. Eswatini
7. Ethiopia
8. Lesotho
9. Malawi
10. Mali
11. Niger
12. Rwanda
13. South Sudan
14. Uganda
15. Zambia
16. Zimbabwe

**Asia**

17. Afghanistan
18. Bhutan
19. Kazakhstan
20. Kyrgyzstan
21. Lao People's Democratic Republic
22. Mongolia
23. Nepal
24. Tajikistan
25. Turkmenistan
26. Uzbekistan

**Eastern Europe**

27. Armenia
28. Azerbaijan

29. North Macedonia
30. Republic of Moldova

**Latin America**

31. Bolivia (Plurinational State of)
32. Paraguay