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Statement by

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High Representative

and

Under-Secretary- General

**Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing
Countries and Small Island Developing States**

at

**Training Workshop for Policy Makers from LLDCs and
Transit Countries, Strengthening capacity to design and
implement policies and identify solutions that promote
transport connectivity for the achievement of the SDGs**

27 September 2021 08:30 am NY time

Excellency Mr. Collen Vixen Kelapile, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Botswana to the UN

Distinguished participants,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I warmly welcome you all to our training workshop today, and I thank the government of Botswana for collaborating with us in organizing this event.

It would have been a great pleasure to meet in your beautiful country, but COVID-19 continues to severely limit our movement.

An old story goes that George Bernard Shaw once wrote to Winston Churchill, inviting him to the opening night of a new play.

“I enclose two tickets” he wrote, “please bring a friend... if you have one.”

To which Churchill responded “Sorry, I am busy. I may come to the second performance... if there is one.”

Now I am glad to see that we are in the company of many friends here today.

And we can be safe in the knowledge that this is not a “one night only” performance.

Today’s training and learning is part of our long-running efforts to bring countries and experts together – to share best practice – to learn from one another and to establish deliverable plans.

I am grateful to representatives of the United Nations system organizations and other partners for their active involvement in supporting this important training.

I would also like to thank everyone here representing their countries and for your commitment to enhance transport connectivity in your regions.

Distinguished participants,
Ladies and gentlemen,

In his speech to the General Assembly last week, the Secretary-General said,

“The best way to advance the interests of one’s own citizens is by advancing the interests of our common future.”

This is why we are here today.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires an urgent improvement to sustainable transport solutions in developing countries.

Improved transit and transport connectivity is at the heart of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries.

If “no-one left behind” means anything at all – then surely it must mean dramatically improved transport connectivity across these nations.

We know that the transport sector has been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, in both the LLDCs and transit countries.

We know too that pre-existing challenges have been exacerbated still further, such as:

High transport costs;
Cumbersome border procedures;
And inadequate transport infrastructure.

The growth of these challenges highlights the importance of establishing enabling national policies and forging stronger cooperation between LLDCs and their neighbours.

Distinguished participants,

I hope that this training workshop gives you an opportunity to gain greater understanding of these critical issues and encourages you to share your experiences.

Discussions will focus on the design and implementation of policies that promote transport connectivity. Also, you will learn how to regularly collect data for developing and monitoring evidence-based transport policies.

We must build transport systems that are resilient to the impacts of external shocks - whether it be climate change, natural disasters, public health emergencies, or global economic downturns.

Today's training will also cover the importance of 'soft infrastructure' - including how to establish legal and regulatory frameworks that promote efficient transit transport.

Above all, I hope that you will share innovative solutions that are already being successfully applied. Solutions that can be adapted, scaled, or localized to yield concrete results.

One such example is the recently opened Kazungula bridge between Botswana and Zambia, which will ease the traffic of goods between these countries and in the region.

Our hosts might recognize the saying that "beautiful words put no porridge in the pot". And so, it is those practical lessons that we are here to share today.

I should state that today's training is implemented as part of a project entitled, *Strengthening the capacity of Landlocked Developing Countries under the "Belt and Road Initiative"*. I thank all our partners who make this possible.

My Office is implementing this project in partnership with the United Nations Regional Commissions, including the Economic Commission for Africa, Economic Commission for Europe, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, and the Economic Commission for Latin America & the Caribbean. We are

also collaborating with the African Development Bank and other partners that are here today.

The project is funded by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Sub-Fund of the UN Peace and Development Trust Fund, for which the Government of the People's Republic of China provided the financial contribution.

Looking ahead, the Second UN Global Sustainable Transport Conference will be held in October, from 14th to the 16th. It will be hosted by the Government of China as a hybrid format that is both virtual and in person.

There will be a dedicated session on countries in special situations and OHRLLS is organizing a virtual side event. Details will be shared with you in the course of this workshop.

Please be assured that the United Nations system and OHRLLS, will continue to support your efforts to enhance transport connectivity and to implement the Vienna Programme of Action, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We have heard a great deal about the need to build bridges in recent days – it strikes me that this event is where that metaphor meets reality, and I wish you a successful two days.

Thank you.