

Summary Report of the meeting “Leveraging on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to promote smooth functioning of Corridors for Sustainable Industrialization and Diversification during COVID-19 era”

Held Virtually as a Side Event of the 53rd UNECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development on Saturday, 20 March 2021

Organized by UNECA and UN-OHRLLS

Introduction

The 53rd UNECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development Side Event “Leveraging on African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to promote smooth functioning of Corridors for Sustainable Industrialization and Diversification during COVID-19 era” was held virtually on 20 March 2021, and was organized by UNECA and UN-OHRLLS. The event was attended by 50 participants.

The landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) face special challenges associated with their lack of direct territorial access to the sea resulting in high transport and transit costs. Establishment of integrated, sustainable and efficient transit transport and economic corridors benefit both the LLDCs and transit countries. The implementation of AfCFTA promotes the efficient functioning of corridors which are critical for movement of goods, expansion of LLDCs’ trade, and increasing their connectivity and integration into regional and global trading networks. Well-coordinated corridors can spur not only development of infrastructure, but also harmonization of procedures along the corridors. In addition, it can stimulate the development of soft infrastructure, implementation of trade facilitation measures, reduction in time spent at borders and the costs of transport and increasing the reliability and predictability of transport in the COVID-19 era.

The Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA) stresses the importance of corridors in reducing transit times spent at borders and transport and trade costs, through increased connectivity, efficiency and transparency in border management thereby increasing the reliability and predictability of transport. The 2019 Midterm Review of the VPoA revealed that although some progress had been achieved in the implementation of the agenda towards the attainment of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2063 by LLDCs, the progress is not sufficient. The SDGs and Agenda 2063 cannot be achieved if the most vulnerable countries, such as the LLDCs, are left behind. Promotion of corridors for sustainable industrialization and diversification is crucial for supporting the structural economic transformation of the LLDCs.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had major impact on the smooth functioning of corridors due to various factors including the closure of state borders, the imposition of restrictions on the movement of people and goods, and the disruption of supply chains. This has negatively affected trade and economic growth of both LLDCs and their transit neighbors.

The event featured remarks by H.E. Ms. Fekitamoeloa ‘Utoikamanu, High Representative of UN-OHRLLS; H. E. Dr. Amani Abou-Zeid, Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, African Union Commission; Mr. Denis Muganga, Director of Private Sector Investment Program, Northern Corridor Transit Transport Coordination Authority; Ms. Zodwa Mabuza, Principal Regional Integration Officer, African Development Bank; Ms. Irene Tembo, Chief Planner, Ministry of Transport and Communications in Zambia; and Ms. Gladys Mutangadura, Senior Programme Officer, UN-OHRLLS. The Event was moderated by Mr. Francis Ikome, Chief, Regional Integration Section, Regional Integration and Trade Division, UNECA.

Proceedings

Opening Remarks: Mr. Francis Ikome, Chief, Regional Integration Section, Regional Integration and Trade Division, UNECA spoke on behalf of Ms. Vera Songwe, Under Secretary General and Executive Secretary, UNECA

Mr. Ikome recognized all dignitaries' present, and thanked all participants who sacrificed their time not only during the difficult time of COVID-19, but also on Saturday to attend the Event. It showed the importance that they attach to the development of African Continent, more especially to LLDCs, which is highly appreciated. The promotion of the priorities of VPoA is intended to address some of the peculiar challenges faced by LLDCs. He recalled that Africa is home to half of the world's 32 LLDCs (16), which has a special interest and speak in assuring that the Group of countries that account for one third of the totality of countries on the continent is not left behind. The ECA is an institution in charge of contributing and supporting the continent in its development and integration, which has a pertinent interest in continuing and following up the development interests of 16 African LLDCs and along with transit countries, through which LLDCs could get their supplies.

He pointed that it is well known that LLDCs suffer from lack of competitiveness of both their exports and imports, as well as reduction in the purchasing power of their populations, leaving them vulnerable to fluctuations in global economic activities especially trade in comparison to non-LLDCs. Poverty headcount ratio, which is the proportion of people living on less than \$1.90 a day, is high with an average of 55.8% in LLDCs as compared to the average of all non-LLDCs African countries of 8.4%. The average GDP per capita in African LLDCs is \$1506, while for non-LLDCs African countries it is \$5208. Africa's infrastructure deficit is a challenge to all countries, in particular to LLDCs, which brings about additional costs in trade and tax implication for the livelihood of majority of people in LLDCs. Regarding energy infrastructure for example, only 30% of people living in the African LLDCs had access to electricity in 2017, lagging behind all LLDCs and the world.

He emphasized that although the 2019 VPoA midterm review pointed to the fact that African LLDCs are making efforts and progress towards the implementation of the VPoA, however, the journey is still a long one as there is still more to be done to achieve the objectives of the programme by 2024 for VPoA, as well as Agenda 2063. Consequently, attention should be paid to the needs of this category of states to maintain the mantra of leaving no one behind. In recognition of the need for accelerated interventions to ensure that LLDCs are not left behind, the High-Level Political Declaration was adopted during the Midterm Review in 2019, alongside a visionary Roadmap on the accelerated implementation of multiple projects to make a difference in LLDCs. Aside from the VPoA, both Agenda 2030 and Africa's Agenda 2063 recognize and make provisions for addressing the peculiar challenges of LLDCs, including in the area of transport connectivity and trade facilitation, which would be the focus of the Event, such as how to ensure the corridors operate smoothly and optimally.

Mr. Ikome continued by addressing that Africa's LLDCs and LLDCs all over the world have peculiar challenges which have been compounded by the unprecedented advent of COVID-19 pandemic. But the pandemic is not all negative, there is a silver lining to every cloud, so there are

also opportunities to be leveraged in the context of COVID-19. The responsive choice by many countries during the pandemic was closure of borders, which had implications for all countries, but most severe impacts are on LLDCs, due to their geographical locations, and challenge to access and marketing of their goods. When it comes to efforts for recovery, special attention shall be paid to LLDCs since the impact of border closure and other responses is heavier on them. As a result of COVID-19, the global economy is projected to contract sharply, by 3%, in 2021 while the African economy is expected to contract by negative 5.4% in 2021 presenting the most vulnerable countries, in particular LLDCs, with unprecedented challenges. Therefore, there is an urgency to continue to pay augmented attention on the reality and situation of LLDCs. Most LLDCs do not have sufficient domestic resources and fiscal space to fund adequate COVID-19 response and recovery measures. Empowerment of LLDCs, including promotion of smooth functioning of corridors, is an urgent priority.

He articulated that partnership is important, since no one can go it alone no matter how rich the country is. There is no one single country that can make it through the pandemic alone. As a result, the imperative to forge strong global, regional, national and local partnerships and cooperation for the achievement of the VPoA objectives has become even more urgent than it has ever been. No country is safe, and no country can overcome this pandemic alone. Collaboration is the key. For LLDCs, collaboration falls in the area of keeping borders open for merchandise trade including proper corridor management which provides an opportunity for LLDCs and their transit neighbors to work on innovative ways to facilitate border-crossing of goods, and to reduce the pain that they are already going through. In this regard, AfCFTA must be stated as a game changer, especially for African LLDCs, as it is a framework that establishes the continent as a wider market addressing many challenges and priority areas contended in the VPoA. As a result, it has to be leveraged to alleviate the pain and challenges faced by African LLDCs, since it will facilitate the achievement of the VPoA, as well as opening opportunities for competitiveness of this category of countries. Corridors create opportunities for industrialization, if they are properly managed, they are enablers of economic growth. Indeed, the AfCFTA provides opportunities for establishment of effective corridors for sustainable industrialization and diversification which African LLDCs stand to derive huge benefit from. This peculiar potential that the AfCFTA offers and additional challenges that it has imposed on LLDCs by the COVID-19 pandemic made the event and the theme not only pertinent but also very timely.

Statement by H.E. Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States

Ms. Fekitamoeloa ‘Utoikamanu welcomed all participants to the Side Event. She indicated that OHRLLS is highly appreciative of the support and partnership from ECA, while expressing her gratitude to Executive Secretary, Ms. Vera Songwe for the excellent partnership, and to the African Union Commission as a key partner on the common development efforts in Africa.

She stated that Africa is home to half of the 32 landlocked developing countries that face special challenges associated with their lack of direct territorial access to the sea resulting in high transport and transit costs. Establishment of efficient transit transport corridors is critical for movement of goods, expansion of LLDCs’ trade, and increasing their connectivity and integration into regional

and global trading networks. Transport and economic corridors benefit both the LLDCs and transit countries to support and facilitate transit and trade, create linkages to regional and international markets and value chains, stimulate trade-induced industrial and value-added production and wider social and economic growth along the corridor and create investment opportunities. The role of corridors worldwide has become more important nowadays because of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Pandemics know no borders and the corridors and trade have not been spared. Ms. 'Utoikamanu therefore, emphasized that the focus of the Side Event was very timely.

She noted that the impacts of COVID-19 on transport connectivity and trade are felt most in LLDCs. Lockdowns and cross-border restrictions aimed at combating the spread of COVID-19 have affected the smooth flow of transport and of imported essential goods and services to LLDCs, including those needed to respond effectively to the pandemic. Passenger and freight transport have slumped. Supply chains have been disrupted. Merchandise trade has plummeted. Reduction of export earnings have created balance-of-payment and fiscal challenges. The VPoA for LLDCs for the decade 2014 to 2024 stresses the importance of corridors in promoting efficient and cost-effective access to and from the sea, which calls for the development of enhanced transport infrastructure and increased trade facilitation and specifically calls for reducing travel time along corridors, with the aim of allowing transit cargo to move a distance of 300 to 400 kilometers every 24 hours and for significantly reducing the time spent at land borders.

She recalled that the High-level Midterm Review of the VPoA was held in 2019. The Political Declaration adopted at the meeting calls for greater efforts to effectively implement all relevant international, regional and bilateral agreements to improve transit; promote corridor development and regional connectivity; develop regionally integrated, sustainable and climate resilient transport infrastructure; enhance trade facilitation; and to deepen regional integration. The issue of transit transport systems in the corridors is linked to other priorities of the VPoA, in particular: regional integration, international trade and competitiveness of the economies, which is essential if the economies are to pursue a structural transformation agenda. Since the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, the UN system has called for supply chains and transport networks for LLDCs to remain open and functional, whilst remaining safe.

Ms. 'Utoikamanu continued by highlighting possible experiences learned from all regions with LLDCs that can help strengthen corridors to support sustainable recovery. First, effective and efficient multimodal transit transport systems in the corridors should be at the core of efforts to enhance regional connectivity of LLDCs. Transit transport systems have to be sustainable, affordable and resilient, while promoting the health and safety of all, to help LLDCs respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and other potential disruptions. Second, there is need to enhance coordination between trade and transport policy responses. Stronger regional trade facilitation mechanisms for resilient trade recovery from COVID-19 are needed and should be coordinated with freight transport policy responses. Member States along with development partners must work together to provide contactless, seamless and collaborative solutions on transport, trade and logistics operations in the age of pandemics.

Third, it would be worth-while to scale up harmonization of border procedures and interventions at the regional level in light of COVID-19. This would ensure transparency and enhanced information sharing to enable continued smooth flow of goods and services. These policy

harmonizing procedures can lead to development of model provisions for trade in times of crisis and pandemic in regional trade and other agreements. Fourth, the COVID-19 crisis presents an opportunity for LLDCs and their neighbors to enhance the use of digital tools and technologies that lower transport costs and border crossing times along the corridors, but also address COVID-19-related border disruptions. These include electronic cargo tracking systems, electronic exchange of information, paperless solutions, use of mobile banking and payment systems and digital solutions for cross-border facilitation. Fifth, the transport sector can be a driver of economic growth in the post COVID-19 world. Investment in corridor infrastructure should be a priority, as it has the potential to alleviate the impacts of COVID-19 and help LLDCs recover better.

She stressed that safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines are urgently needed and are crucial for sustainable recovery and should be rolled out in the vulnerable countries like LLDCs. It is time to scale up all actions and invest in innovative transport solutions in response to the pandemic that will help LLDCs recover, but also prepare them on a sustainable path for future progress. She noted that the AfCFTA that entered into force on 30 May 2019 and trading that started on 1st January 2021 brings positive prospects for African LLDCs. It offers an opportunity for LLDCs to integrate into the African market of over a billion consumers and can support promotion of industrial development and economic diversification and the enhancement of the participation of LLDCs in regional and global trade and ultimately achievement of the SDGs. Effective participation of LLDCs in the African Continental Free Trade Area will integrate them into the regional and global value chains. Meanwhile, UN-OHRLLS will continue to advocate for smooth functioning of corridors and enhanced transport connectivity and trade potential of the LLDCs during pandemics.

Ms. ‘Utoikamanu sincerely hoped that the Side Event will allow panelists to share knowledge, best practices and lessons learned in promoting effective functioning of corridors during pandemics. LLDCs, by their nature, are more reliant on global and regional collaboration than most. They cannot simply “go it alone”. Enhanced corridors are critical for their building back better from the COVID-19 pandemic. This requires all member states to do their parts to support.

The moderator thanked Ms. ‘Utoikamanu for setting the tone for the Event. He pointed out a few issues that she had highlighted, such as centrality of corridors in recovery efforts, importance of regionally coordinated trade policy, key role of transport and infrastructure for development, digital solutions and opportunities for LLDCs and transit countries affected by the pandemic, importance of AfCFTA and opportunity for LLDCs, investment, etc.

Statement by H. E. Dr. Amani Abou-Zeid, Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, AUC

Dr. Abou-Zeid reiterated that the COVID-19 pandemic had added to the hardship, devastation and problems faced by LLDCs. Africa has 16 landlocked countries and 7 islands with specific needs and challenges that need to be addressed. Nevertheless, AU has been devising the programme for the incoming 10 years 2021-2030 while paying attention to the issue of corridors to make sure that not only Africa is connected, but also rural and urban areas are connected in a way to ensure economic growth and smooth trade flow, and to facilitate the integration of the Continent. For LLDCs in the last 10 years, the inefficiency of corridors generates an annual loss of US\$ 75 billions according to the research of AUC, which is obviously borne in large proportion by the populations and disrupts the livelihoods and trade opportunities across the Continent. It is clear that a corridor does not work on its own, it should be led to the port, the airport, and wider network across Africa. However, the issue is not just about the existence of the corridor, but also about logistics and facilitation issues. At the borders nowadays, the logistics are lengthy and complex, and police harassment frequently happens.

She articulated that one excellent way of tackling these problems is digitalization and easy use of digital tools, which would help easing majority of the harassment, complex procedures and lengthy queues, and would facilitate transport flow across borders opening up landlocked countries.

She noted that with the Africa Center for Disease Control, the AUC harmonizes the health measures at the borders through seamless and safe digital tools to ease the mobility and fluidity of transport. Meanwhile, digitalization goes beyond the borders into E-commerce that has increased 5-fold over the last years. It brings opportunities to landlocked countries to import and export. It is great news, but in the end, the products need to be channeled through multimodal transport, in spite of online transaction. Air transport is also included into the transport mode and it is important to LLDCs. What happened in 2020 made air transport come to a standstill. However, she stressed that under the circumstance of lockdown, African Airlines are the ones which cover African Union and out of CDC, and which provide special human corridors to channel the food, personal protective equipment, medication and many products to meet daily needs. For the Continent as a whole, in particular for LLDCs, due to border closure and constraint on movement, there is a long queue at the border. Therefore, the aim is to make all modes of transport to work together to improve efficiency, and to form a seamless corridor.

Dr. Abou-Zeid proceeded by emphasizing that AUC strives for increasing connectivity and the number of corridors, and opening up the borders throughout the Continent, but especially for landlocked countries in a better way to ensure better coverage. Africa has been and still is subjected to severe and frequent climate disasters. In this case, AUC is making sure that programmes for infrastructure development include climate resilience as one criterion. Regarding the fuel, AUC is exploring greener fuel in 2021 for railway projects across Africa. Regarding the energy, she cited that since 2020, besides large energy and transmission programmes, AUC is intensifying efforts for off-grid and mini-grid solutions to reach inner land, remote and rural areas.

The moderator thanked Dr. Abou-Zeid for the rich intervention from both inside and outside perspectives. AU plays a leading role in the Continent regarding continental integration and other

development agendas. He commended that she joined other speakers to mention other complications that the pandemic has brought to LLDCs, while reassuring by stating how AU has continued to pay attention to the issue of corridors, connectivity, and integration. She also indicated the great loss caused by the inefficiency of the corridors in the past years that triggered distortion in trade, and impacted the livelihood of LLDCs. The 10-year programme 2021-2030 that the AUC has been working on is paying a lot of attention to ensure the connectivity of LLDCs including multimodal connectivity. He quoted that corridors do not operate as islands, but with other modes of transportation, therefore all means of transport need to be connected correctly and managed properly. There are also issues related to logistics and entry barriers, which need to be addressed for corridors to function optimally and effectively. She pointed out the importance of digitalization which has the potential to address some of the obstacles, and that it goes beyond borders involving the issue of E-commerce. Besides, she mentioned the key role of air transport, and how African Airlines operates following the leadership and guideline of AU, through which African countries in particular LLDCs are able to receive critical supplies during the pandemic.

Presentation by Mr. Denis Muganga, Director, Private Sector Investment Program, Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority

Mr. Muganga introduced the role of Northern Corridor Transit & Transport Coordination Authority based in Mombasa, Kenya and the COVID-19 interventions for its 6 Member States. The Authority is responsible for coordination of transit and transport within the 6 countries of East Africa, including Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, South Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo. The majority of the members are landlocked, so the Authority assumes the great responsibility with its location to support other countries in terms of connectivity for transit and transportation of cargo. Meanwhile, it serves countries such as Tanzania, Ethiopia and Somalia, which is the busiest route in East and Central Africa. The Corridor has a multimodal function including roads, railways, pipelines, ports and inland waterways, so it has the responsibility to coordinate within the Member States in ensuring the seamless flow of cargo and human traffic in these countries.

He noted that the main objectives of the corridor were to facilitate trade, the movement of persons and goods, to stimulate economic and social development in the Member States, and to transform the Corridor into a sustainable and economic development one. The Authority is also implementing strategies to accelerate economic and social development along the Corridor, while ensuring environmental sustainability. It has been able to identify specific areas where improvements are needed in relation to transit and transport, to provide tools for diagnosing some of the problems and proposing solutions that have over time been adopted by Member States, and to measure the evolution of the Corridor to establish effectiveness of programs. The Authority possesses a powerful tool called the Transport Observatory that captures real time data along the Corridor to provide real time and reliable information to policymakers to facilitate formulation of policies.

He recalled the gains achieved, including promotion of safety and security along the Corridor; engagement of stakeholders, public and private sectors in partnering for infrastructure development, safety, security and general movement of cargo along the Corridor; support to the Heads of States with the Transport Observatory portal where information is available to support policy making and decisions; Single Customs Territory that has greatly reduced time taken to move

goods along the Corridor; reduction in the transit time because of the different interventions such as the High Speed Weigh in Motion, reduction in the number of roadblocks, One Stop Border Posts on most of the borders, 24/7 operations in key transit nodes, and elimination of Non-Tariff Barriers; improvement of the road and rail infrastructure along the Corridor; and establishment of stakeholders performance charters such as the Port Community Charter which gathers commitments from all agencies in the industry to be able to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness in how to manage the Corridor, transit and transport matters.

Mr. Muganga stressed the immediate effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as reduced business hours and productivity especially at the Port of Mombasa and also in all other government agencies within the Member States, limited mobility of staff and other key stakeholders, longer transit time, escalation of cost of freight, and increase in non-tariff barriers, because checkpoints are set up to look at the COVID certificates and compliance of the protocols that are implemented at different points along the Corridor and that are negatively affecting movement of cargo. The Authority came in working closely with key stakeholders and different Member States within the Region to ensure that cargo movement was considered as an essential service. Therefore, whenever there was any directive for a lockdown or suspension of movement in any Member State, cargo movement would be exempted and trucks and other players along the Corridor would be approved to move.

Secondly, the Authority supports the coordination of different players in the industry. The Kenya Ports Authority which is in charge of the Port of Mombasa used to have physical Friday meetings to look at the issues along the Corridor and at the Port. However, because of the pandemic, there was a stop to the physical meetings. As a result, the Authority established a platform for virtual meetings that are held every Tuesday, bringing together key stakeholders who are able to discuss and address the bottlenecks faced at this moment as a result of COVID-19. It undertakes advocacy campaigns focusing on safety measures especially for truck drivers and other Corridor users. At the same time, the Authority provides real time information in terms of the requirement at the border posts, in each of the 6 countries, and any other requirement along the road so as to facilitate the movement of trucks and cargo. It is developing a regional roadmap to support the 6 countries to build systematically the profile that supports even future disruptive hazards as well. Other interventions include distribution of water tanks, as well as establishment of COVID-19 Testing Centers, which were specially done in Kenya that is the starting point of the Corridor. In addition, it carries out sensitization which supports rebuilding self-confidence in particular in truck drivers, because some of the drivers start to pull out knowing that it is a nightmare to move the trucks along the Corridor. Because of the efforts made in terms of sensitization and advocacy, the truck drivers are returning to work, and the number of drivers tested increased from about 100 per day to over 600 on any given day. Besides, it also promotes harmonization of response measures.

Looking at the responsibility of the Authority, he emphasized that it tackles issues of relevance to the Corridor and of interventions required by the Member States. At the border points, women, youth and farmers were trading across borders, but the activity was hampered by the pandemic. Therefore, the Authority is assessing the impact, building up capacity, stimulating interventions, and seeking partnerships to intervene, especially around the borders. It publishes the Corridor Digest where impact of COVID-19 and interventions required from Member States are periodically released. Meanwhile, the Authority is working closely with partners to sustain the Wellness Centers along the Corridor where truck drivers and other users are able to access

information and medical services free of charge.

The moderator thanked Mr. Muganga for the rich presentation which provided practical experience regarding the workings of one of the most functional Corridors in East Africa, and an overview of the Corridor on why it is organized, its objectives, and more importantly, the interventions in response to the impact of COVID-19.

Presentation by Ms. Zodwa Mabuza, Principal Regional Integration Officer, African Development Bank

Ms. Mabuza stated that in April 2020, in response to the COVID 19 pandemic, the Board of Directors of the AfDB approved US\$10 billion COVID-19 Response Facility (CRF), from which a number of countries benefitted, including Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The activities funded under this facility facilitate the smooth movement of goods across borders and include scaling up of testing for drivers to prevent the spread of the pandemic across borders. The programmes further provide sanitization facilities for trucks at border crossings.

The also launched the Trade and Transport Facilitation Due Diligence Tool in 2020, which is a Tool used to mainstream soft infrastructure aspects of physical transport infrastructure, such transport regulations, policies, One Stop border Posts and harmonization of transport policies. The development of this Tool was prompted by the realization that previously, transport infrastructure did not yield the intended socio-economic benefits because the softer aspects were neglected. The Tool can be used from the design stage of the project cycle throughout to completion and evaluation. The Tool also encourages working with corridor management, RECs, and other institutions in the trade facilitation space.

The moderator thanked Ms. Mabuza for the briefing notes on the strategic and important interventions undertaken by AfDB to alleviate the pain of African Countries during this difficult period, and to facilitating trade particularly for LLDCs.

Statement by Ms. Irene Tembo, Chief Planner, Ministry of Transport and Communications in Zambia

Ms. Tembo addressed that Zambia is surrounded by 8 countries and with 8 corridors traversing the Country from east to west and from north to south. As such, Zambia has been working with neighboring countries and others to ensure the smooth flow of goods and commodities, and to contain the pandemic. Zambia has participated in developing guidelines through Southern African Development Community (SADC) and through the tripartite that includes the SADC Region, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Region and the East African Community (EAC), in order to ensure smooth flow of transport and therefore to facilitate trade in these regions. Zambia has mostly used road transport, though air transport has also been used, the cost is relatively high.

With the objective to guarantee the smooth flow of transport, the Government had established One Stop Border Posts, while strengthening the use of ICTs during the COVID-19 pandemic, which

assisted in decongesting the borders, and ensuring that the drivers are not subjected to long stays at the border crossing-points. Under this circumstance, the importers and exporters have been encouraged to pre-register their cargo with the Zambia Revenue Authority, so that when it gets to the border, it will not take long at the border crossing-points.

She continued to state that during the pandemic, Zambia has promoted the Buy Zambia Campaign encouraging local people to produce and to be able to sell to the Zambian market, while encouraging them to produce quality goods in the right quantities in order for them to be able to export to the outside world. The positive outcome is that there are a very good number of products coming up, in particular in the hygiene sector, at least the country is not starved of any sanitizers or anything similar. Regarding local farmers, they start adding value to their products, such as the emergence of local juices, local sources and others in local markets and supermarkets. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has hit the Country severely as some goods are not able to be sourced, the gap is being filled by those that have found a potential to manufacture their products and actually export them out of the country. The local manufacturers are being encouraged to improve their packaging to ensure that their products penetrate the wider African market.

The moderator thanked Ms. Tembo for sharing interesting and unique experience of Zambia with so many neighbors and corridors by highlighting how well Zambia has been able to maintain and manage fast movement of goods along the corridors, more importantly, the impact of the pandemic, and how it created an opportunity for local value addition and production including both local consumption and exportation, which is a vivid example of what Ms. Songwe has stated in the intervention at the beginning that there is always a silver lining in every cloud. He hoped that these emerging local industries would blossom as the AfCFTA takes root. He thanked her for sharing how Zambia has been able to exploit ICT to reduce the impact of the pandemic and to ease movements along the corridors, in particular country experience, case study of how landlocked country has been able to manage the pandemic, and how its corridors have been able to function in spite of the COVID-19.

Interactive Discussion

Ms. Karonga, Economic Affairs Officer, ECA, read to the meeting an intervention/question from a Sudanese participant in the meeting. It noted that South Sudan is a new country that is fragile, and that has not yet established significant industrial sector, and heavily depends on oil revenue to finance government budget. The participant from South Sudan would like to learn lessons from the panelists on how can Sudan promote smooth functioning of corridors for sustainable industrialization and diversified economy during the COVID-19 pandemic and the future ahead.

Mr. Ikome stated that as a landlocked country, the opportunities of smooth and optimally functioning corridors are important for South Sudan, transportation of goods in this case includes crucial refined petrol product which is the main commodity of South Sudan resource economy, but which could not be stored if procedure is slow at the border. Establishing corridors and making them to operate smoothly is the engine of the economy in LLDCs, such as South Sudan. Mr. Muganga previously shared how the Northern Corridor in Sudan is operating, which will be a lesson learned by South Sudan. All the interventions, such as that from the Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, who emphasized infrastructure development while linking multimodal

approach, are instructive to South Sudan on how to make transportation of key goods move faster and smoothly across corridors to port, as well as to get imports coming into the country.

Closing Remarks: Ms. Gladys Mutangadura, Senior Programme Officer, UN-OHRLLS

Ms. Mutangadura recalled that the discussions in the event clearly showed that corridors are important for trade, industrialization, value-addition, diversification, and overall social and economic development along the corridors for the benefit of both LLDCs and transit countries. The panelists discussed the impact of COVID-19 on corridors and the numerous non-tariff barriers that have arisen as a result. It is clear that it is important to promote smooth functioning of corridors during COVID-19 for better and sustainable recovery.

She continued by citing some of the experiences shared during the Event that include: increased use of digital technology to facilitate contactless border crossing procedures; development and use of regional or subregional guidelines for trade facilitation at borders; scaling up harmonization of border procedures and interventions and responses so as to ensure transparency and enhanced information sharing to enable continued smooth flow of goods and services during COVID-19; increased investment into corridor infrastructure as stimulus to support sustainable recovery; and the need to as much as possible to keep the borders open.

She noted that the meeting highlighted that safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines are urgently needed and are crucial for sustainable recovery in both the landlocked and transit countries; The meeting stressed that greater regional integration, and greater partnerships were essential and that recovery efforts should support the operation of all modes of transport (road, rail and air) in an integrated, seamless, harmonized and safe manner; climate-resilient corridors. Finally, the role of international organizations is crucial in supporting the recovery efforts of LLDCs as well as achieving sustainable development. On behalf of the organizers, she thanked all panelists and participants for their active participation and valuable contributions, as well as the experiences shared.