



**Summary Report of 2020 HLPF Side Event: UN Roadmap for Accelerated
Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs in the Decade of
Action and COVID-19 Era**

Organized by UN-OHRLLS and the Chair of the LLDC Group

**9 July 2020
Microsoft Teams Virtual Platform**

Introduction

The 2020 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) Side Event entitled “UN Roadmap for Accelerated Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs in the Decade of Action and Covid-19 Era” was organized by the Chair of the LLDC Group and UN-OHRLLS and held on 9 July virtually using the Microsoft Teams virtual platform. The Side Event served as a forum for LLDC Member States and other relevant stakeholders to discuss the UN Roadmap for Accelerated Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs, share country experiences in dealing with the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and discuss the needed support of the UN system and other international organizations towards achieving accelerated implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs (VPoA) in the Decade for Action and COVID-19 era.

The event was attended by over 70 participants, including Member States, UN system agencies, and other international and regional organizations. Moderated by H.E. Mr. Kairat Umarov, the Chair of the LLDCs Group, the event featured statements from H.E. Mr. Tijani Muhammad-Bande, the President of the 74th General Assembly (PGA) and Ms. Fekitamoeloa ‘Utoikamanu, the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS, UN-OHRLLS, followed by interventions from Member States and other stakeholders.

Proceedings

Opening statements

Opening Remarks by H.E. Mr. Kairat Umarov, Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan and Chair of the LLDC Group

H.E. Mr. Kairat Umarov appreciated the participation of the President of the General Assembly and the USG and High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS. The Chair highlighted the challenges of LLDCs that make them especially vulnerable, including lack of direct access to the sea, isolation from world trade, inadequate infrastructure, cumbersome border crossings, and reliance on restricted number of commodities for exports. H.E. Mr. Umarov reiterated the finding from the Midterm Review of the Vienna Programme of Action that indicated that despite positive efforts, progress was not sufficient to meet the objectives set forth in the VPoA or to be on pace to achieve the SDGs by 2030. He noted that the Political Declaration that was adopted by the Midterm Review outlined areas with greatest need for action in order to accelerate the implementation of the VPoA. He cautioned that the COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized the need to address the challenges LLDCs face and has threatened to roll back much of the progress made on the VPoA and the 2030 Agenda.

The Chair stressed that effective implementation of the VPoA is critical to the achievement of the SDGs and that he requested for the UN Roadmap for accelerated implementation of the VPoA to be developed to ensure greater visibility of results on the ground. The Chair thanked the USG and OHRLLS staff for developing the Roadmap, in particular the detailed mapping of activities to be undertaken by the UN agencies and other international and regional entities. He added that the detailed and balanced document will help LLDCs better understand how different organizations are supporting LLDCs and how more coordinated deliverables can be achieved. The Chair made clear that the primary responsibilities of implementation of the VPoA lies with the Member States, in particular the LLDCs and transit countries. The Chair ended his remarks by calling for increased cooperation between LLDCs and the revamped UN development system to find ways to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19, to recover and to build back better.

Statement by H.E. Mr. Tijani Muhammad-Bande, President of the 74th General Assembly

H.E. Mr. Tijani Muhammad-Bande thanked the LLDC Chair and USG of OHRLLS for the invitation to the event, stressing that the new reality of COVID-19 brings the urgent needs of LLDCs to the forefront of the global development agenda. He reaffirmed his commitment to support achieving of the SDGs and ensuring no one is left behind as the 74th GA session draws to a close. He acknowledged that progress has been made on the VPoA, such as improved human development index, land corridors have opened for LLDCs, and regional trade participation has increased. However, noting that more work remains to be done, he welcomed the Roadmap, as a concrete follow-up from the Midterm Review and a tool to guide the work of the UN system. He called for the momentum from the Midterm Review to be channeled into accelerated implementation of the VPoA and the UN Roadmap.

H.E. Mr. Muhammad-Bande stressed that the COVID-19 pandemic should not discourage LLDCs from attaining implementation of the VPoA, but rather urge them further in implementing it and achieving the SDGs. He called on enhanced efforts to work towards inclusive, sustainable and resilient future, with transition to green economy at its core. He called on Governments to refocus on the 2030 Agenda and align their national SDG implementation plans. He highlighted that the digital divide must be closed and policy responses must be targeted and inclusive to ensure that women, girls, youth, elderly and other vulnerable groups are not left behind. He added that regional dialogue should be harnessed, both within and outside of the UN. H.E. Mr. Muhammad-Bande ended his remarks by encouraging coordination and partnerships in order to achieve the VPoA and ensure prosperity for the millions of people in LLDCs.

Statement by Ms. Fekitamoeloa 'Utoikamanu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS, UN-OHRLLS

Ms. 'Utoikamanu thanked the Chair for co-organizing the side event and the PGA for participating. The USG outlined the Chair's request for the Roadmap, which OHRLLS was designated to prepare. She informed that after an initial framework of the Roadmap was developed, inputs were sought from the UN system partners, multilaterals and regional banks and other organizations that are part of the Inter-Agency Consultative Group (IACG). An ensuing IACG meeting in late June discussed and revised the consolidated Roadmap that contains concrete deliverables submitted by more than 40 agencies to support the accelerated implementation of the VPoA in the remaining years ahead. The USG emphasized the nature of the Roadmap as strategic commitment of the UN system and other international and regional organizations and framework for partnerships, highlighting that it is now up to the Member States, the LLDCs and transit countries, with support of development partners to take the lead in implementing the VPoA.

The USG gave a brief overview of the Roadmap, which consists of five main parts. The document starts with a set of guiding principles the UN system and other international and regional organizations should follow during their efforts to implement the Roadmap. These principles include enhancing coordination, synergies and 'Delivering as One'; leveraging UN Development System Reform; integrating LLDC priorities in broad sustainable development processes; strengthening innovative partnerships with governments, private sector and civil society; and promoting the sharing of experiences and best practices. Part Two of the Roadmap focuses on the key asks from policy makers in LLDCs, transit countries and development partners, the private sector, multilateral and regional development banks, and the UN system and other organizations. These call to action are cross-cutting and about leveraging high-impact opportunities in an effort to effect real structural change in LLDC priority areas. Part Three includes the key actions the UN system and other organizations can support, which cover the thematic areas of the VPoA, as well as strengthening resilience and climate action, strengthening of the International Think Tank for LLDCs,

support to help LLDCs deal with the impacts of COVID-19, the empowerment of women and girls in all facets of society, and the development of stakeholder networks during the implementation of the VPoA.

The USG emphasized the importance of Part Four, which is the detailed mapping of activities as submitted and to be implemented by the UN system and other international and regional organizations. The USG highlighted that some of these activities are proposals, meaning they require further conceptualization or funding. She added that the final part of the Roadmap covers implementation and outlined that the Roadmap and its implementation will be regularly reviewed in the context of the IACG and in the annual Report of the Secretary-General and that it will remain a living document. The USG concluded that halfway through the VPoA's ten-year timeline, and as we are entering the Decade of Action, increased international solidarity and support for the LLDC Group is essential.

Interventions on the Roadmap, COVID-19 Responses and UN Support

Intervention by H.E. Mr. Nkopane Monyane, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Lesotho

The Ambassador appreciated the development of the Roadmap at such a critical time coinciding with the commencement of the Decade of Action. He noted that in light of the Midterm Review of the VPoA and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Roadmap and in particular the detailed mapping of activities can be leveraged to not only accelerate the implementation of the VPoA but also to build back better. The Ambassador echoed the USG's call to 'Deliver as One', calling for effective and timely execution of the Roadmap.

Intervention by H.E. Mr. Rubén Darío Cuéllar, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bolivia

The Ambassador outlined the importance of the Roadmap in guiding the UN system support to LLDCs on infrastructure development, international trade and trade facilitation, noting the need to promote regional integration to ensure LLDCs' access to seaports. He applauded the guiding principle to 'Deliver as One' and enhance cooperation among Member States, the UN system, private sector and other stakeholders, while he called for attention to organizations and leaders of indigenous people. He called for fulfillment of ODA commitments and support to LLDCs to access new sources of financing, noting that middle-income status of some LLDCs should not be an obstacle to access financial assistance. A final call was made to support the Chaco region of South America as it faces an impending ecological disaster.

Intervention by H.E. Mr. Amrit Rai, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Nepal

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ambassador called for increased international cooperation in the context of the Roadmap to support LLDCs in their efforts to accelerate progress to implement the VPoA. He noted that the Roadmap provides comprehensive look at UN system support and appreciated the guiding principles of leveraging the UN system reform and of greater collaboration. He called for the Roadmap implementation to be materialized soon. H.E. Mr. Rai called on OHRLLS to engage with LLDC country teams to mainstream the VPoA into national strategies and echoed the call for regional approach in implementation and reporting of the VPoA. His closing comments called for adequate financing to support the implementation of the Roadmap, from UN system and development partners.

Intervention by H.E. Mr. Enkhbold Vorshilov, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Mongolia

The Ambassador recalled the midterm review of the VPoA and the critical need to accelerate the implementation of the VPoA in the remaining five years and this regard welcomed the Roadmap and the inclusion of support to LLDCs to help deal with impacts of COVID-19. He called for greater support for the International Think Tank for LLDCs to enable enhanced research and analysis in support of the LLDCs. He

also called on any LLDCs that have yet ratified the Agreement on the establishment of the Think Tank to do so. H.E. Mr. Enkhbold gave a brief overview of Mongolia's response to COVID-19, as it is working with the UN to scale up its national healthcare capacity and support neighbouring countries.

Intervention by H.E. Mr. Mahmamin Mahmaminov, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Tajikistan

The Ambassador noted that LLDCs made progress in implementation of the VPoA but were still facing difficulties in integrating to the world economy. He noted that COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated the weaknesses of LLDCs, shutting down borders, disrupting trade and supply chains, limiting trade and slowing down investment projects. The Ambassador stressed that the Roadmap offers timely opportunity for accelerating the efforts by LLDCs and their partners in implementation of the VPoA and highlighted in particular the importance for the UN system to leverage repositioning of the UN Development Pillar.

Intervention by H.E. Ms. Doma Tshering, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Bhutan

The Ambassador noted that the Roadmap provides important guidance and strategic vision to accelerate action on the VPoA, with focus on key deliverables. She appreciated it as a good example of UN system 'Delivering as One'. She expressed concern that the COVID-19 pandemic may undo the progress made, however noted that the Roadmap responds well to the need for greater international cooperation towards accelerating the implementation of the VPoA and achieving the SDGs. She noted the importance of the Roadmap for Bhutan's national planning, in particular in the area of structural transformation. H.E. Ms. Tshering called for increased technical support and sustainable financing to implement the VPoA, encouraged the UN system to strengthen inter-linkages to mainstream the VPoA in their workplans and echoed Nepal's call for OHRLLS to support mainstreaming of VPoA the country level.

Intervention by Mr. Li Young, Director-General, UNIDO

Mr. Young welcomed the Roadmap, as a guide to the future work of the UN system on the VPoA, as the international community accelerates action to deliver on the SDGs. He noted that inclusive and sustainable industrial development is well reflected in the Roadmap and will contribute to several priority areas of the VPoA related to the socio-economic transformation of LLDCs, including quality infrastructure, value-addition, agri-business, energy and environment, ICT and digitalization, public-private dialogue, South-South Cooperation, and statistics. He recalled the importance of the living nature of the document and expressed UNIDO's full support to the activities included in the Roadmap to support industrial capacity building in LLDCs and unlocking their industrial and economic development potential, during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

Intervention by Mr. Dulguun Damdin-Od, Director of Operations, International Think Tank for LLDCs (ITT for LLDCs)

Mr. Dulguun stressed that the ITT for LLDCs was happy to see its inputs well-integrated in the Roadmap, noting that over the remaining years of the VPoA, the ITT for LLDCs will focus its efforts on developing template agreements for LLDCs and strengthening capacity of LLDC on trade negotiations. He added that the Think Tank will also focus research on ways for LLDCs to build back better following the pandemic. His final remark called for increased support for the Think Tank and opportunities for cooperation with other international organizations.

Intervention by Mr. Michael Lodge, Secretary-General, International Seabed Authority (ISA)

Mr. Lodge outlined ISA's mandate under UNCLOS, which provides for the rights of LLDCs to participate in deep-sea mineral exploration, scientific marine research and share in the benefits from deep-sea

minerals. He noted that LLDCs make up 10% of ISA membership, and urged them to fully leverage the opportunities that come with ISA membership. He added that ISA was happy to see its contributions included in the Roadmap and highlighted specific areas of support, including capacity building in marine science, especially for women, access to marine scientific research and ensuring full participation of LLDCs in deep-sea exploration.

Intervention by Mr. Satya Tripathi, UN Assistant Secretary-General and Head of the UNEP New York Office

Mr. Tripathi explained that many of the diseases that have spread over the last few decades have come from human encroachment into animals' natural habitats, often disproportionately impacting LLDCs. He highlighted the importance of increased support for LLDCs in the era of COVID-19, to help them build back better as well as to help them deal with impacts of environmental degradation and climate change. He noted that UNEP is continuing its capacity building and technical assistance to LLDCs to help them achieve sustainable development through green economy transition. He stressed that adaptation is critical for LLDCs and noted UNEP's efforts in facilitating knowledge sharing on climate change adaptation and resilience building, assisting countries to develop national adaptation plan and integrating adaptation in existing programmes.

Intervention by Mr. Ahmed Abdel-Latif, Permanent Observer to the United Nations, IRENA

Mr. Abdel-Latif noted IRENA's continued efforts in working closely with LLDCs to accelerate renewable energy deployment in the context of advancing the SDGs, Paris Agreement and VPoA. He expressed IRENA's full commitment within the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic and supporting LLDCs with recovery measures using energy transformation and renewables. He noted that IRENA welcomed the opportunity to contribute to the Roadmap, especially in light of a joint Memorandum of Understanding with OHRLLS signed in September 2019 to further support LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS. Mr. Abdel-Latif highlighted the proposed joint report with OHRLLS on scaling up renewable energy resources in LLDCs with focus on attracting investment in renewables, as a key deliverable.

Intervention by Mr. Paul Akiwumi, Director of Division of Africa, LDCs and Special Programmes, UNCTAD

Mr. Akiwumi highlighted the priority areas of the VPoA where UNCTAD provides assistance to LLDCs, including transport and logistics, trade facilitation, export diversification, investment promotion and structural economic transformation. He cautioned that the COVID-19 pandemic threatens to undo progress in many of these priority areas. He informed that UNCTAD recently developed a Productive Capacity Index (PCI), as a tool for policy makers to benchmark their productive capacities. To be launched shortly, the PCI is composed of 46 core indicators across eight components and initial results show LLDCs perform below average in almost all components. He also mentioned a recent UNCTAD study of four Asian LLDCs showing strong potential for export diversification in sectors such as textiles, tourism and ICT services. Mr. Akiwumi appreciated the Roadmap's flexibility and nature as living document.

Intervention by Mr. Arjun Goswami, Chief of Regional Cooperation and Integration Thematic Group, Sustainable Development and Climate Change Department, Asian Development Bank (ADB)

Mr. Goswami emphasized ADB's continued support for LLDCs and commitment to regional integration, which has been identified as one of the seven operational priorities of ADB's Strategy 2030. He noted that ADB recognized LLDCs as a special country category under its operational plan for regional cooperation. He highlighted that substantial portion of the \$9 billion under ADB's COVID-19 response operations has gone to LLDCs, supporting vulnerable segments and sectors such as SMEs and tourism. Mr. Goswami highlighted three guiding principles from the VPoA: building back together; building back better, focusing

on vulnerable sectors and segments; and building back differently, leveraging opportunities of digital revolution and contactless trade.

Intervention by Mr. David Tanenbaum, Commercial and Economic Law Advisor, International Development Law Organization (IDLO)

Mr. Tanenbaum introduced IDLO as the only intergovernmental organization exclusively devoted to the rule of law. He highlighted the Investment Support Programme for LDCs designed by IDLO and UN-OHRLLS which provides no-cost legal and technical assistance to least developed LLDC governments and private sector on investment-related matters. He called for increased coordination and the need for the Roadmap to guide cooperation and coordination amongst organizations to avoid overlap, maximize the efficient use of resources and ensure complementarity while streamlining support for LLDCs.

Intervention by Mr. Andrey Kuleshov, Strategy and Development Advisor, Common Fund for Commodities (CFC)

Mr. Kuleshov noted CFC's recent completion of its most successful round of Open Call for Proposals and work to accelerate the delivery of SDG impact investment projects. He noted that CFC activities contribute to structural economic transformation in LLDCs by enhancing their capacity in sustainable development of the agriculture sector. He informed that CFC works to attract and facilitate domestic and foreign investment, with more than half of project costs coming from the private sector. He called for greater global cooperation to support LLDCs in building back better, with greater resilience to economic and environmental shocks. Mr. Kuleshov added that CFC also set up an Emergency Liquidity Facility to help qualifying SMEs withstand COVID-19 shocks.

Intervention by Mr. David Mehdi Hamam, Director, United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA)

Mr. Hamam highlighted OSAA's efforts alongside OHRLLS and other UN entities to provide support to African LLDCs in their efforts to achieve the VPoA, SDGs and Agenda 2063. He noted the entry into force of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which seeks to double African trade, lower trade barriers and promote economies of scale and will be driving force for African LLDCs to achieve key actions areas of the VPoA. He cautioned however that the implementation of the AfCFTA has been held back due to the pandemic and called for continued support to the AfCFTA implementation.

Intervention by Ms. Angelica Jacome-Daza, Director, Office for LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS, FAO

Ms. Jacome-Daza gave overview of FAO's continued support to LLDCs and introduced FAO's new OSL office that specifically supports LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS. She highlighted FAO's flagship Hand-in-Hand Initiative, a match-making initiative that brings together beneficiary countries with donors and other partners. She added that the Initiative promotes country-led agricultural and rural transformation to eradicate hunger and poverty. She noted that eight LLDCs, out of 15 countries, confirmed participation in the first round of the Initiative. Ms. Jacome-Daza invited participants to review FAO's activities included in the Roadmap and reiterated the living nature of the Roadmap, allowing flexibility to respond to emerging issues.

Intervention by Mr. Raúl Torres, Counsellor, World Trade Organization (WTO)

Mr. Torres noted the timeliness of the Roadmap given the pandemic's potential for derailing efforts made towards implementing the VPoA. He informed that WTO has seen an increase in restrictive trade measures, especially transit-related, and called on Member States to notify the WTO of any trade-restrictive measure encountered. He reiterated the need to keep markets open and predictable during and post-COVID-19. He noted the good progress in implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation

Agreement, highlighting the importance of continued support to LLDCs towards assessing their needs. Mr. Torres called on LLDCs to take advantage of the important opportunity of the next WTO Ministerial Conference being held in Kazakhstan in summer of 2021, noting that recognition from WTO Members of the particular situation of the LLDCs would go further in allowing the WTO to implement specific measures and programmes for LLDCs.

Closing

USG 'Utoikamanu thanked all participants for sharing their experiences and their feedback and comments on the Roadmap. She reiterated that moving forward the Roadmap is meant to be adaptable will be regularly updated to reflect the evolving nature of UN's support to LLDCs and new partnership opportunities. She reiterated that the UN stands committed to work together to support the Roadmap initiatives and the accelerated implementation of the VPoA

The LLDC Group Chair H.E. Mr. Kairat Umarov thanked all participants for their active engagement and contributions to the Roadmap. He expressed his belief that the document can serve as a good practice to be replicated in other processes that require better collaboration between the UN system and with Member States. He informed that further discussions on the Roadmap will take place during the upcoming LLDC Ambassadorial Meeting. The Chair noted that the Group aims to formally recognize the Roadmap during the upcoming LLDC Ministerial Meeting during the September High-Level week through the adoption of the annual Ministerial Declaration, while re-emphasizing the document's living nature.