

UNOPS Official Statement at the Annual Ministerial Meeting of Foreign Ministers of Landlocked
Developing Countries

23 September 2020

08.00-11.00 AM

Virtual meeting

Nick O'Regan, Director of Implementation Practices and Standards

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Mr. Chair,

The existence of well planned, delivered, and managed infrastructure systems that are sustainable, resilient and inclusive is one of the most important factors in the development of Landlocked Developing Countries.

Unfortunately, too many lack these systems, which negatively impacts their integration into international markets and the delivery of basic services to populations within their borders. Without urgent action to address this situation, the progress of LLDCs towards the SDGs and the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action will continue to remain challenged.

Mr. Chair,

Many barriers remain across the enabling, built, and natural environment that inhibit LLDCs from developing sustainable and resilient infrastructure systems, including the lack of adequate policy and processes to effectively govern infrastructure systems and address hazards and risks, as well as the need to strengthen government capacity to deliver, and manage sustainable, resilient and inclusive infrastructure, that incorporates a vision of greater connection to regional and global economies.

Additionally, only by working with the private sector can LLDCs advance these connections at a level and speed that benefits all. National budgets and ODA investment in infrastructure systems will not be enough to address this need. It is going to require the creation of a pipeline of bankable projects that can attract and mobilize large amounts of private sector financing.

Mr. Chair,

As we assess the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and identify priorities to acceleration, UNOPS believes that a cross-cutting focus on the issue of connectivity is key.

Without connectivity, LLDCs cannot access international markets nor integrate difficult to reach regions into their economic, social, or cultural life.

In particular, there are three infrastructure sectors which UNOPS would highlight as central to increasing connectivity - transport, energy and digital communication. Development partners should scale up their efforts in these three areas, including in supporting the creation of an enabling environment that will attract more private sector investment into infrastructure. Furthermore, UNOPS advocates for greater integration of this concept into the Roadmap for Acceleration.

Mr. Chair,

The COVID-19 global pandemic has further emphasized the need for greater connectivity. Without connectivity, millions of children, particularly in rural areas, have been left without education and nations have found it difficult to secure the essential commodities and protective equipment necessary to combat this deadly pandemic. Resilient supply chains depend on quality infrastructure.

Mr. Chair,

As the UN agency with a mandate on infrastructure, UNOPS has identified a series of key principles to support LLDCs in this challenge. These include a systems-based approach where we examine physical assets together with the governance and knowledge that is essential to the overall planning and management of an infrastructure asset throughout its life-cycle.

We take a long-term view of infrastructure investment decisions, that helps Governments create an enabling environment to make informed decisions on where to best invest limited resources, and attract new funding opportunities.

At UNOPS, our foundation of expertise is built on 25 years of delivering infrastructure for our partners around the world in some of the most challenging contexts. We are now using this experience to drive a paradigm shift in the way infrastructure is being planned, delivered, and managed, on a national scale, including helping to address inter regional connectivity - ensuring that it is sustainable, resilient, inclusive, and underpins national and regional economic strategies.

Mr. Chair,

UNOPS applauds the efforts of the Government of Kazakhstan...not only in organizing this meeting, but also in championing the cause of connectivity throughout the Central Asia region, among the most connectivity challenged landlocked regions in the world. We look forward to increasing our support in advancing these important issues within the region and beyond.

I thank you Mr Chair for the opportunity to address this important meeting and UNOPS looks forward to partnering with LLDCs, other development partners, and the private sector to accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action.