

Meeting of the revitalized Group of Friends of LLDCs
23 November 2022, 0900 hrs, CR 11, UNHQ

Welcome remarks by Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj
Permanent Representative of India to the UN

Thank you Ambassador Claver Gatete for giving me the floor. May I also thank Ambassador Alexander Masrchick and his team for all the effort in leading on this coordination.

2. It is indeed an honor and a privilege for India to be co-chairing this Group of Friends meeting along with Austria and Rwanda,

I welcome Ambassador Collen Vixen Kelapile, PR of Botswana and Chair of the Group of LLDCs,

I also welcome Under-Secretary General and High Representative Rabab Fatima for being with us today.

Excellencies, Friends,

3. We are gathered here together because we believe that a revitalized Group of Friends is an important rallying point for support to the LLDCs. This Group of Friends can play an instrumental role in supporting the stock-taking of the Vienna Programme of Action, even as we plan for the Third UN Conference on LLDCs in 2024. This could include, for example, supporting the regional review meetings, thematic pre-conference events and other preparatory activities. We are also eight years away from the SDG target year of 2030. The Group of Friends should support the LLDCs' and help build intergovernmental consensus on LLDCs' priorities over the next eight years, and beyond.

4. Across various forums, we have been discussing ways for countries globally to 'build back better'. We must bear in mind that the recovery for the LLDCs from the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 pandemic have been particularly challenging with adverse global economic conditions. Global supply chain disruptions, increased prices for food, fuel, and fertilizers, inter alia, have compounded the trade and logistics costs for the LLDCs. These challenges are further compounded by longer-term issues such as trade and transit bottlenecks, unsustainable debt, and natural resource dependency.

5. As a transit country, India is aware of these challenges and of the importance of effective cooperation between LLDCs and transit countries, not the least on transit and trade facilitation which is critical for making transport and trade efficient and effective.

6. India is ready to share its experience of improving connectivity and strengthening cross-border cooperation. We extended our hand to assist our LLDC partners in their COVID-19 response, with medical assistance through the supply of vaccines, therapeutics, and equipment. Since the beginning of the Ukraine conflict, in order to mitigate the adverse effects of the disruptions in the food and commodity supply chains, India has also been providing financial and food assistance to countries in need.

7. Closer home the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN) initiative to strengthen economic cooperation and transport connectivity was geared to assist landlocked Nepal and Bhutan, and provide BBIN countries greater access to global supply chains. Cooperation under BBIN is also being discussed in the areas of power, water resources management, inland water ways and rail connectivity.

8. India is undertaking extensive cooperation with LLDCs in the context of its development partnership programme and through the India-UN Development Partnership Fund. In the landlocked countries of Africa, for example, we are involved in projects which directly contribute to enhancing the quality of life of the people –from power projects and IT related projects to major infrastructure and water projects.

Excellencies, Friends,

9. On the road to the Third UN Conference on LLDCs in 2024, we must identify gaps in the target areas of the VpoA and the 2030 Agenda within the LLDCs, and seek solutions to enhance investment and technical assistance to bridge the gaps. Some of the core areas of our focus could, inter alia, be economic diversification, productive capacity-building, innovation, skills and knowledge, enhanced trade and transit facilitation, and increased digitalization.

10. India is committed to use this Group of Friends as a platform to strengthen its support towards LLDCs. We hope that other members of this group will contribute actively to the activities of the Group of Friends, and we welcome your suggestions. I also take this opportunity to thank UN-OHRLLS for its work in supporting this Group of Friends and the most vulnerable countries, including the 32 LLDCs.

I now hand over the baton back to my fellow co-chair Ambassador Claver Gatete of Rwanda