

**STATEMENT BY HON. FREDERICK M. SHAVA, MINISTER
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE AT
THE 22ND MEETING OF MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE GROUP OF LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING
COUNTRIES: 21 SEPTEMBER, 2023**

**Chair of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries,
Excellencies
Distinguished delegates.**

Zimbabwe, like all LLDCs, faces several challenges arising from remoteness, landlockedness and geographical isolation. These challenges, inter-alia, include difficulties in connecting to global trade networks and value chains. These constraints disproportionately, increase the cost of doing business, and, overall, the cost of development, thereby perpetuating poverty and economic distress in our countries.

With the added burden that was brought about by the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and

geopolitical tensions, Zimbabwe, is among the vulnerable countries that risk being left behind, in this Decade of Action and delivery on the Sustainable Development Goals.

The high levels of public debt continue to further constrain the ability of many LLDCs to implement the requisite fiscal responses to recover from the crisis they are facing today.

Addressing these specific challenges requires concrete multidimensional action at all levels. In that regard, we are pleased to note that the poly crisis has not deterred the UN system's efforts to support LLDCs in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, and the 2030 Agenda.

At the national level, Zimbabwe, continued to mainstream the 2030 Agenda and VPoA into national development plans and programmes, with the latest having been our National Development Strategy (NDS 1), running from 2021-2025. The overarching objective is to bolster our trade and infrastructure projects that are crucial in attaining our national aspiration to become an upper middle-income society by 2030.

To that end, we have worked on developing all modes of connectivity including, air transport, roads, railway, and transmission lines, which are key to enhancing access to global markets. The COVID 19 pandemic demonstrated that world class ICT infrastructure is a pre-requisite for every country, and we cannot overemphasize the importance of developing efficient, modern, and reliable infrastructure, including ICT and energy infrastructure. The pandemic demonstrated the need for coordination and solidarity between the coastal States and the LLDCs.

Zimbabwe has thus embarked on modernizing and expanding its strategic infrastructure as a key priority in our national plans and remains firm in its aim to reposition the country into a transport hub for the region. Notable developments have been realised in the construction and upgrading of several roads, border posts, expansion of airports, education and health facilities as well as energy and Information Communication Technology roll out programmes among other key interventions. We, also, continue to

focus on policy reforms meant to create the right conditions for private sector participation in public infrastructure provision, in line with our mantra Zimbabwe is Open for Business.

Mr. Chairman

The Vienna Programme of Action was adopted with renewed and strengthened commitments by both the LLDCs, transit countries and their development partners to achieve rapid, sustainable and inclusive development of our vulnerable group of countries. The slow pace of progress makes it clear that the principle of leaving no one behind will not be achievable without empowering the LLDCs.

Inadequate funding for research and development hinders innovation and the realization of the benefits of Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) for LLDCs to move up the value chain and attain the required levels of structural transformation. The LLDCs are, also, deprived of the benefits of digital technologies due to the lack of sufficient investment.

While diverse production and trade patterns are key to economic success for a country, more than half of the population in many LLDCs remain dependent on the agriculture sector making them more volatile to various shocks.

At the same time, most of our countries, including my own Zimbabwe, our neighbours, Malawi, and Mozambique, have borne the greatest brunt of climate effects despite being minimal contributors to the global carbon footprint. There is, also, need for us to share experiences and best practices as we work to resolve the plethora of challenges that we face due to our land lockedness.

Mr. Chairman,

With all these challenges, we still believe that the experience we gained from the implementation of the VPoA, should spur us, together with our partners, to forge ahead with conviction, if the 2030 target is still possible. What we seek is the international community's enhanced support, greater resource allocation, and

conversion of commitment into action, for us to move from being landlocked to being landlinked.

Lastly, Zimbabwe expresses its commitment to engage constructively, in the work ahead, as a member of the Preparatory Committee for the LLDC3, in efforts to come up with a renewed programme of action, founded on the experience earned, lessons learnt and hindsight, to guide us in the next decade. We reiterate the commitment made in the 2030 Agenda, to support those furthest behind and ensure that no one and no place is left behind.

I thank you!