



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

29 October 2019

Excellency,

Further to the letter dated, 18 June 2019, concerning the High-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly devoted to the comprehensive midterm review of the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA) for Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) for the decade 2014-2024, I have the pleasure to enclose herewith, the concept note and revised agenda for the meeting.

The meeting is scheduled to take place on 5 and 6 December 2019, at the United Nations Headquarters, New York.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized, cursive script.

Tijjani Muhammad-Bande

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

COMPREHENSIVE HIGH-LEVEL MIDTERM REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE VIENNA PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE DECADE 2014–2024
5 AND 6 DECEMBER 2019, UNHQ, NEW YORK

BACKGROUND

The Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA) for Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) for the Decade 2014-2024 was adopted at the Second United Nations Conference on LLDCs held in November 2014. The VPoA provides a comprehensive framework to tackle LLDCs' special challenges and improve their integration into the global economy through six mutually reinforcing priority areas: transit, infrastructure development, international trade and trade facilitation, regional integration and cooperation, structural economic transformation, and means of implementation. The VPoA is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The specific challenges faced by LLDCs, particularly regarding disaster risk reduction, poverty eradication and zero hunger must be prioritized to ensure that no one is left behind in achieving the 2030 Agenda.

Over the past five years, achievement in implementation of the priorities of the VPoA has been mixed. Progress has been made in areas such as high ratification of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement by LLDCs and transit countries, deepening of regional integration and cooperation, improvements in road and rail corridor performance and growth in dry ports.

In other areas there has been limited progress. One third of the LLDCs' population is still living in poverty and the LLDCs continue to account for less than one percent of the global merchandise trade and their exports remain undiversified. There has been limited progress on structural economic transformation, as demonstrated by the relatively low value-added contribution of the manufacturing sector in the LLDCs. Quality education, including skills training addressed to youth would be one of the key areas to address in order to overcome those challenges.

Despite the continued efforts to expand and upgrade the transport infrastructure, inadequate quality and deficiencies in the physical infrastructure remain. Access to electricity in the LLDCs has increased but remains below the world average. In addition, costs of ICT services in the LLDCs remain high. Whilst most LLDCs have ratified the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, their implementation of the Agreement lags behind other Official Development Assistance (ODA) flows as to LLDCs increased from \$24 billion in 2014 to \$28 billion in 2017, but continues to be concentrated in a few LLDCs. Foreign direct investment flows declined by 21%, from \$28.7 billion in 2014 to 22.67 billion in 2018. It is important to address means of implementation regarding the needs of the LLDCs.

MANDATE

In accordance with its resolutions 72/232 and 73/243, the General Assembly will convene on 5 and 6 December 2019, a comprehensive High-level Midterm review on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs for the Decade 2014–2024. The review will assess progress made, identify obstacles and constraints encountered, emerging challenges and opportunities, as well as finding ways to further accelerate its implementation in the remaining five years. The High-level midterm review will adopt an inter-governmentally negotiated and agreed draft political declaration.

FORMAT

The High-level Midterm Review will be structured as follows:

- On 5 December, the opening and plenary meetings will take place in the General Assembly Hall from 10:00 to 13:00 hours and from 15:00 to 18:00 hours. The list of speakers will be established in accordance with the practice of the General Assembly.
- On 6 December, the meeting will comprise one high-level panel and two interactive panels which will be convened in the Trusteeship Council Chamber. In accordance with resolution 73/243, which stressed the effective participation of all relevant stakeholders, civil society and representatives of the private sector are invited to participate in the interactive panels. A list of interested non-ECOSOC accredited non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, academic institutions and the private sector will be submitted to Member States for their consideration on a non-objection basis. No list of speakers will be established for the interactive panels.

The panels will address the following topics:

High-level panel on challenges and opportunities for the VPoA and its interlinkages with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The high-level panel will examine the challenges and opportunities experienced in the implementation of the VPoA and identify priorities, policies and solutions to accelerate its implementation and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Interactive Panel on Promoting trade, trade facilitation and structural economic transformation in Landlocked Developing Countries

LLDCs' global merchandise exports decreased from 1.19% in 2014 to an estimated 0.98% in 2018 and the majority of LLDCs are still commodities-dependent. The high-level panel will explore integrated policies and strategies, including on poverty eradication,

skills training, deepening cooperation, partnerships, and support for LLDCs' increased exports and integration into global trade as well as achieving structural transformation that is economically sustainable and resilient to disasters.

Guiding questions

- How can the Sustainable Development Goals and targets guide LLDCs' policies in order to fulfil the commitments of the 2030 Agenda?
- What is the role of quality education and skills training in harnessing the potential of LLDC's?
- What have been the challenges hindering deeper integration of LLDCs into global trade and achieving economic diversification and poverty eradication?
- What policies, strategies and solutions can be adopted at national, regional and global levels to further accelerate LLDCs' efforts to diversify, add value and increase their exports, join regional and global value chains and better integrate into global trade?
- How can the multilateral trading system contribute to an enabling environment and support LLDCs' national efforts to achieve zero hunger, enhance structural economic transformation and their integration into global trade?
- How can LLDCs foster and sustain competitive industries?
- What have been the key achievements and challenges in the implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement by the LLDCs and Transit countries and how can implementation be accelerated?

Interactive Panel on regional integration and infrastructure connectivity

The session will assess the progress made in the area of regional integration and infrastructure development and connectivity, analyse remaining challenges and identify opportunities for enhancing transport development and infrastructure connectivity of the LLDCs, in particular in the context of regional integration. The discussion will include topics such as implementation of regional trade and transport agreements and initiatives; regional energy and ICT development; establishment of reliable and efficient transit transport systems; corridor development and management; financing of regional and cross-border infrastructure.

Guiding questions

- What examples are there of successful regional integration and infrastructure development initiatives? How can they be scaled up and replicated?
- What challenges have been faced in implementation of regional trade, transport and infrastructure initiatives? What needs to be done to address those challenges?
- What is the role of financing for development and implementation of the Addis Ababa Agenda for Action as well as disaster risk reduction?
- What are some of the lessons learned in regional infrastructure and corridor development?
- How can development partners and international and regional organizations better support regional integration and infrastructure connectivity in LLDCs and transit countries in order to achieve the SDG's?

**Programme of the Comprehensive High-level Midterm review on the
implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs
for the Decade 2014–2024**

	DAY 1 (5 December 2019) General Assembly Hall
10:00 – 10:30	Opening <i>Adoption of the draft Political Declaration</i>
10:30 –13:00	Plenary Meeting
15:00 –18:00	Continuation of the Plenary Meeting
	DAY 2 (6 December 2019) Trusteeship Council Chamber
10:00 –11:00	High-level panel on challenges and opportunities for the VPoA and its interlinkages with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
11:00 – 13:00	Interactive Panel on promoting trade, trade facilitation and structural economic transformation in Landlocked Developing Countries
15:00 – 17:00	Interactive Panel on regional integration and infrastructure connectivity
17:00-17:30	Closing