



UN-OHRLLS

Opening Remarks

by

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for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing
Countries and Small Island Developing States

at the

23rd Annual Ministerial Meeting of Foreign Ministers of
Landlocked Developing Countries

15:00 - 18:00 pm (EST)

26 September 2024

Conference Room 2, UNHQ, New York

His Excellency, Dr. Lemogang Kwape, Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Republic of Botswana,

His Excellency, Mr. Philemon Yang, President of the 79th session
of the UN General Assembly,

His Excellency, Mr. Robert Rae, President of the ECOSOC,

Hon'ble Ministers, Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues,

I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for convening this annual Ministerial
Meeting of Landlocked Developing Countries under the theme
"Building momentum towards Gaborone: Partnering for a
Decade of Action and Transformation in LLDCs".

I commend Botswana for its exemplary leadership of the Group
and its role as host of the upcoming Third UN Conference on
LLDCs in Gaborone this December.

I also express my deep appreciation to the President of the
General Assembly and the President of the ECOSOC for their
steadfast support in keeping LLDC issues high on the UN agenda.

The strong presence of Ministers from LLDCs and Friends of LLDCs here today demonstrates your shared commitment to addressing the unique vulnerabilities of LLDCs.

Excellencies,

We stand at a pivotal moment in LLDCs' development journey.

Despite some progress under the Vienna Programme of Action, LLDCs continue to face profound structural challenges, hindering their full participation in the global economy and achievement of the SDGs.

The lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and other overlapping global crises have further exacerbated their vulnerabilities.

The upcoming LLDC3 Conference will be crucial as we transition from the Vienna Programme of Action to a new Programme of Action - the Gaborone Programme of Action, that will guide the LLDCs' development for the next decade.

Excellencies,

We welcome the consensus already reached on the new POA - the Gaborone Programme of Action - for LLDCs by the members states. This is a testament to the exemplary collaboration and partnership of all stakeholders involved.

The delegation of Botswana, the LLDC Group, transit countries and development partners have shown remarkable dedication and solidarity in delivering this ambitious agenda.

I extend particular thanks to the Permanent Representatives of Austria and Mongolia for their exceptional leadership in guiding the negotiations to a successful conclusion.

The GPOA outlines five key priority areas essential for addressing LLDCs' structural challenges and facilitating their integration into global value chains.

As we prepare for the Conference, I would like to share some key priorities and concrete recommendations drawn from the GPOA:

First (on): integrating LLDCs into global trade:

LLDCs' share of global merchandise exports remains marginal at only 1.1%, with trade costs estimated to be 30% higher than coastal developing countries.

The new Programme of Action underscores LLDCs' interest in establishing a dedicated work programme on their special needs under the WTO. I call on all WTO members to support this proposal at the upcoming Ministerial Conference.

Second: (is about) reaffirming freedom of transit:

LLDCs' market competitiveness is significantly undermined by additional border crossings and long distances from major markets, which drive up trade and transport costs.

The new Programme of Action requests the Secretary-General to constitute a high-level panel of experts to examine the application of existing international laws on freedom of transit for LLDCs.

I call on all Member States to support this important initiative.

Third: (is on) addressing infrastructure gaps:

LLDCs require nearly 200,000 km of paved roads and over 46,000 km of railways to reach global average densities, at an estimated cost of over half a trillion dollars.

The GPOA proposes creating an Infrastructure Investment Finance Facility (IIFF) for LLDCs, which can play a critical role in bridging this infrastructure deficit.

I urge development partners and international financial institutions to support the establishment and capitalization of this facility.

Fourth: (is about) boosting agricultural productivity:

Agriculture accounts for 17% of GDP and employs 55% of the workforce in LLDCs.

Yet, they struggle with low productivity and limited value addition.

The GPOA commits to establishing regional agricultural research hubs for LLDCs.

It is imperative to strengthen support for LLDCs to enable them to fully leverage the opportunities offered by STI.

Excellencies,

The implementation, monitoring and review of the new Programme of Action must be an ongoing process across national, subregional, regional, and global levels. This will require mobilization of domestic resources, increased official development assistance, and an expansion of other sources of external financing. Additionally, attracting FDI and attaining long-term debt sustainability will be essential to its success.

It is imperative that p

We are also working to strengthen the UN Inter-

The UN Secretary-General will convene the UN system at the principal level, calling for ambitious commitments to support the GPOA.

It will be important to integrate the GPOA into the strategic plans and priorities of the UN agencies, funds and programmes. Your support will be critical in the respective governing bodies of the UN entities.

Excellencies,

The upcoming Conference in Gaborone provides a historic opportunity to set an ambitious course for LLDC development over the next decade.

I urge all Member States to ensure participation at the highest level and to come with concrete commitments and partnerships. The UN system stands ready to support LLDCs in implementing the new Programme of Action.

Let us seize this historic opportunity to usher in a new era of progress and prosperity for LLDCs.

I look forward to seeing many of you in Gaborone in December!

I thank you all.