

Annual Ministerial Meeting of Foreign Ministers of Landlocked  
Developing Countries

25 September 2019

3:00pm - 6:00pm

Conference Room 5

UN Headquarters, New York

Concept Note and Draft Agenda

Theme: Midterm review of the Vienna Programme of Action: Renewed strength to accelerate implementation and transformation in LLDCs

## Background

Lack of territorial access to the sea, isolation and remoteness from world markets and high transport and transit costs impose constraints on the overall economic development and trade competitiveness of the 32 landlocked developing countries (LLDCs). LLDCs face substantially increased total expenses for transport and other transaction costs because of the additional border crossings and long distances from major markets. The high cost of trade is a major barrier to their ability to fully harness their trade and overall sustainable development potential. These challenges have major implications on economic growth, and social and environmental aspects of development including the achievement of the SDGs.

To address the challenges of LLDCs, the international community adopted in 2014 the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA) for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024. The VPoA, which is also an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Development, offers a holistic approach to improve the integration of LLDCs into the global economy through the following priority areas: Fundamental Transit Policy Issues; Infrastructure Development and Maintenance; International Trade and Trade Facilitation; Regional Integration and Cooperation, Structural Economic Transformation, and Means of Implementation. The full and effective implementation of VPoA is critical for LLDCs in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Midway through the Vienna Programme of Action implementation, some progress has been achieved in its implementation, but the progress still falls short of meeting the set targets. LLDCs have exhibited mixed progress in their economic development as real GDP growth for LLDCs declined from 5.6% in 2014 to 2.9% in 2016, lowest level since 1998. It recovered to 4.5% in 2017. The percentage of employed population below the poverty line in LLDCs declined from 26.8% in 2015 to 25.5% in 2017. LLDCs as a group improved the Human Development Index by only 1.5% between 2014 and 2018. However, average HDI index for 2018 lags behind the world average by 20%.

Limited progress has also been achieved in infrastructure development, in particular, transport, energy and ICT. On transport, whilst some progress has been achieved in completing missing links and generally improving the quality of infrastructure for increased connectivity of LLDCs, there are persistent challenges and a lot remains to be done. Major constraints in developing and maintaining road and rail infrastructure connectivity include limited financial resources, institutional bottlenecks and limited skilled human resources.

On energy, the average proportion of population with access to electricity in LLDCs increased from 49.5% in 2014 to 56.3% in 2017, however, LLDCs still lag behind the world average of 88.8%. On ICT, LLDCs have experienced significant growth in mobile cellular subscriptions that increased from 66 per 100 people in 2014 to 172 in 2017 but still lag significantly behind the world average of 104. The proportion of individuals using internet in LLDCs increased from 17.3% in 2014 to 25.7% in 2017 but remains way below the world average of 48.6%. The cost for broadband continues to be higher than those of the coastal countries.

The above mentioned show that while some progress is being made to implement the VPoA, there are challenges that need to be addressed to achieve the VPoA objective and to improve the welfare of over 50 million people living in the region.

### 3. Expected Outcome

The Ministerial Meeting will reinforce the political commitment to the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The meeting will adopt a Ministerial Declaration of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries. The meeting will also elect the new Chair for the Group of LLDCs for the years 2020/2021.

### 4. Participation

The Ministerial Meeting will be attended by Ministers and High-Level officials from the 32 LLDCs. Ministers and High-Level Officials from transit developing countries, development partners and representatives of UN systems and other international and regional organizations will also be invited to participate.

### 5. Documentation Available online

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