



Allow me to first, express profound gratitude from the people and the Government of the Republic of Malawi to the ; and to the current Chair of the LLDCs, Kazakhstan, for ably organizing and coordinating this meeting. This is a clear example of how we can collectively adapt to the tough conditions brought by the COVID-19 pandemic to pursue our common interests.

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I am pleased to be here having recently attended the "*Ministerial Meeting on Vienna Program of Action on LDCs*" on 28th July, 2020. This meeting is vital as it will enable us to increase the scope on how best we can collectively utilise the Vienna Programme of Action to achieve Sustainable Development Goals. Challenges stifling economic growth in LLDCs are strikingly similar. Lack of territorial access to the sea, isolation and remoteness from world markets which all lead to high transport and transit costs thereby negatively affecting the business environment of our economies. It is a fact that we are not the main culprits of environmental degradation, yet are the biggest victims of vulnerabilities arising from climate change, which continue imposing constraints on our overall socio-economic well-being. The onset of COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated border and transit measures impacting negatively on trade facilitation and increasing transit fees.

