

United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States

The Sixth Inter-Agency Consultative Group (IACG) Meeting on the Follow-up and Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs was held in Geneva on 11 April 2018. The meeting was organized by the United Nations Office of the High-Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS). The IACG provided a platform for the participating organizations to update each other on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA), as well as consult on the preparations for the comprehensive high-level midterm review of the implementation of the VPoA.

The meeting was chaired by UN-OHRLLS and opened by Ms. Heidi Schroderus-

the LLDC Group in the negotiations to help ensure that the Group stays fully engaged in the process and that their priorities and concerns are adequately reflected. She concluded by emphasizing the need to pull together available resources and capacities towards raising global awareness of the LLDC challenges and special needs, enhancing their participation in relevant fora, and mobilizing financial and technical support for the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action.

In his remarks,

, noted that close to the half way point in the implementation of the VPoA, the LLDCs face new opportunities as well as challenges. He explained that the main efforts of LLDC continue to focus on diversifying and restructuring their economies. He stressed the importance of

support the Think Tank. In addition, the resolution also includes few paragraphs on the midterm review of the VPoA.

, updated the meeting in trade facilitation, Aid for Trade and outcome of WTO's 11th Ministerial Conference (MC11). He indicated that by MC11, 126 countries ratified the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), representing 77% of WTO members. With regards to notifications, by 15 March 2018, 111 developing countries, including 24 LLDCs made category A notifications; 61, including 16 LLDCs made category B notifications; and 50, including 15 LLDCs made category C notifications. He explained that more than 54% of TFA provisions are already subject to a commitment. He further indicated that transparency notifications have also been received: 22 members made notifications under import, export and transit procedures, 16 members on single window; 19 on use of customs brokers and 17 on customs cooperation. Mr. Torres noted that WTO with OHRLLS and several other agencies, began to look at concrete projects to help in implementation of TFA and identified border agency cooperation as one area where LLDCs would require assistance, with the aim to set up project funded by the TFA facility to help, on a regional basis, transit countries and LLDCs on issues of border agency cooperation.

With regards to Aid for Trade, he highlighted that the key message of the 2017 Aid for trade global review was the need to focus on connectivity, physical and digital, noting that digital divide can be also viewed as an issue of lack of market access and that there is need for additional Aid for Trade financing to help bridge this digital divide. The Aid for Trade at a Glance report illustrates how improved physical and digital connectivity are lowering trade costs and reducing poverty. He indicated that the review also emphasized close synergy between Aid for Trade and SDGs and 2030 Agenda. He indicated that almost \$300 billion has been disbursed for aid-for-trade support since the Aid for Trade Initiative was launched in 2006. He noted that disbursements to LLDCs were close to \$6 billion in 2015, an increase from \$5.5 billion in 2014, and raising the total of disbursements to LLDCs in 2006-2015 to over \$50 billion. He also noted that WTO is working on the next Aid for trade biennial work programme, which will focus on economic empowerment.

With regards to the MC11, Mr. Torres noted that progress was made in some areas, such as fisheries subsidies, but most substantive outcomes were not possible such as on agriculture stockholding and domestic support in agriculture. In terms of the way forward, while acknowledging lack of progress, WTO members committed to move forward on the remaining issues, including agriculture, non-agricultural market access, services, development, TRIPS, rules, and trade and environment. Mr. Torres also indicated that several new areas where interest was shown to advance talks was on electronic commerce, investment facilitation and MSMEs, as well as women and trade, and many WTO members have announced plans to pursue further negotiations. In concluding, Mr. Torres informed that Deputy Director-General Agah will provide a briefing on MC11 to Member States in New York on 13 April.

, gave an overview of UNCTAD's support to LLDCs in the key priority areas of the VPoA. He noted that LLDCs seen sharp slowdown in grow/F1 1n-2(ir)1io101100032 0.00

UNCTAD's assistance to several LLDCs in preparation of science, technology and innovation reviews such as Rwanda; and conduct of e-trade readiness assessment in Bhutan and Nepal, with plans for Lesotho and Afghanistan this year. On Priority 3, he said that UNCTAD supported Botswana and Zambia in preparing trade policy frameworks and conducted Paraguay services policy review. He stressed that UNCTAD is also providing LLDCs with WTO accession through advisory missions as well as post-accession assistance and also recalled the ASYCUDA programme which is active in 23 LLDCs.

With regards to Priority 4, he noted UNCTAD's support to CAFTA and TFTA negotiation processes. He also recalled that UNCTAD also has project on assisting African LLDCs in strengthening regional value chains, in cooperation with other agencies. On Priority 5, he highlighted UNCTAD's work on benchmarking productive capacities and developing an index on productive capacities, explaining that preliminary results were presented in a workshop in Botswana and further workshops are planned in Lao PDR and Rwanda to finalize this work this year. He also noted UNCTAD's technical assistance on diversification for energy exporting LLDCs in Asia. Mr. Meier-Ewert mentioned a side event on Unlocking the potential of SMEs in LLDCs, organized with OHRLLS and other partners during the Financing for Development Forum. He emphasized that UNCTAD is also providing assistance in area of investment and investment policy reviews are available for almost half of the LLDCs, while noting assistance to a number of regional groups in reviewing their model international investment agreements. He concluded by highlighting the growing demand for technical assistance and capacity building assistance from LLDCs.

, gave a brief overview of WCO, noting that all LLDCs are WCO members. She gave an overview of WCO's strategic goals, highlighting its four strategic packages, namely Economic Competitiveness Package, Revenue Package, Compliance and Enforcement Package and Organizational Development Package. She stressed that the WCO has a prominent role in promoting trade facilitation through securing and facilitating legitimate global supply chains, developing international standards and recommendations and at the same time, supporting the implementation of the WTO's TFA.

, informed the participants of recent and upcoming activities of UN-OHRLLS. She noted that Expert Group Meeting on Financing Infrastructure Development for Enhanced Integration of LLDCs into Global Trade was organized by OHRLLS last October, and that a final report on infrastructure financing for transport sector in LLDCs will be released in the next few weeks. She then informed that the Agreement on the Establishment of the Think Tank for LLDCs entered into force in October last year, and OHRLLS together with the Interim Secretariat of the Think Tank organized a high-level luncheon event for LLDCs on that occasion. She further noted that 12 LLDCs are now members of the Think Tank and have been appointing their representatives for the Board of Governors, which will decide on the operational aspects of the Think Tank. She informed that an inaugural meeting of the Think Tank is planned to be held in Mongolia on 11 and 12 June this year, preceded by meeting of the Board of Governors. She briefed on the Ministerial Meeting of the Group of the LLDCs held in Buenos Aires in the margins of the WTO Eleventh Ministerial Conference last December, which in particular emphasized the need to address high trade costs faced by the LLDCs, the need for accelerated implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement as well as the need for structural transformation of the LLDCs and diversification of their exports.

Ms. Hertova also noted that OHRLLS has participated in several transport related meetings and initiatives to raise the awareness of the VPoA and the needs of the LLDCs, including being an active member of the Sustainable Mobility for All initiative, in particular the Group of Efficiency, participating in the ECE Inland Transport Committee session in February 2018 and organizing events as part of the Aviation Partnership for Sustainable Development, together with ICAO, OHRLLS, DESA, World Bank and ATAG, to raise awareness of air transport for sustainable development of LLDCs. In addition, she explained that OHRLLS continues supporting the LLDC Group in New York in the ECOSOC, HLPF and other global follow-up processes, with the aim of promoting the aim of leaving no one behind and ensuring that the Vienna Programme of Action is coherently mainstreamed into the global processes. She highlighted that a number of LLDC focused side events are planned in this context, including a side event with partners on the pote

resource base for accessing scientific and technological information such as Access to Research for Development and Innovation (ARDI) and the Access to Specialized Patent Information (ASPI) for countries to build their productive capacity. He posited that technology transfer can play greater role in raising productivity and competitiveness of LLDCs and that WIPO's technical assistance can be instrumental in structural economic transformation and capacity building, contributing to the implementation of the VPoA and the SDGs.

demanded by countries, as they are key to connecting with international markets. He explained that IRU

Mr. Pérez then gave more insight into the transport and digital development portfolio, through which the World Bank is supporting 30 LLDCs with lending and advisory services. He noted that the largest beneficiary is Kazakhstan, followed by Ethiopia, Azerbaijan and Bolivia. He highlighted that there are 48 ongoing projects in 24 LLDCs, with \$10.8 billion in WB financing, with almost \$9 million for national projects and the rest for regional projects. He also noted that for 2018-

, highlighted that exports of the LLDCs in Latin America are heavily concentrated in little value-added commodities; in Bolivia, oil and gas represent major exports, while soy and energy exports from Paraguay are principally targeting nearby markets. He stressed that neighbours matter a lot, with neighbouring countries such as Brazil, Argentina and Peru being the main markets for these products. He emphasized that structural transformation in these countries is not moving in the right direction, with many sectors that looked promising in manufacturing and innovatienergpoivn5(g)14()TJETC

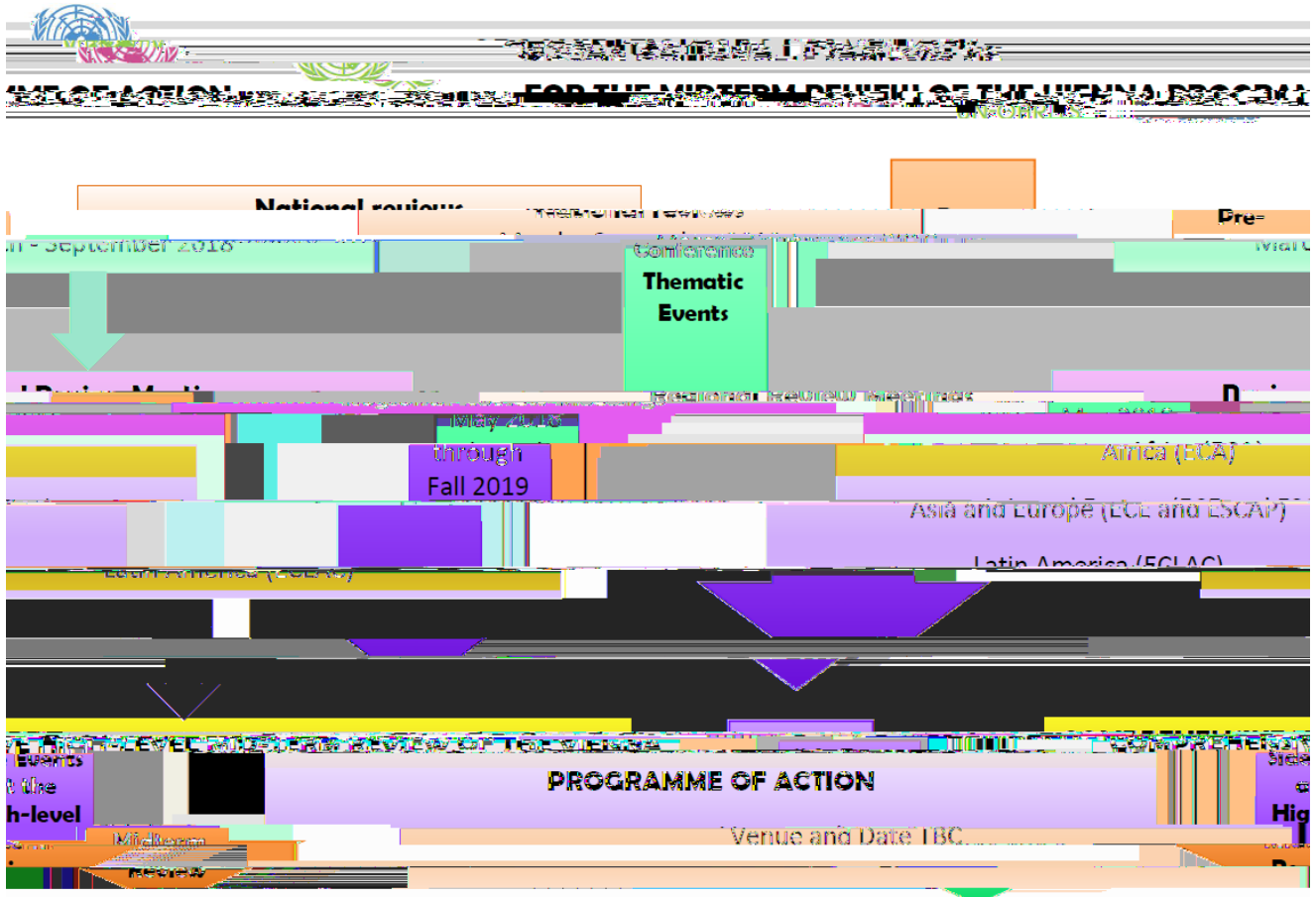
resources, education and migration in LDCs and LLDCs, including Uganda, Rwanda, Nepal, Malawi, Kyrgyzstan, Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, Armenia.

, explained that ICC represents over 6 million companies of all sizes from . She explained that trade facilitation has long been on ICC's agenda. She highlighted that ICC is now in a mapping phase working with national committees and various chambers of commerce, with more information on this coming in May. She mentioned that ICC is collaborating with OHRLLS and other partners towards organizing a side event during the Financing for Development Forum focused on SMEs. She also noted that LLDCs are increasing becoming a priority for ICC and they remain committed to rally up the private sector in the implementation of the VPoA, including the midterm review, as well as for implementation of the SDGs, Sendai framework and TFA.

, highlighted that UNFPA continues to engage in LLDCs which still have an opportunity to harness the demographic dividend, and working with them to meet their needs related to family planning, gender-based violence and access to sexual and reproductive health services by young people, in particular in Africa. She indicated that UNFPA's support to LLDCs includes contributing to the use of demographic data to integrate population projections into development planning and update of national policies and development plan.

She noted that UNFPA also supports strengthening of national statistical systems to monitor the implementation of SDGs and other key development outcomes as reflected in the Vienna Programme of Action. This includes assisting LLDCs with data collection in relation to the 2020 census round. In addition, she stressed that some LLDCs in Central Asia and Europe have also requested assistance with respect to the Gender Generational Survey. She also indicated that UNFPA looks forward to engaging further with OHRLLS and other partners in relation to the midterm review of the VPoA.

informed the meeting about the preparations for the comprehensive high-level midterm review of the implementation of the VPoA which was decided by the General Assembly to be held no later than December 2019. He noted that the aim is to review the progress made in the implementation of the VPoA; share best practices; identify obstacles

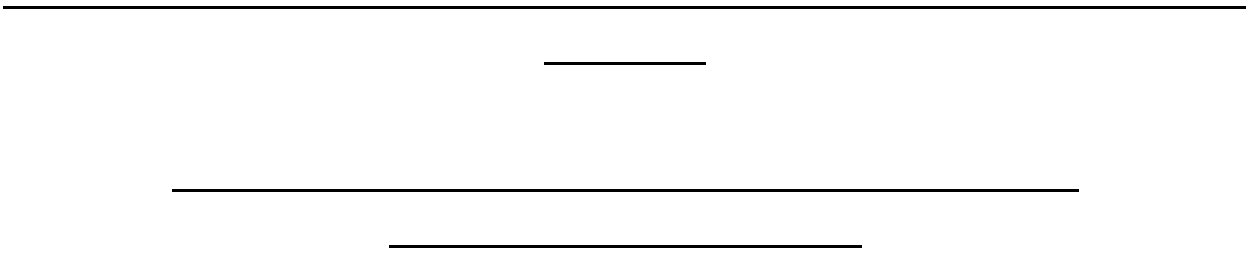


conference events will be held. He stressed that it is important for organizations to play a key role in the preparations, either through (co-)organizing thematic pre-conference events or substantive reports. He said that preliminary list of pre-conference events has been circulated (Annex III) and urged representatives to inform OHRLLS of their organization's intentions to organize thematic events or prepare reports. He informed that the preparations will be launched with the Ministerial Meeting of LLDCs on Trade and Transport in Astana on 16-17 May and expressed hope that the heads of organizations will attend and participate in the meeting. Mr. Erdenebileg also noted that limited number of side events will be organized during the midterm review itself, and asked organizations to seek collaborations and send their suggestions for side events to OHRLLS.

Mr. Erdenebileg concluded by emphasizing that the USG and High Representative will soon be writing to the Principles of the organizations to solicit their suggestions for the pre-conference and side events.

concluded the meeting by thanking the representatives of the organizations for their support and dedication to the LLDCs. She was impressed with the work ongoing to implement the Vienna Programme of Action. She summarized the intervention of the Chair of the LLDCs and Coordinator on Trade in Geneva who gave an overview of the priorities of the Group and their

Sixth Inter-Agency Consultative Group Meeting on the Follow-



	<u>Government of Kazakhstan and UN-OHRLLS</u> Regional Commissions, UNCTAD, World Bank, UNDP, WTO, WCO, ITC ...	Astana, Kazakhstan 16-17 May 2018
	Government of Paraguay; Government of Austria; OHRLLS and UNIDO	New York July 2018