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Ministerial Communiqué of the Landlocked Developing Countries

We, the Ministers of the landlocked developing countries, having met in Nairobi on 16 July 2016, prior to the fourteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XIV), held from 17 to 22 July 2016,

Recalling the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals aimed at, inter alia, eradicating extreme poverty and hunger by 2030; the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development; and the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,

Recalling the Vienna Declaration and the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024, adopted at the Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries,

Recalling the Geneva Ministerial Declaration adopted at the Fifth Meeting of Trade Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries, held in Geneva, Switzerland from 23 to 24 June 2016,

Reaffirming the Geneva Ministerial Declaration of the Fifth Meeting of Trade Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries,

Recalling the Ministerial Communiqué of the landlocked developing countries adopted within the framework of UNCTAD XIII,

Taking note of the communiqué adopted at the Thirteenth Annual Ministerial Meeting of Landlocked Developing Countries,

1. We recognize that the lack of territorial access to the sea, aggravated by remoteness from world markets and by high transit costs and risks, imposes constraints on the export earnings, private capital inflow and domestic resource mobilization of

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landlocked developing countries and therefore adversely affects their overall growth and socioeconomic development.¹

2. We welcome the progress seen in our countries in recent years. In particular, the economic performance has been encouraging, with annual average gross domestic product growth rates that have been higher than most other country groups, due to a large extent to the active socioeconomic policies undertaken by landlocked developing country Governments. We also recognize that despite our efforts there is still much more to do to overcome the problems and challenges that landlocked developing countries face.

3. The challenges related to being landlocked are often compounded by the high degree of commodity dependence in most of our countries. Commodity exports are frequently characterized by high volumes and low values, which amplifies the importance of transportation costs as a factor in overall trade costs. In addition, the high reliance on commodity exports in many landlocked developing countries increases exposure to commodity price volatility, with potential dire consequences on the sustainable development of our economies.

4. We reaffirm our commitment to address these challenges by intensifying our efforts to build productive capacities, pursue structural economic transformation and encourage export diversification. In doing so, we will lay the foundations for poverty eradication, employment generation and inclusive economic growth.

5. We call upon the international community to enhance efforts to support landlocked developing countries in diversifying their exports through, inter alia, the transfer of relevant technologies, support to develop and strengthen their productive capacities and capacity-building in developing relevant policies.²

6. We emphasize the particular need of our countries to develop and maintain infrastructure in order to reduce trade costs. The necessity is all the more urgent because our group of landlocked developing countries lags behind other developing countries in many dimensions of the state of infrastructure. Investments are therefore required to improve transport infrastructure, energy infrastructure and information and communications technology infrastructure.

7. We call for a rapid ratification and implementation of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation. We urge members to continue to provide technical, financial and capacity-building assistance to landlocked developing countries, on a sustainable basis, for the effective implementation of the Agreement. We also call for the constructive cooperation of transit countries for the effective and early application of disciplines that contribute to reducing transit time and costs, simplifying procedures and enhancing certainty in transborder trade.³ To enable landlocked developing countries to take full advantage of the Agreement, it is important that thorough needs assessments be completed before its implementation and that the international community enforce the special and differential treatment provisions, which remains a fundamental principle for any future agreement and decisions.

8. We urge the engagement of our neighbouring countries to ensure a smooth transit of goods. The cooperation between landlocked developing countries and transit countries to ease the flow of goods is of mutual benefit and efforts should be made to facilitate transit transport systems for landlocked developing countries. We underscore the importance that transit countries guarantee free and unrestricted transit through their

¹ Geneva Ministerial Declaration, para. 2.

² Ibid, para. 6.

³ Ibid, para. 13.

territories for landlocked developing countries, allowing the enjoyment of free and direct access to high seas.

9. We underline the importance of gaining greater market access to our trading partners for products of interest to landlocked developing countries. Better access to foreign markets will complement the efforts to develop infrastructure and improve trade facilitation and, ultimately, support the building of productive capacities and the structural transformation of our economies. We therefore call on trade and development partners to remove market entry barriers and eliminate unnecessary non-tariff measures.

10. We also urge the international community to provide greater assistance in the Aid for Trade framework. Development finance is needed to address supply-side constraints, including the challenges related to infrastructure and trade facilitation faced by landlocked developing countries. In addition, greater support should be forthcoming to the building of productive capacities, addressing of trade-related adjustment costs and formulation of effective export diversification strategies.

11. We take note of the mutual benefits of regional integration for the sustainable development of our countries and our neighbours. Closer regional cooperation and exchange can lead to reduced trade costs and greater export diversification as well as spur integration with the global economy. Landlocked developing countries, coastal neighbours and development partners should therefore support, sustain and intensify their efforts to promote intraregional trade and development.

12. Regional value chains and global value chains can also help integrate the world economy, particularly when they support developing country priorities of diversification and value addition, and it is important to mobilize and engage with multiple stakeholders with the aim of increasing a more beneficial participation by our countries in regional value chains and global value chains. In addition to increased efforts to address infrastructure and trade facilitation bottlenecks to ease the flow of exports and imports, landlocked developing countries – with the support of development partners – commit to boosting investments in human capital, promoting private sector development and strengthening institutions.

13. We welcome the efforts by UNCTAD, under its three pillars of research, technical assistance and consensus-building, in addressing systemic issues related to trade and development and interrelated issues of finance, technology, investment and sustainable development, assessing the vulnerabilities and impact of landlockedness, and supporting efforts for structural transformation, diversification and value addition, promoting a more equitable participation of landlocked developing countries in international trade, including in regional and global commodity value chains.

14. We take note also of the important contribution of the Common Fund for Commodities in building public–private partnerships around commodity-based regional and global value chains to secure the appropriate contribution of the commodity sector to foster structural economic transformation and development in landlocked developing countries. We encourage UNCTAD and the Common Fund for Commodities to redouble efforts to enhance their ongoing collaboration to assist our countries to integrate commodity-based development, including diversification and value addition, into domestic trade and development policies and strategies.

15. We recognize the important role of the private sector, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, in improving productivity, creating employment, reducing poverty and enhancing the innovation and competitiveness of our countries. In this regard, we resolve to encourage private sector development through strengthening infrastructure, including information and communications technologies, facilitating access to finance, easing ways to conduct business and providing incentives to build domestic entrepreneurial

capabilities. We particularly underline the importance of impact-oriented financing mechanisms, including specialized impact investment funds, in offering important instruments and alternative financing for improving economic efficiency, creativity and innovation by small and medium-sized enterprises.

16. We are pleased to note the positive work of the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries in support of our countries. However, not all landlocked developing countries are fully involved in the Think Tank and we therefore urge those countries, which have not yet done so, to accede to the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of an International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries, in order to bring the Think Tank to full operation.

17. We welcome the continued support to our countries by the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS). We call on the international community to strengthen UN-OHRLLS as it intensifies its work to assist landlocked developing countries in meeting the objectives and targets of the Vienna Programme of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals.

18. We are grateful to UNCTAD and its Secretary-General, Dr. Mukhisa Kituyi, for its work and contribution to promoting the sustainable development of our countries, including reaching the objectives of the Vienna Programme of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals. We underline the importance of strengthening the Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes, in particular the Landlocked Developing Countries Section, with increased human and financial resources, as well as of an enhanced role for coordinating actions in favour of the landlocked developing countries within the UNCTAD secretariat and with other relevant United Nations agencies and international organizations.

19. We invite the organizations of the United Nations system, in particular UNCTAD, UN-OHRLLS, the United Nations Development Programme, the regional commissions, and other international organizations, including the Common Fund for Commodities, the World Bank and regional development banks, the World Trade Organization and the World Customs Organization, to strengthen, within the context of the respective mandates, their efforts to mitigate the special situation of landlocked developing countries.

20. We express our appreciation to the Plurinational State of Bolivia, which will organize the next meeting of transport ministers of landlocked developing countries in September 2016.

21. We express our sincere recognition for the constant efforts undertaken by Paraguay in its capacity of Coordinator of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries in Geneva.

22. We express also our sincere appreciation and gratitude to the people and Government of Kenya for their warm hospitality, generous financial support and excellent arrangements made for the organization of UNCTAD XIV.
