

## Opening remarks by

H.E. Mr. Purvesuren Lundeg, Permanent Representative of Mongolia to the United Nations Office, the World Trade Organization and other international organizations in Geneva, and Coordinator of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries in Geneva at the UNCTAD briefing for Ambassadors of landlocked developing countries (LLDCs)

7 December 2020

Virtual meeting

10:00-12:00 hours EST / 16:00 – 18:00 hours CET

Excellencies and dear Colleagues,

At the outset, I would like to thank the UNCTAD for organizing today's briefing for Ambassadors both in New York and Geneva.

Just a year ago we, together with our transit neighbours and development partners, assessed the progress made in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. Although it was emphasized that a modest progress had been realized in some areas, the international community was, overall, off the track for achieving the goals set in the Vienna Programme of Action. In this regard, the midterm review conference held December 2019 called for accelerated implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action in its remaining 5 years.

Unfortunately, 2020 has been a challenging year for us to make a tangible progress in implementing the VPoA. The COVID-19 pandemic poses a higher risk to all of us, and unfortunately, the LLDC are being hit hardest.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is intensifying the challenges already facing the landlocked developing countries due to their geographical locations and other structural obstacles. Many LLDCs have confronted with trade, transport, and distribution challenges. Exports and imports have been affected by problems at borders, lockdowns, trade restrictions, disruptions in global supply chains and commodity price shocks. These unprecedented impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic will have far-reaching consequences in socio-economic life of LLDCs.

As it was emphasized at the annual Ministerial Meeting of Foreign Ministers of landlocked developing countries last September, a strengthened and renewed global partnership is of utmost importance for mitigating the risks and the full implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. Thus, we, the landlocked developing countries, should continue to call on the renewed and strengthened partnership for our development. In this regard, I would like to welcome the UN Roadmap for accelerated implementation of the Vienna Program of Action, adopted last September.

Now, in my capacity as the coordinator of the LLDCs based in Geneva, I would like to focus on more specific issues including transit policy issues and international trade and trade facilitation.

Freedom of transit and transit facilities play a key role in the overall development of landlocked developing countries. Thus, we should attach high importance to transit issues. As it was stated in the VPoA, WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation should guide the work in this area. The full implementation of the TFA will reduce LLDCs' trade costs by an average of 15.4 percent.

Indeed, it is encouraging that 26 LLDCs that are members of the WTO have ratified the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. Implementation, however, remains low at about 35%.

Therefore, we do believe that effective implementation of the TFA, specifically, Article 11 on transit freedom, is very much instrumental in removing obstacles faced by our group of countries and better integrating us into global trading system.

In this regard, I have been trying to promote the transit right of LLDCs in every possible way. During the February meeting of the Trade Facilitation Committee of the WTO, we proposed to the Committee to study the possibility of establishing a sub-committee on transit freedom and trade facilitation. The proposed subsidiary body could be instrumental in identifying achievements and obstacles in the process of implementation of the TFA and providing recommendations to improve transit for both landlocked and transit countries. I will continue my efforts in this regard.

Moreover, several LLDCs shared their experience in implementing the TFA during October meeting of the Trade Facilitation Committee of the WTO.

Mongolia together with Afghanistan, Nepal and Paraguay has submitted draft articles to include in the current draft consolidated text on fisheries subsidies negotiations.

As the Coordinator of the Geneva Chapter of LLDCs, Mongolia has called LLDCs to cosponsor the submission. However, due to the limited interest of LLDCs in the fisheries negotiations, we are not receiving the level of support that we hoped for. Nonetheless, the above-mentioned countries are working together on the draft articles. I would like to call on LLDCs once again to consider the cosponsorship of the submission.

Coordination and cooperation of national agencies responsible for border and customs controls and procedures is essential. Indeed, the VPoA called on to enhance coordination and cooperation between them and with the respective agencies in transit countries. Thus, appointment of a national transit coordinator will be instrumental, and I would like to encourage the LLDCs to appoint such an official and notify it.

As the coordinator of the LLDCs based in Geneva, I also attach an importance to organization of the Group. In this regard, during its meeting held on 10 February, 2020, the Group discussed a proposal on a rotating mechanism for the chairmanship of the Group similar to the system implemented in New York and adopted the rotating mechanism consists of a Bureau of seven members taking into account geographical distribution. Several members from Asia, Europe and the Latin America have expressed their interest in working in the Bureau. Now we are consulting with our colleagues from African continent to finalize the Bureau membership. Once the bureau is established, we

will collaborate more actively not only within the Geneva missions, but also with our colleagues in New York.

Dear Participants,

A scientific knowledge, effective research studies, evidence-based advisory services and analytical tools are imperative to overcome the challenges faced by LLDCs. Hence, I would like to underscore the important role of the International Think Tank for LLDCs in Ulaanbaatar and its contribution in achieving the sustainable development in LLDCs.

Taking this opportunity, I invite the LLDCs that haven't joined the LLDC ITT to do so and to provide the Think Tank with adequate support and contribution for enabling this organization to do more for LLDCs as it has started playing an important role in enhancing the analytical capability of LLDCs and provide home-grown research to cater for our specific needs.

Excellencies,

Next April we will convene for the UNCTAD 15 in Barbados. The event will be the first global gathering to examine development challenges and opportunities, as well as set priorities for development policy for the post-COVID-19 environment.

In this regard I would like to encourage you openly exchange your views on key issues and priorities for LLDCs in the context of the Conference during today's briefing including the availability and distribution of future vaccines to LLDCs, investment in transport infrastructure, digital technology and regional integration.

Moreover, I do believe that UNCTAD's Productive Capacities Index to be presented during this meeting will be an instrumental tool for LLDCs in shaping right policy framework.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my full commitment to the work of the Group of the LLDCs. I also wish a fruitful discussion.

Thank you for your kind attention.