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Ministerial Communiqué of Landlocked Developing Countries

We, trade ministers of landlocked developing countries, having met on 22 April 2008 in Accra within the framework of UNCTAD XII,

Recalling the United Nations Millennium Declaration¹ in which heads of State and Government recognize the special needs and problems of landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), and *urging* both bilateral and multilateral donors to increase financial and technical assistance to this group of countries in order to help them overcome the impediments of geography,

Recalling the Almaty Programme of Action “Addressing the special needs of landlocked developing countries within a new global framework for transit transport cooperation for landlocked and transit developing countries” and the Almaty Declaration endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session,²

Recalling the outcome of the 2005 World Summit,³ in which the special needs and challenges of LLDCs were reaffirmed along with reiterated commitments of world leaders to urgently address those challenges by effectively implementing the Almaty Programme of Action,

Recalling General Assembly resolutions 56/180, 57/242, 58/201, 59/245, 60/208, 61/212 and 62/204 on the specific actions related to the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries,

Recalling the Asunción Platform for the Doha Development Round, adopted at the meeting of trade ministers of LLDCs on 10 August 2005 in Asunción,

Recalling the Ulaanbaatar Declaration, adopted at the meeting of trade ministers of LLDCs on 29 August 2007 in Ulaanbaatar,

¹ General Assembly resolution 55/2.

² General Assembly resolution 58/201.

³ General Assembly resolution 60/1.

Adopt the following communiqué:

1. We recognize the adverse developmental impact of high transaction costs incurred by landlocked developing countries in international merchandise trade due to geographical isolation and remoteness, lack of territorial access to the sea, additional and often cumbersome customs procedures, as well as other administrative burdens related to transit transport operations.

2. We emphasize the need for particular attention to be given in the current negotiations at the World Trade Organization (WTO) on market access for agricultural and non-agricultural goods to products of special interest to landlocked developing countries, including cotton producers, and the granting of special and differential treatment on account of these countries' disadvantaged geographical location that undermines their international competitiveness.

3. We underline the importance of trade facilitation measures for the growth and expansion of the external trade of landlocked developing countries and its positive impact on their economic development. As called for in the Doha Ministerial Declaration of the WTO, high priority should be given to the landlocked developing countries in implementing a technical assistance programme in the area of trade facilitation.

4. We call on WTO member States to initiate the provision of assistance in the context of the Aid for Trade agenda as soon as possible and independently from the final result of the ongoing round of negotiations. Priority areas of Aid for Trade assistance should include capacity-building for the formulation of trade policies; participation in trade negotiations; implementation of international agreements; strengthening productive capacities; and development of transport and ICT infrastructure for competitive export products of landlocked developing countries.

5. We call on WTO member States to take into account specific needs and problems of landlocked developing countries in the process of WTO accession negotiations.

6. We note the contribution that foreign direct investment (FDI) can make to strengthening productive capacities and the private sector in landlocked developing countries, so as to enable these countries to make better use of trading opportunities, and call on UNCTAD to give special attention to their needs in its analytical work and technical assistance activities that help attract FDI, including the coverage of all landlocked developing countries in UNCTAD investment policy reviews, investment guides and FDI Blue Books.

7. We call for the full and effective implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action at international, regional and national levels, and welcome the forthcoming Mid-term Review of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action to be held in October 2008, as an opportunity to take stock and to focus on the next steps.

8. We invite the organizations of the United Nations system, particularly UNCTAD, the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS), the United Nations Development Programme, the Regional Commissions and other international bodies, especially the World Bank, the World Trade Organization and the World Customs Organization, to strengthen their work within their respective mandates towards the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action.

9. We call for the successful implementation of the Ulaanbaatar Declaration, adopted at the Meeting of Trade Ministers of the LLDCs in August, 2007, and request the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, in cooperation and consultation with the Office of the High Representative and other relevant United Nations organizations and international agencies, to assist in setting up an international think tank, which will contribute towards addressing the challenges of LLDCs and their integration into the international trading system.

10. We request the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, in cooperation and consultation with the Office of the High Representative and other relevant United Nations organizations and international agencies, to assist landlocked developing countries in organizing a Meeting of Ministers of Trade of LLDCs in 2009.

11. We request the Secretary General of the United Nations to undertake all necessary measures to strengthen the Office of the High Representative.

12. We call on the Secretary General of UNCTAD to strengthen its institutional and operational capacity for addressing the complex and severe development challenges faced by LLDCs, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 56/227 and other relevant resolutions.

13. We urge both bilateral and multilateral donors, in accordance with the United Nations Millennium Declaration, to increase financial and technical assistance to the LLDCs in order to enable them to meet their special development needs and overcome the impediments of geography, with a view to helping them participate effectively in the multilateral trading system.

14. We express our sincere appreciation to the continued efforts made by Paraguay, as the coordinator of the Group of the Landlocked Developing Countries in Geneva, in close coordination with Mali, as the Chair of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries in New York, on matters related to trade and development.

22 April 2008, Accra, Ghana