

**Report and Outcome of the African Regional Review Meeting on
the Implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action**

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

16 to 18 July 2013

A. Introduction

1. The lack of direct territorial access to the sea, remoteness and isolation from major international markets makes landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) highly dependent on transit countries for their seaborne trade. Additional border crossings and the long distance from major markets, coupled with cumbersome transit procedures and inadequate infrastructure, substantially increase the total expenses for transport and other transaction costs that erode the competitive edge of LLDCs, reduce economic growth and subsequently have an impact on their capacity to promote social development and environmental sustainability.

2. The International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation, held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in 2003, adopted the Almaty Programme of Action (APoA) to address the special development needs and challenges faced by LLDCs in five priority areas: fundamental transit policy issues; infrastructure development and maintenance; international trade and trade facilitation; international support measures; and implementation and review. In its resolution 66/214, the United Nations General Assembly decided to hold a comprehensive ten-year review conference of the Almaty Programme of Action in 2014. The Assembly also decided that the conference should be preceded by regional and global, as well as thematic preparations. The Assembly designated the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS) as the UN system-wide focal point for the preparatory process, and noted that UN system organizations, including the regional commissions, should provide necessary support and actively contribute to the preparatory review process and the comprehensive ten-year review conference itself.

3. In this context, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and OHRLLS jointly organized the African Regional Review Meeting on the Implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action (APoA) that was held at the United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 16 to 18 July 2013. The meeting was preceded by an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) to assess the status of implementation of trade and transport facilitation instruments and measures in Africa, also held at UNCC on 15 July 2013.

4. The objectives of the regional review meeting were to: (i) review the implementation of APoA in Africa, with the view to identifying major achievements and constraints, as well as emerging opportunities and challenges; (ii) examine the overall economic development of African landlocked countries, particularly in the area of trade; (iii) assess progress in establishing efficient transit transport systems on the continent; and (iv) formulate appropriate policy measures and action-oriented recommendations aimed at sustaining the achievements made so far in overcoming the special problems of landlocked developing countries.

5. The meeting was attended by about 100 participants including Government representatives, from both landlocked and transit countries; African Union Commission (AUC); Regional Economic Communities (RECs); transport corridor organizations; United Nations agencies and organizations, LLDC Global Chairman, member of the bureau, chambers of commerce and the private sector in general; international organizations including the International Road Transport Union (IRU); development partners; and civil society. The full list of participants is at the end of this report.

B. Recommendations

6. The meeting adopted the following recommendations.

1. Investment in infrastructure development

a. The establishment of a secure, reliable and efficient transit transport system, which is the overarching goal of the Almaty Programme of Action, still remains critical for LLDCs to reduce transport costs and enhance their competitiveness in regional and global markets. Further development and maintenance of supportive infrastructure, including distribution centres, intermodal points, dry ports, border structures and rest areas that are secure, is therefore necessary;

b. Future infrastructure developments in the transport sector should take into consideration two important aspects: the need for alternative transit transport corridors and rebalancing the modal mix. There is a strong need to develop alternative route and multimodal transport;

c. More investment is needed in hard infrastructure in both landlocked and transit developing countries to close the missing links and upgrade transport infrastructure, and in energy and information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure, particularly broadband, in order to improve the connectivity of LLDCs and the reliability of communications networks and electricity supply;

d. Member States and RECs should mobilize resources, with the support of development partners, to improve inland water transport. The LLDCs need financial and technical assistance in this regard;

e. African countries and RECs should articulate clear implementation strategies for existing corridor infrastructure programmes, especially those that have the potential to promote regional integration and enhance intra-African trade;

f. RECs and African countries should initiate and improve regional transit management systems;

g. AUC, RECs and member States should step up ongoing resource mobilization efforts, particularly domestic resource mobilization.

h. Create innovative financing mechanisms to combine public and private contributions to fund infrastructural development should be pursued including PPPs, catalytic mechanisms, non-traditional applications of solidarity.

2. Enhancing accession and effective implementation of relevant conventions

a. LLDCs and transit countries should become parties to and effectively implement the existing key UN trade and transport facilitation instruments in particular TIR System/ Convention, Harmonisation Convention, Convention on Traffic and Road Safety, Customs Convention on the Temporary Importation of Commercial Road Vehicles, Customs Convention on Containers, Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of

Goods by Road, Agreement on the International Carriage of Perishable Foodstuffs and on the Special Equipment to be used for such Carriage, and Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road, as well as regional and sub-regional agreements ;

b. Relevant UN systems and other organizations should intensify capacity-building assistance to LLDCs and transit countries in respect to the international legal instrument, including training programmes for all stakeholders, to raise awareness and understanding of the process and implications of accession to international conventions, regional and sub-regional agreements relating to transit facilitation and transport;

c. The private sector should be involved at all stages in the development of transport and trade instruments, including the conceptual stage. This will improve its ownership and willingness to support the implementation of these instruments.

3. Investment in transit cooperation and trade facilitation

a. LLDCs and their transit partners should undertake further harmonization of policies, simplification and standardization of rules, documentation, and border crossing and customs procedures;

b. Trade facilitation initiatives that have proved to work such as one-stop border posts (OSBPs) where appropriate should be replicated and fully funded in order to make them efficient in close consultation with corridor management institutions;

c. More attention should be given to addressing road safety along transit corridors, as well as health care and truck stops;

d. Development partners should scale up their support for facilitating accession to and implementation of the key global UN facilitation conventions and look for the harmonization of transit transport and trade instruments in Africa;

e. RECs, with the support of development partners, should develop a prototype (template) legal framework for OSBPs in close consultation with corridor management institutions;

f. RECs and corridor management institutions, with the support of development partners, should undertake a review of the legal and operational framework of OSBPs;

g. Implementation efforts of OSBP concepts in the landlocked and transit countries that are behind schedule need to be bolstered and the operations of existing ones need to be improved.

h. RECs and Corridor Management Institutions should be strengthened and mandated to play an advocacy role, and to monitor the implementation of trade facilitation instruments and measures at the national level;

i. The private sector should be involved in developing trade facilitation instruments as this will provide them with the incentive to advocate for the domestication of these instruments;

j. RECs, with the support of development partners, should undertake studies on the cost of trade facilitation in order to clarify the benefits of implementing existing instruments and measures to member States;

k. Non-tariff barriers on corridor routes, which lengthen the transit time as well as increasing the cost of using the routes, need to be removed;

l. RECs and member States should implement non-tariff barriers reporting and elimination systems such as the one developed by tripartite of SADC, COMESA and EAC.

4. Trade negotiations and enhanced trade

a. Develop a fair, just, transparent, inclusive and predictable multilateral trade system to support the effective opening of markets and the creation of opportunities for developing countries, and particularly for the most vulnerable and small countries such as LLDCs. Faster progress is needed in the Doha Development Round so that LLDCs can reap benefits, particularly in areas that have strong positive impacts on the trade flows of LLDCs, such as trade facilitation, market access and the elimination of non-tariff barriers and other trade distorting measures, as well as implementation issues.

b. Trade facilitation is an area of great importance in the current negotiations to reduce costs and guarantee predictability for LLDC exports. Improved trade facilitation will help LLDCs to gain a more efficient flow of goods and services as well as improved international competitiveness. The future agreement on trade facilitation, in the final outcome of the Doha Round, should contain binding commitments ensuring freedom of transit; customs cooperation; expedited movement, release and clearance of goods in transit; most favoured nations treatment; national treatment, fees and charges commensurate with transit services; and transparent and predictable procedures as well as special and differential treatment for LLDCs with the necessary financial and technical support. There is an imperative need for the consideration of the special needs of LLDCs in the current World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations on trade facilitation.

c. LLDCs should be supported to actively negotiate and push for adoption of a Trade Facilitation Agreement that can take care of the interests and concerns of LLDCs. At the same time LLDCs should make effort to diversify into tradable goods that are less transport dependable and which are also less subject to trade barriers such as services.

d. Improved market access is needed for agricultural and non-agricultural goods originating from LLDCs to ensure their meaningful participation in the global trading regime.

5. WTO accession

The accession procedure for LLDCs should be simplified to take into account the individual levels of development and the special needs and problems caused by the geographical disadvantage of being landlocked. All provisions on special and differential treatment reflected in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and in all WTO agreements must be effectively granted to all acceding LLDCs. In this regard, the sharing and dissemination of experiences and guidelines on WTO accession is important to allow LLDCs to benefit from each other's experiences. Continued technical support is needed for LLDCs acceding to WTO to help expedite their accession.

6. Structural transformation, diversification, value addition and industrialization

a. African LLDCs, most of which depend on trade in commodities, have a real opportunity to capitalize on their resource endowment and high international commodity prices, as well as changes in how global production processes are organized. Commodity-based industrialization can provide an engine of growth for the continent, reducing its marginalization in the global economy and enhancing its resilience to shocks. Key among the components of this framework is the need to design and implement effective development plans and industrial strategies to address constraints and tap opportunities for African countries to engage in value addition and commodity-based industrialization. Successful industrial policies would assist African countries to strengthen and sustain their policy space through higher and sustainable growth rates and tax revenue.

b. LLDCs, with the assistance of the international community, should adopt policies aimed at structurally transforming their economies with an emphasis on research, and innovation, industrialization, value addition, enhanced productive capacities, diversification and a reduction of dependency on commodities, increased technology transfer, increased agricultural productivity, expansion of the services sector, and joining global and regional value chains.

c. Provide measurable goals and a mechanism for monitoring progress on structural transformation.

d. Address and build the resilience of LLDCs to economic, financial and food crises, climate change and desertification.

7. Regional integration and cooperation

a. The share of intra-African trade is extremely low relative to other major regions, hovering around 10–12 per cent. Intra-African trade is more diversified and reliant on manufactured goods than Africa's trade with external partners, and increased trading among African countries has huge potential to support industrialization and structural transformation. African countries should address the trade-related constraints such as tariff and non-tariff barriers, poor infrastructure, lack of exploitation of supply chain potential, paucity of productive capacity, governance issues and social and economic stability in order to boost intra-African trade.

b. There are significant opportunities for greater exploitation of the potential of regional economic integration, especially in terms of increasing intra-regional trade and intra-regional foreign direct investment flows and improving connectivity through transport, energy and ICT networks. LLDCs need to fully leverage the regional preferential trading arrangements for harnessing the complementarities not only within the sub-region but also across sub-regions in critical areas such as energy security and trade facilitation to promote a more inclusive and balanced pattern of economic growth and sustainable development.

c. LLDCs and their regional and global development partners should make efforts to deepen regional integration including accelerating the implementation of FTAs in order to enhance competitiveness and maximize benefits from globalization.

8. Free movement of persons and goods

a. RECs, Corridor Management Institutions, and member States should be strengthened their capacity to enable them to implement their mandate in the area of free movement of persons and goods needs to be addressed;

b. Tracking progress in the free movement of persons and goods is difficult because several government departments (for example, transport, trade, and immigration) are involved in the process, and there is thus a need for enhanced coordination;

c. The extent to which progress has been made in the free movement of persons and goods varies across RECs and more studies are needed to improve current understanding of the issues;

d. RECs and member States should develop and implement simplified and harmonized visa systems for drivers involved in international transport (freight and passengers).

9. Enhancing the role of the private sector

a. LLDC Governments should strengthen the public-private partnership policy frameworks and put in place the necessary legal instruments and institutions to enhance the role of the private sector;

b. LLDCs and their development partners should enhance the capacity of the private sector in particular entrepreneurship for SMEs;

c. LLDC Governments should improve consultation and involvement of the private sector in regional integration processes and initiatives, especially transit cooperation and border management;

d. Similarly, at sub-regional, regional and global levels, the private sector should be allowed to participate and contribute to the formulation of regional and global policies and legal instruments;

e. The private sector should be included as a key stakeholder in the new programme of action for LLDCs..

f. LLDCs should seek to create a stable, predictable and enabling investment environment for attracting increased and more diversified foreign direct investment.

10. International support measures and financial resources

a. Specific and targeted support measures should be provided to LLDCs by the UN system organisations, international organisations and development partners in order to help them mitigate the high cost of being landlocked;

b. Official development assistance, aid for trade and South-South cooperation should be fully enhanced and harnessed to address the physical and non-physical barriers that separate LLDCs from the broad currents of world trade;

c. The international community should support and encourage foreign direct investment flows to LLDCs;

d. United Nations organizations, particularly OHRLLS and ECA, international, regional and sub-regional organizations, international and regional financial institutions, and other stakeholders should continue and scale up their support to help LLDCs improve supply-side capacities to take advantage of trading opportunities already at hand and to allow them to expand their international trading frontiers;

e. The private sector and public-private partnerships and multilateral and regional financial and development institutions must play a critical role in meeting financing gaps. LLDCs should establish an appropriate legal framework for public-private partnerships;

f. Innovative sources of funding need to be explored, including the channelling of remittances to productive activities and infrastructure bonds;

g. UN systems and other development agencies should provide funding and programmes for innovative financing for facilitating the renewal of the fleet for international transport of goods and passengers.

11. Implementation and review

a. The successor programme of action should have ambitious, short, medium and long terms goals and targets with a clear monitoring and reporting mechanism which will ensure that the programme is mainstreamed into national development strategies, sub-regional and regional development and integration frameworks, and the work programmes of RECs;

b. The follow-up monitoring mechanism should be a continuing and evolving process to reinforce partnerships and mutual accountability;

c. RECs should mainstream the new programme of action and conduct regular reviews at sub-regional level, and ECA in collaboration with AUC should take a lead in organizing biannual reviews of the programme at regional level which would contribute to the annual global review by the United Nations General Assembly;

d. An African centre of excellence for LLDCs should be established in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

12. Post-2015 development agenda

a. Mainstream the special needs of LLDCs into the global post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development goals;

b. The new development agenda for LLDCs must specifically address the challenges of LLDCs in a more holistic manner.

13. Follow-up

a. The report of the African regional review meeting, including its recommendations, should be submitted to the next Conference of African Ministers of Transport and the next Conference of African Ministers of Trade;

b. The report should also be submitted to the second United Nations Conference on LLDCs and its intergovernmental preparatory committee with a view to fully reflecting the views and interests of African landlocked and transit developing countries in the final outcome document of the Conference.

C. Account of Proceedings

1. Opening of the meeting

7. Opening statements were made by H.E. Dr. Anthony Mothae Maruping, AU Commissioner for Economic Affairs; Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS); H.E. Mr. Saleumxay Kommasith, Permanent Representative of the Lao People's Democratic Republic to the United Nations and Chairman of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs); H.E. Mr. Ahmed Shide, State Minister of Finance and Economic Development of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia; and Mr. Carlos Lopes, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ECA.

8. In his opening statement, Dr. Maruping expressed his profound gratitude to ECA and OHRLLS for co-organizing the event with AUC. He reiterated AUC's commitment to work with partners in support of the implementation of APoA, noting that AUC's interest in the programme was based on the fact that Africa had 16 landlocked countries and indeed most of the world's LLDCs. The geographical conditions of LLDCs undoubtedly posed special challenges in their efforts to integrate into the global trading system. Such challenges ranged from goods being transported through one or more neighbouring countries in order to get to a port, to inadequate and poor quality infrastructure of transit corridors and long delays at ports due to cumbersome customs procedures, among others.

9. He noted that addressing those challenges would contribute to improving intra-African trade. He underscored the importance of close collaboration with LLDCs and transit countries. Collaboration with development partners, through initiatives such as Aid For Trade, was also necessary to integrate LLDCs firmly into the multilateral trading system. In addition, the AU Commissioner stressed the vital role of the private sector in promoting trade as an engine of growth. To that end, African Governments should create the necessary environment for the private sector to thrive, including through innovative development approaches such as public private partnerships.

10. In his statement, Mr. Acharya said that the regional review meeting would contribute to preparations for the comprehensive global 10-Year Review Conference on the implementation of APoA to be held in 2014, as mandated by the United Nations General Assembly. Preparations for the conference were progressing well in three main tracks, namely intergovernmental, United Nations inter-agency and the private sector. OHRLLS was leading the substantive preparations of the United Nations inter-agency group through the United Nations Inter-Agency Consultative Group. The group had already held three consultative meetings on the preparatory process of the conference and had organized several relevant thematic pre-conference events. LLDCs had also been invited to prepare national reports on progress in implementing the APoA and 14 had so far submitted their reports. He strongly encouraged other member States to prepare and submit their national reports.

11. Mr. Acharya underscored the importance of private sector participation in the preparatory process. The private sector was actively involved in trading activities in LLDCs as traders, freight forwarders, insurance providers, transporters, and a source of both domestic and foreign direct investment, and their views needed to be fully reflected in the preparatory

process and at the conference in 2014. A steering committee had been set up to oversee the activities of the private sector, which would culminate in an investment forum to be held as a high-level event at the conference in 2014.

12. He highlighted key elements required to advance the development agenda of LLDCs over the coming decade, including: investment in transport, information and communication technology, and energy infrastructure in both landlocked and transit developing countries; investment in soft infrastructure or trade facilitation, particularly harmonization of policies, simplification and standardization of rules, documentation, and border crossing and customs procedures by LLDCs and their transit partners; consideration of the special needs of LLDCs in the current World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations on trade facilitation; improved market access for agricultural and non-agricultural goods originating from LLDCs; and continued technical support to expedite accession of LLDCs to WTO. He concluded by stressing that the key development priorities of LLDCs should be firmly integrated into the post-2015 development agenda in order to ensure meaningful development outcomes.

13. In his opening statement, Mr. Kommasith noted that half of the members of the LLDCs group were African countries. He emphasized that the group provided a platform for LLDCs to coordinate their development efforts and agree on common positions on global issues, such as the ongoing discussions on the post-2015 development agenda. He informed participants of the influential role played by the group in the United Nations General Assembly decision to convene a global conference in 2014 to review progress in the implementation of APoA ten years after its adoption. He also drew attention to an international agreement on the establishment of a think tank to deal with issues related to LLDCs and encouraged African countries to become parties to the agreement to ensure sufficient signatories for it to become operational.

14. Mr. Shide, in his opening statement, expressed his Government's appreciation to ECA and OHRLLS for convening the present meeting. He underscored the need to accelerate the implementation of APoA, noting that the programme provided a unique opportunity to galvanize international solidarity and partnership to facilitate the effective participation of LLDCs in international trade. He highlighted the commitment of the Government of Ethiopia to APoA and noted that all the priority areas of the programme had been included in the country's previous three development plans. Ethiopia had made steady progress in its economic and social development since the adoption of APoA. The country's GDP had grown on average by 11 per cent over the previous nine years. He also noted the challenges identified during the implementation of APoA, among them limited human and financial resources, as well as technical and institutional capacity.

15. He reiterated the importance of international support for LLDCs in the implementation of APoA, including through South-South and triangular cooperation. Overcoming the challenges of LLDCs called for close cooperation and collaboration with their transit neighbours. In conclusion, he commended the United Nations system for its key role, through OHRLLS, in mobilizing international support and resources for the implementation of APoA and urged development partners to scale up their contribution.

16. Mr. Lopes said in his opening remarks that it was fitting that the present meeting was taking place in Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia, a country that was transforming itself and had proved that it was possible for a landlocked country to extricate itself from poverty. He stressed that the current growth experienced by many African landlocked

countries symbolized the essence of APoA, which was about overcoming the special challenges of landlocked countries. APoA was pertinent for African countries because it aimed at tackling trade facilitation and infrastructure challenges, which were known to be more severe in Africa than in other regions of the world. Achieving the objectives of APoA would enhance Africa's regional integration, industrialization, and economic transformation in general.

17. He underscored the need for the meeting to take into consideration existing trade and transport facilitation initiatives in Africa and to clearly articulate the value that APoA added to those initiatives. He urged delegates to bear in mind the progress in WTO negotiations on trade facilitation and stressed that interventions made in the context of APoA could facilitate implementation of the envisaged WTO provisions. He also urged them to examine linkages between APoA and the ongoing discussions on the post-2015 development agenda. In conclusion, he assured the participants of the continued support of ECA in efforts to address the special needs of Africa's landlocked and transit countries and to strengthen their ability to engage in international trade.

2. Agenda of the meeting

18. The meeting adopted the following main agenda:

- a) Report on the status of implementation of APoA;
- b) Regional and sub-regional infrastructure and trade facilitation initiatives in Africa;
- c) Country experiences (achievements and challenges) on: (i) fundamental transit policy issues; (ii) infrastructure development and maintenance; (iii) international trade and trade facilitation;
- d) International support measures for the implementation of APoA;
- e) Implementation and review of APoA;
- f) The role of the private sector in the implementation of APoA and trade and transport facilitation in general.

3. Report on the status of implementation of APoA

19. Introducing the item, a representative of OHRLLS gave a presentation on the global perspectives of the comprehensive ten-year review of APoA. He indicated that the LLDCs continued to face problems, including: inadequate transit infrastructure, remoteness from major markets; inefficient logistics systems; delays in transit due to cumbersome border crossing procedures; insufficient application of information and communication technology (ICT) and excessive documentation; heavy reliance on low-value high bulk commodities; and limited productive capacities.

20. OHRLLS had undertaken a study to estimate the total development cost (including economic and social dimensions) of being landlocked. Empirical evidence from the study indicated that being landlocked was an obstacle to development: the study findings showed that the trade of LLDCs amounted to only 61 per cent of the trade volume of coastal countries in 2010, and that transport costs for LLDCs were 45 per cent higher than those of coastal economies in 2010 and had increased over time. The level of development of LLDCs was on average 20 per cent lower than it would have been, had they not been landlocked.

21. Since the adoption of APoA, LLDCs as a group had achieved higher rates of economic growth, but they were experiencing a decline in manufacturing value addition and

agricultural productivity. On the social development front, LLDCs had experienced a positive trend in the Human Development Index since 2003. They had also made advances on some of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) including: net primary school enrolment increased from 64 per cent in 2000 to 83 per cent in 2011; the share of women in national parliaments increased from 7.8 per cent in 2000 to 23.5 per cent in 2013; HIV prevalence rate decreased from 4 per cent in 2001 to 2.8 per cent in 2011; and the under-five mortality rate down from 121.5 per 1,000 live births in 2000 to 80.9 in 2011. More still needed to be done, however, in particular on poverty reduction and undernourishment.

22. In the priority area of fundamental transit policies, LLDCs and transit countries had increased harmonization of transport and transit policies and laws, streamlining of border procedures, development of supportive institutional frameworks and implementation of trade facilitation initiatives, including one-stop border posts, the TIR system, single window processing and third party motor insurance schemes. There had been increased establishment, adoption and implementation of regional agreements, including the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway and Railway Networks; the Africa region was also developing an intergovernmental agreement to underpin the Trans African Highway.

23. In the priority area of infrastructure development and maintenance, there had been the development and upgrading of both the Asian Highway and the Trans-Asian Railway networks, transit corridors in Africa and transport infrastructure in South America. However, LLDCs still had the lowest proportion of paved roads. All LLDCs had experienced an increase in cellular subscription and internet users over the review period. Dry ports were being established in all regions, e.g. Nepal, Burkina Faso, Mongolia and Ethiopia. The financing needs for infrastructure development were high.

24. In the priority area of international trade and trade facilitation, exports of LLDCs increased from \$42 billion in 2003 to \$224 billion in 2011. However, LLDCs were still marginalized in international markets with a share of the world's overall trade that remained close to 1 per cent. LLDCs relied heavily on the export of primary commodities and their concentration index had increased since 2003. LLDCs had low productive capacities.

25. LLDCs had made progress in facilitating trade and transport across borders. According to the World Bank report, *Doing Business 2013*, the number of days that LLDCs take to import had decreased from 57 in 2006 to 48 in 2013, and the number of days to export had reduced from 48 to 42 over the same period. Although this was a major achievement, the number of days taken by LLDCs to import and export was still almost double that of transit countries.

26. Trade facilitation in the Doha Development Round had the potential to address many of the fundamental transit policy issues that affected LLDC exports. The negotiations aimed to clarify and improve relevant aspects of Articles V, VIII and X of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) 1994 with a view to further expediting the movement, release and clearance of goods, including goods in transit. Since 2003, three LLDCs had been able to successfully complete their accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) – Nepal, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Tajikistan. Kazakhstan, Afghanistan and Ethiopia were in advanced stages of the accession process and Azerbaijan, Bhutan and Uzbekistan were at various less advanced stages. Support for acceding countries was needed.

In conclusion, he indicated some of the priorities of LLDCs, including: a reduction in high trade transaction costs; enhanced productive capacities, value addition and diversification,

and reduced dependency on commodities; infrastructure improvement; support for regional integration and corridor management; increased financial resources, official development assistance (ODA), foreign direct investment (FDI) and remittances; and mainstreaming their particular challenges in the global post-2015 development agenda.

27. A representative of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) gave a presentation on fostering structural transformation in Africa's LLDCs. He stressed that transaction costs, especially transport and insurance costs, were generally higher in Africa and had been an impediment to trade flows within the region and to external markets. In Central Africa, for example, transporting one ton of goods along the route from Douala in Cameroon to N'Djamena in Chad cost \$0.11 per kilometre, which was more than twice the cost in Western Europe, where the cost was \$0.05. Given the dire state of transport and trade facilitation services in African LLDCs, it was likely that the focus on transport, trade facilitation and transit agreements would remain a priority in future programmes of action and the development agenda of this group of countries.

28. The challenges facing LLDCs went beyond the difficulties of delivering goods on time and at reasonable cost to international markets to include lack of productive capacity, declining agricultural productivity due to low levels of investment, a high incidence of poverty, excessive dependence on exports of primary products, low levels of skills and technological base, a private sector dominated by informality, and limited progress in structural transformation. Therefore, looking to the future, LLDCs needed a more comprehensive development agenda and a new analytical and policy narrative for the promotion of development in landlocked developing countries that suffered from specific structural weaknesses and locational disadvantages.

29. Although Africa had experienced a period of sustained economic growth, that growth had not been translated into sufficient job creation and improved human development, and there was little indication of structural change towards productivity-led and higher-value-added economies because of high dependency on the extraction and export of natural resources. Structural transformation in LLDCs could only be achieved by shifting resources between sectors or from production of low-technology and low-productivity goods and services to high-technology and higher-productivity goods such as high-value horticultural goods and e-services. He emphasized that manufacturing, services and agriculture were sectors that could foster structural transformation. Labour intensive manufacturing could promote structural transformation, and a comprehensive development agenda for LLDCs should incorporate a strategy for industrial development. Value addition could also be based on agricultural activities.

30. He highlighted specific policy areas that could promote structural transformation, including regional integration, which was particularly important as the small size of the economies of most African countries made them less competitive in the global market. Africa needed to expand the focus of its regional integration agenda beyond increasing intra-African trade and to place more emphasis on economic growth and development outcomes in general. Africa should develop regional value chains as a stepping stone for greater integration into global value chains. That would require increasing investment in hard and soft infrastructures, continuous upgrading of domestic firms that were involved in value chains, providing business support services and market information, and investing in education and innovation. In each of those areas, national and regional industrial policies would play a crucial role. LLDCs should also foster entrepreneurship, especially among small and medium

enterprises, and building the production and supply capacity of domestic private enterprises was crucial.

31. A representative of ECA gave a presentation on the status of implementation of APoA in Africa. He noted that African LLDCs had made good progress in economic and social development during the implementation of the Programme. Their human development indicators had improved and the gap between LLDCs and transit countries had narrowed. African LLDCs had made notable progress towards the achievement of some of the Millennium Development Goals, namely education, gender equality, and combating HIV/AIDS. More remained to be done, especially in terms of poverty reduction and child mortality and inequalities that had increased within LLDCs.

32. In the priority area of fundamental transit policies, he noted that participation of African countries in relevant international conventions was poor. Most LLDCs and transit countries were party to regional and sub-regional agreements and, sometimes, bilateral agreements. He stressed that it was important that relevant instruments were effectively ratified and implemented by both LLDCs and their transit neighbours so that LLDCs could realize the benefits of becoming more integrated into the world economy. He pointed out that transit transport legal instruments at sub-regional level had been updated after the adoption of APoA to focus on transit facilitation. LLDCs and transit countries were implementing several transit transport facilitation policies including: one-stop border posts; the introduction of single window processing systems; harmonized road transit charges and customs declaration documents; third party motor vehicle insurance schemes; reduction of roadblocks; and increased use of electronic systems for customs clearance. The initiatives had contributed to significant reductions in transit times and transport costs.

33. In the priority area of infrastructure development and maintenance, LLDCs and transit developing countries had made substantial progress in developing and maintaining transport infrastructure. In particular, progress had been achieved in developing road infrastructure in the major transit corridors of the Trans African Highway. However, major infrastructure gaps remained that required substantial resources; the development and maintenance of supportive infrastructure, including distribution centres, dry ports, border structures and secure rest areas, were also necessary. Although some progress had been made in improving energy infrastructure, Africa had the lowest energy access in the world. With regard to ICT, African LLDCs had significantly increased mobile telephony and internet use, but they lagged behind other developing countries in terms of broadband internet access, because of lack of direct access to submarine cables.

34. In the priority area of international trade and trade facilitation, merchandise exports of all LLDCs grew fivefold over the review period, but merchandise exports of African LLDCs grew only threefold and accounted for only 18 per cent of the group's total. African LLDCs were highly dependent on primary commodities with very high export concentration in 2010/2011 (Mali 79 per cent gold; Botswana 75.6 per cent diamonds; Malawi 58.4 per cent tobacco, etc.). The African export market concentration was shifting from traditional European Union dominance towards emerging economies. Although trade facilitation had improved, trade transaction costs were still high and had increased in African LLDCs. African LLDCs could benefit from a trade facilitation agreement under WTO, and it was important to actively negotiate and push for adoption of an agreement that would address the interests and concerns of LLDCs. Two African LLDCs were not yet party to WTO.

35. In the priority area of international support measures, African LLDCs had experienced an increase in official development assistance (ODA) and Aid for Trade over the review period, and had also benefited from technical and financial support from international and regional financial institutions, African infrastructure funds, and South-South cooperation. The United Nations and other international organizations had provided technical and capacity building assistance. In conclusion, he highlighted some of the emerging challenges, including: civil conflicts, the global economic and financial crisis, climate change, rapid urbanization and migration, and governance and natural resource management.

36. In the ensuing discussion, participants stressed the need to improve transport infrastructure, in particular completion of missing links and upgrading the road network. Emphasis was placed on the importance of support infrastructure – ICT and energy were crucial for improving the connectivity of LLDCs and should be funded. Participants noted that limited diversification of the export base, and lack of value addition and productive capacity were a major challenge for LLDCs. Reference was made to the outcome of the expert group meeting on assessing the status of implementation of trade and transport facilitation instruments and measures in Africa, held on 15 July 2013, and participants underscored the importance of ratification by LLDCs and transit countries of relevant conventions and of support from the international community.

4. Regional and sub-regional infrastructure and trade facilitation initiatives in Africa

37. Presentations were made by representatives of the following institutions under this agenda item: African Union Commission (AUC); Trans-Kalahari Corridor Secretariat; Central and Dar Corridors; International Commission of the Congo-Oubangui-Sangha Basin; Abidjan–Lagos Corridor; and Maputo Corridor. Presentations were also made on behalf of the following RECs: Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

38. Most of the presentations outlined the geographical coverage, scope of work, objectives and programmes of the corridor institutions and their member States. The representatives of the corridor institutions gave an overview of the issues addressed by those bodies, which generally related to improving physical infrastructure, transit and trade facilitation, growth in traffic and business, and reduction in transit time and cost. Their achievements included the adoption of streamlined legislation, harmonized customs procedures, and common transit procedures. Some had also set up observatories to collect information and data on the movement of people and goods, assess delays at border posts, and carry out inspections of the state of roads. In addition, improvements were reported in risk management and compliance.

39. The representatives of RECs presented highlights of some of the ongoing infrastructure and transport programmes within the Communities, including the tar road programmes in ECCAS with 55 road projects aimed at building a multimodal transportation system for regional integration; the ongoing implementation of programme initiatives responding to infrastructure needs in SADC to harmonize regional and trade integration; the already finalized and adopted feasibility studies for seven border posts in ECOWAS; and priority projects identified for corridor construction in IGAD (Djibouti–Ethiopia, Ethiopia–South Sudan, Ethiopia–Kenya, etc.), among others. The African Union Commission had made good progress in the implementation of the Trans-Africa Highway projects in spite of many challenges. AUC was moving into further initiatives to finance the identified missing

infrastructure links on major transport corridors, and regarded the successful implementation of the Trans-Africa Highway and the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa as important milestones towards the implementation of APoA.

40. Some corridors such as the Maputo Corridor were mostly private-sector driven and focused on transport logistics, involving roads and railways. Trade imbalances between countries served by the same corridor, for instance between Mozambique and Swaziland on the one hand and South Africa on the other, were also highlighted. Since its establishment, the Trans-Kalahari Corridor had prided itself on the harmonization of substantial cross border procedures consistent with the regional integration programmes of SADC, the Southern African Customs Union, and indeed NEPAD, and international best practices, namely: adoption of streamlined legislation and harmonized customs procedures to facilitate transit traffic along the corridor; the successful introduction and implementation of a single administrative document (SAD 500); adoption of common transit procedures; harmonization of axle load limits; reduction of border clearance (dwell) time from over several hours to less than one hour with a minimum of 30 minutes clearance; increased commercial and passenger traffic from less than 5 per cent in 2000 to currently nearly 50 per cent (commercial) and 60 per cent (passenger).

41. In the ensuing discussion, participants noted that the desire of member States to safeguard and ensure national sovereignty was a contributing factor to the slow progress in dismantling trade barriers in Africa. They underscored that important recommendations related to transit transport and trade had been made in previous meetings and should be taken into consideration in order to avoid wasting time and resources, and stressed the need to clarify and sensitize stakeholders on the legal basis of some trade and transport facilitation instruments at REC level.

5. Country experiences

42. Presentations were made by representatives of the following LLDCs under this agenda item: Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Mali, Niger, Rwanda, South Sudan, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Presentations were also made on behalf of the following transit countries: Benin, Cameroun, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, United Republic of Tanzania, Nigeria and Togo.

43. The LLDC representatives highlighted the progress made in improving transport infrastructure, including road, rail, maritime and air transport; ICT and energy infrastructure; and dry ports. Most LLDCs had utilized domestic resources and financial assistance from development partners towards infrastructure development, however the infrastructure development needs were still high and required more assistance. Representatives also noted that some seaports that they were using were heavily congested, and some indicated that they were developing alternative routes as a safeguard.

44. Most representatives stressed that their countries were party to sub-regional, regional, and bilateral agreements. Some indicated that they were party to some of the relevant international conventions, while others said that they were not party to international conventions because of lack of knowledge and awareness of the conventions and their potential benefits. They stressed the need for capacity-building support. LLDCs had made progress in harmonizing transit and border crossing procedures and in policies relating to management of transport facilities and services within RECs. Many LLDCs had established

one-stop border posts which had greatly reduced border crossing times. They had also introduced automated customs systems and single window processing; many had developed institutional frameworks to coordinate trade or transit facilitation at national level.

45. Although milestones had been achieved in different areas of infrastructure and transport facilitation, challenges still impeded the movement of persons, vehicles and goods along the corridors, including, among others, the continued imposition of non-tariff barriers; poor or inadequate infrastructure in LLDCs, and even transit countries, to support efficient movement of goods; high logistical costs arising from delays along some borders; unavailability of empty containers; inadequacy of storage facilities; and lack of financial support for LLDC programmes.

46. The messages that emerged from the presentations made by transit countries mainly focused on their efforts in improving port clearing and border crossing times; modernization and equipment of customs administration; simplification of custom and administration procedures; reducing escort fees; continuing cooperation with landlocked countries through corridor monitoring by means of transport observatories; setting up corridor management institutions and trade and transport facilitation committees, including the private sector; and close monitoring of cargo clearance and delivery with a view to reducing port congestion and transportation costs. The representatives of the transit countries drew attention to the high transportation costs in the region. They also mentioned ongoing efforts, with other partners (the private sector and other international partners) to reduce supply chain costs for exporters and increase the economic competitiveness of their countries, thus leading to job creation, higher incomes and reduced poverty. In the area of infrastructure, in addition to road improvements, efforts were also being made to extend ports and build new ones, modernize port equipment, and create new trade and transport corridors.

47. In the ensuing discussion, participants noted that high customs fees at ports and along corridors and high transport costs were among key obstacles that needed to be addressed. There were also several missing links in major corridors and there was an urgent need to step up rehabilitation of the infrastructure along major corridors. Participants also noted that if APoA was mainstreamed in national development strategies, it would help to influence budget allocation to priority areas for its effective implementation.

6. International support measures for the implementation of APoA

48. Presentations were made by representatives of the following international organizations under this agenda item: OHRLLS, UNCTAD, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the International Road Transport Union (IRU).

49. In her presentation, the representative of OHRLLS pointed out that ODA to LLDCs more than doubled between 2000 and 2010 and reached \$26 billion in 2011. However, the allocation was very uneven across LLDCs and six of the African LLDCs relied on ODA for at least 20 per cent of their central Government expenditure. Aid for Trade flows to LLDCs had increased since 2003, with the majority of that aid going towards economic infrastructure and building productive capacity. However, the allocation of Aid for Trade was also very uneven across LLDCs, and there was a need to enhance the quantity, quality and impact of both ODA and Aid for Trade for LLDCs.

50. FDI had increased for the LLDC group, however FDI to Africa had not increased as much as in other regions. FDI was highly concentrated in a few resource-rich LLDCs. In order to attract FDI, it was important to have an enabling environment in LLDCs. FDI should be promoted to support local processing, value addition, infrastructure development, trade facilitation and technology transfer. Improved market access was important for LLDCs and the international community should consider establishing a preferential market access scheme for LLDC exports to mitigate the high trade transaction costs stemming from their geographical disadvantages. South-South cooperation had increased over the review period and it was important to foster it through sharing best practices and experiences and knowledge, increased investment and transfer of appropriate technologies. United Nations organizations, RECs, multilateral institutions including WTO and the World Bank, donors, regional development banks, and some sub-regional organizations had supported LLDCs through technical assistance, capacity-building, advocacy and resource mobilization. That support needed to be continued and increased.

51. In his presentation, the representative of UNCTAD noted that when APoA was drafted 10 years ago, it did not identify support measures specifically targeted at LLDCs. LLDCs currently received assistance as developing countries and benefited from various international cooperation initiatives such as ODA, and many of them were part of free trade agreements, and South-South cooperation. However, those measures were not LLDC-specific, nor were they related to the geographical handicap of having no direct access to the sea. It was important for specific measures such as special and differential treatment, and those measures applied to least developed countries under WTO, to be extended to LLDCs. The European Union could be invited to consider extending European Banking Authority (EBA) privileges to all LLDCs as part of the APoA review process. An extension of EBA benefits to all LLDCs would be a historic achievement of a successor programme to the Almaty Programme of Action. In conclusion, the representative of UNCTAD highlighted some of the technical assistance that UNCTAD provided to LLDCs.

52. In his presentation, the representative of IRU outlined the support that his organization provided for sustainable development and facilitation. On facilitation, he said that the TIR Convention played a key role in facilitating international trade and transport, in particular, over the past 15 years, for LLDCs in Central Asia. What had been used by LLDCs in other regions to develop and facilitate trade and transport could be used with the same positive effects for LLDCs in Africa. The IRU Academy had also contributed to increased capacity-building for LLDCs by providing, through its network of accredited national training institutes, training programmes for road transport operators and drivers fully in line with international standards, thereby contributing to strengthening the profession and increasing the efficiency and profitability of road transport companies while also contributing to sustainable development, notably through eco-driving programmes, and to road safety. He highlighted IRU cooperation with AUC, UNECA, the World Bank and the Sub-Saharan Africa Transport Policy Program, and confirmed that IRU was ready to share its knowledge and experience to facilitate accession to and implementation of the key United Nations conventions.

53. In his presentation, the representative of UNIDO highlighted the initiatives that the organization was undertaking to support LLDCs in improving their productive capacities, particularly in energy, industrialization and entrepreneurship. He stressed that LLDCs should be subject to special international measures.

54. In the ensuing discussion, several participants emphasized that LLDCs had special needs in various areas ranging from investment and maintenance of hard and soft infrastructure to enhancing trade and productive capacities, with regional integration and global value chains also having an important role to play. It was stressed that investing in road infrastructure was important, and improving the rolling stock of the rail sector was equally important in African LLDCs. Participants also emphasized the need to consider the creation of innovative sources of financing, such as funds for the development of transport and energy infrastructure. It was also necessary to improve FDI flows to LLDCs and it was suggested that countries should improve international corridors to attract FDI more effectively.

7. Implementation and review of APoA

55. A representative of OHRLLS gave a presentation on the implementation, monitoring and review of APoA. He presented a roadmap for the comprehensive 10-year review of the Programme to be held in 2014, highlighting the activities on three main tracks, namely intergovernmental, United Nations inter-agency, and private sector. The outcome of the review conference would be a successor programme of action for LLDCs.

56. He informed the meeting that implementation, monitoring and review needed to be undertaken at all levels, including national, sub-regional, regional and global. The monitoring and review mechanism was a continuously evolving process aimed at reinforcing partnerships and mutual accountability at all levels. LLDCs and transit developing countries had to be mutually accountable for actions to improve transit processes. At the national level, LLDC Governments should mainstream the new programme of action in their national and sectoral development strategies, and implement and conduct regular reviews.

57. At sub-regional level, organizations should develop and implement priority projects for infrastructure development to improve connectivity and trade facilitation initiatives, mainstream APoA implementation in their relevant programmes of work, and undertake reviews. At regional level, the relevant United Nations RECs should undertake periodic reviews, involving regional organizations, development banks and regional United Nations organizations. APoA should be mainstreamed in development assistance and funding.

58. Implementation of the new programme of action would undergo an annual review at global level by the United Nations General Assembly, involving annual reports of the Secretary-General, assessment of indicators to measure the progress of achievements, and biannual General Assembly plenary interactive thematic dialogue. The governing bodies of organizations in the United Nations system should mainstream the implementation of APoA in their programmes of work, and sectoral and thematic reviews of the Programme should be undertaken. The role of OHRLLS was to assist the United Nations Secretary-General in ensuring the full mobilization and coordination of the United Nations system in the implementation, follow-up, monitoring and review; to provide coordinated support to General Assembly reviews; to mobilize international support and resources; and to monitor and report.

8. Role of private sector in implementation of APoA

59. Introducing the item, the representative of OHRLLS reiterated the important contribution of the private sector in the development efforts of LLDCs and the need to include the private sector in the preparatory process of the 10-year review conference. Presentations were made

by representatives of chambers of commerce and other private sector organizations from the following countries: Kenya, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Togo, Ethiopia, Burkina Faso and Nigeria.

60. The representatives noted that chambers of commerce, whose membership was derived from small and medium enterprises, played a key role in promoting trade and investment as well as creating opportunities for export markets through trade exhibitions and international partnerships. The chambers worked with Governments both in the development and the implementation of Government policies, particularly on trade and investment. At the global level, the International Chamber of Commerce played a role in promoting private sector involvement in the global development agenda. It was further noted that the private sector was not well resourced and sometimes lacked the capacity to make meaningful contributions. The importance was stressed of including the private sector in the new development agenda for LLDCs. The private sector representatives also bemoaned the high transportation costs incurred by LLDCs and indicated that bad governance was a major contributor. They emphasized the need to improve governance in the new development agenda in order to reduce the cost of doing business.

61. In the ensuing discussion, participants noted that other private sector organizations in some LLDCs such as shippers' councils also played a major role in national development and should be consulted as private sector representatives in their countries. Participants also noted that the private sector, in particular public-private partnerships, could play a major role in infrastructure rehabilitation and maintenance, but there remained challenges that needed to be overcome, including strengthening policy and legal frameworks. It was noted that limited effective communication between Government and the private sector could lead to the private sector's lack of awareness of many conventions and initiatives, from which they were meant to benefit or which they should implement. The issue of governance, in particular corruption, needed to be addressed in order to reduce the cost of doing business in LLDCs.

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