Your Excellency, Ms. Zhanar Aitzhanova, Minister of Economic Integration of Kazakhstan,
Your Excellencies, Ministers responsible for Trade and Commerce in the landlocked countries,
Your Excellency, the Under Secretary-General and High Representative for the LLDC,
The Deputy Director-General, WTO,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me Your Excellencies to thank you and the Peoples of the Republic of Kazakhstan for the excellent preparations and hospitable welcome accorded to all of us. We are indeed very happy to be in Almaty. Allow me also to thank the UN for the wonderful work in coordinating the activities of this meeting. I bring you very warm and hearty greetings from the people of the Pearl of Africa-Uganda. As you all may know Uganda, a young democracy, will be celebrating its 50th independence anniversary on the 9th October this year, we hope that you all will find time in your very busy schedules to join us in this momentous celebration.

1.0 Background and Context

International trade procedures are recognized as an important factor in trade transaction costs. Delays in procedures and processing of documentation not only increase costs, but also lower utilization of facilities and resources. Inefficiencies in international trade procedures impose substantial burden to businesses, government and impact negatively on economic development. Bottlenecks may arise from multiple sources such as: the large number of stakeholders involved, duplication of manual and electronic information capture and processing, and the challenges of streamlining procedures and documents amongst government control agencies. The simplification of trade documentation and clearance procedures is a key agenda item for trade facilitation and competitiveness.
The use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) has proven to be a highly cost effective means of reducing time and cost for clearing and moving consignments. Trade Facilitation measures like, Single Window model, the One Stop Border Post, and e-tracking of cargo have been highly successful in creating an efficient environment for exchange and processing of trade related documentation. With East Africa contributing to simplification of many of the steps involved in international trade documentation processing, from submission of applications for permits, customs declarations, payment of duties and taxes, and release of consignment.

I am also aware that issues such as access to the sea, remoteness from the markets, inadequate bulk and other transport facilities constitute huge constraints to competitive trade.

Whereas I do not wish in any way to downplay the contribution of the above factors in constraining trade, we may need to have a parallel approach to this problem. Instead of always only emphasizing our landlockedness we should consider ourselves as landlinked. We in Uganda are actually landlinked to the whole of the Great lakes region. This region has a population of more than 200million people today. This population is expected to double in the next 50 years. Is it possible then for us to position ourselves to exploit this given opportunity? How much have we done to ensure that this is a strength that we should vigorously be exploiting without, of course losing sight of the other strategic interventions of access to the sea?

I do believe that for international trade to thrive and yield meaningful results for any State, this (trade) must first consolidate its Domestic and regional comparativeness and competitiveness.

I do agree with the theme of this meeting and contend that there are numerous potentials that we need to exploit even in our landlockedness. We may need to pay a lot more attention to those areas. Therefore, in my opinion, whereas landlockedness could be a temporary setback, it is not necessarily a sentence we cannot exploit.

### 2.0 The case of Uganda

As a landlinked country, Uganda has its specific needs to be reviewed prior to embarking on the implementation of Trade Facilitation measures. Needs of the trading community: forwarders, railroad, transporters, transit, banks, Customs and other government control agencies. Study of systems to establish the
requirements and capabilities for interfacing measures from different institutions, locally and from neighboring countries are considered.

2.1  **Electronic Single Window (e-SWS)**
At Individual Institution level, Uganda has embarked on establishing an e-SWS. Trademark East Africa (TMEA) is supporting Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) and Uganda National Bureau of Standards to establish Single Windows at the Individual Institution Level, through systems upgrade and interconnectivity.

At the National Level, there is an e-SWS committee coordinated by Ministry of Trade Industry and Cooperatives. The committee is comprised of all Ugandan Ministries and private sector agencies involved in Trade Facilitation. The focus of the committee is to coordinate all efforts aimed at developing the National e-SWS, identify needs and challenges. However, the committee is yet to develop a work plan for the e-SWS programme due to financing challenges. To address the challenges, Ministry of Trade and Industry has approached TMEA and Common Wealth Secretariat for support. These two agencies have already showed interest in financing the Initiatives and fund a needs assessment studies that will identify gaps and implementation strategies.

Uganda is also a member of the East African Trade and Transport Facilitation Committee. One of the objectives of the Committee is to coordinate e-SWS initiatives in all the EAC Partner States, by enabling Partner States to put in place systems that “talk” are compatible to each other.

Border Management Committees. These committees have been established at borders including Katuna, Busia, Malaba, and Mutukula. The committees so as to cordially develop and implement programs for efficient management of day today border operation.

2.3  **One Stop Border Post**
Government of Uganda has embraced the concept of (OSBP). Under this concept government has prioritized the Kenya/Uganda borders of Busia, and Malaba, and the Uganda/Rwanda Borders of Katuna and Mirama Hills.

- At Busia and Malaba, designs were completed and submitted for approval.
However, the OSPB concept is already being implemented by Customs Officials at these borders. Customs Officials conduct joint verifications for selected items that have greatly reduced on clearance time.

At Mirama Hills Border, TMEA has set aside funds for constructing the OSPB. However, the construction has been delayed due to the poor road infrastructure connecting to the border. Therefore TMEA is pending the construction of the OSPB while awaiting the road to be constructed.

2.4 Other Trade Facilitation Initiatives

- The Electronic Cargo Trucking System
  This was introduced in Kenya about two years back but it met strong resistance from transporters who contended that the Revenue Authorities in the region bare the installation costs. Revenue Authorities are opposed to this. Uganda Revenue Authority is undertaking consultations on how best to implement this requirement.

- E-tax payments: Uganda Revenue Authority has introduced the e-tax system of registering for tax purposes, and payment of taxes. This has reduced on congestions at URA offices, increased tax collection through timely payment of returns and increased on compliance levels

- Temporally Importation and Export of Vehicles (TEVIES), this is a system introduced by URA to facilitate trade in import and exportation of vehicles for purpose of faster clearance

- Authorized Economic Operators. Uganda Revenue Authority has introduced the concept so as to enable self and fast clearance by compliant companies and individuals. URA is yet to implement the piloting this concept probably by end of this year.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished participants, Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me once again to thank the hosts for allowing us to enjoy their warm hospitality, and to wish all present very meaningful deliberations for the good of all our peoples. I thank you.