Statement by Mr. Fambaoga L. Myambo, Deputy Director, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Zimbabwe, at the Fourth Meeting of Trade Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs)
Almaty, Kazakhstan
12 September 2012

H.E Mr. Bakytzhan Sagintayev, Minister of Economic Development and Trade, Republic of Kazakhstan, the Chair of this session

H.E Mr. Akhmetzhan S. Yesimov, Mayor of this beautiful city of Almaty

Honorable Ministers and Deputy Ministers here present

Heads of delegations

Heads of the United Nations Agencies,

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

At the very outset allow me, on behalf of my Honorable Minister of Industry and Commerce Professor Welshman Ncube to express my sincere appreciation to People’s Democratic Republic of Lao for its successful leadership of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs). Allow me also to express my Government’s appreciation to the people of the Republic of Kazakhstan for successfully hosting this meeting. As a member of the new Bureau of the Group of Landlocked Developing countries for 2012-2013, Zimbabwe remains committed to the realization of the aspirations of this Group.

Mr. Chairman,
Zimbabwe, just like any other landlocked country, grapples with structural challenges to access world markets due to lack of territorial access to the sea. As a result, we often lag behind our maritime neighbours in overall development and external trade. Landlocked developing countries are commonly among the poorest of the developing countries because the high costs for transporting our export goods erode the competitive edge and the quantities of our exports. It is however disheartening to note that landlocked developing countries have not been particularly successful in mitigating consequences caused by this geographical handicap as compared to landlocked countries in some parts of Europe. There is a clear connection between distance and the transport costs. High transport costs affect the competitiveness margin of landlocked developing countries and trade volume. As Landlocked developing countries, we have the weakest growth rates, and we typically rely heavily on a very limited number of commodities for our export income.

Your Excellencies,
To stimulate economic growth, It is vital that Landlocked Developing Countries increase their exports. However, LLDCs currently account for less than one percent of global merchandise trade. The single biggest obstacle to increasing this share is the very high cost of transport which has become a bigger barrier to trade than tariffs.

It is pleasing to note that Landlocked Developing countries continue to be vigilant in search for ways to unlock their trade potential to generate higher levels of economic growth and sustainable
development. This meeting serves as exemplary demonstration of the solidarity and united action of landlocked developing countries to address their common challenges. We are calling upon international cooperating partners to assist our countries to overcome the current physical impediments and unlock our potential to generate higher levels of economic growth that can also be used to invest into social development and sustainable growth of our economies.

Your Excellencies and distinguished delegates, LLDCs must focus on transforming "from landlocked to land-linked countries " through development of a network of transnational roads and rail routes that link transport systems, power grids and markets across and beyond sub-regions to facilitate fuller participation in the regional and global economy by enhancing competitiveness as economic blocs.

We need not concentrate on developed countries as trading partners and overlook regional and emerging markets. There is need to promote and develop regional markets, especially through South–South trade and cooperation to exploit geographical proximity. Zimbabwe commends the efforts made through South-South cooperation in the areas of transit transport cooperation between landlocked and transit developing countries and further requests for the scaling-up of the aid that can help us address the complex and severe challenges we face.

Distinguished delegates,

Zimbabwe’s exports and imports have been adversely affected by long distance to the sea, bad condition of roads and dilapidated railway system in the country. The decade of economic meltdown we passed through significantly damaged our economy and our political and social infrastructure, including our roads and transport systems. Despite this setback, we continue to be vigilant to improve our road and rail infrastructure at the national level through rehabilitation and construction of new ones with the participation of the private sector and foreign investors from our region and beyond.

Mr Chairman,

The Almaty Programme of Action constitutes a sound global framework to support the Landlocked Developing Countries in the areas of transit policy issues, transport infrastructure development and maintenance, international trade and trade facilitation, and international support measures. Zimbabwe fully supports the commitment of the landlocked countries to accelerate the implementation of Almaty Programme of Action through effective and genuine partnerships between landlocked and transit countries and their development partners as well as between public and private sector at national, regional and global level. It reflects the strong commitment by the international community to address our special needs and problems as called for in the United Nations Millennium Declaration. It is therefore important that we reaffirm our commitment towards the accelerated implementation of the Almaty Declaration and Programme of Action.

To date Zimbabwe has recorded encouraging progress in implementing the Almaty Programme. We have formulated policies aimed at removing physical and non-physical barriers for effective participation in international trade. Border facilities and procedures are being streamlined and harmonized leading to increased efficiency and lower delays. At the regional level, Zimbabwe has sought to simplify the import/export clearance and turnaround period through the trade facilitation concept of the “One-Stop Border Post” with Zambia at the Chirundu Border Post to the north which was opened as a pilot project in Southern Africa within the ambit of the Common Market for Eastern
and Southern Africa (COMESA). Similar arrangements are currently being pursued with South Africa at the Beit Bridge Border Post to the south within the context of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC).

Mr. Chairman, Your Excellencies
The Government of Zimbabwe, as part of its mission to address trade and transport facilitation issues, embraced the concept associated with Spatial Development initiatives (SDIs). We are part to the North South Corridor (NSC) that stretches from Durban in South Africa up to DRC and serves eight countries. Attached to the NSC are various SDIs which act as tributaries feeding from the Eastern and Western parts of the NSC. These SDIs include the Beira Development Corridor, Walvis Bay Corridor, Trans-Limpopo Corridor and the Limpopo Development Corridor just to mention a few. It should also be noted that Zimbabwe is at the advanced stages in the construction of a Dry Port at Walvis Bay Sea Port in Namibia.

Our country, as is the norm in most LLDCs, is commodity-dependent, and relies heavily on minerals such as diamonds, platinum, gold and coal as well as agricultural products for export which often have low value addition. This makes us vulnerable to external trade shocks due to volatility of commodity prices. We are therefore calling upon investors to come and invest in value addition of these commodities.

Mr Chairman, Your Excellencies

Zimbabwe has recently launched the National Trade Policy (NTP) and The Industrial Development Policy (IDP) 2012 – 2016. The Vision of these policies is to transform Zimbabwe from a producer of primary goods into a producer of processed value-added goods for both the domestic and export market. We endeavor to have trade function as the engine for sustainable economic growth and development through transforming the productive sectors of the economy towards export-orientation and international competitiveness.

Distinguished delegates,
The expeditious implementation of the Aid for Trade initiative would provide crucial support that meets the special needs and requirements of LLDCs in the areas of capacity building for participation in trade negotiations, implementation of trade facilitation measures, implementation of international agreements, investment into infrastructure for transport, telecommunications and utilities, and strengthening of productive capacities.

Zimbabwe supports adoption of a multilateral, transparent, bottom up and member driven negotiation process in WTO in order to arrive at a successful conclusion with an ambitious, balanced and equitable outcome which ensures, inter alia, improved market access for agricultural and non agricultural export products of LLDCs.

Mr. Chairman, Still on the area of capacity building, we welcome the establishment of the International Think Tank on the Landlocked Developing Countries in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia in 2009. Zimbabwe believes the Think Tank will assist us to undertake home-grown research to cater for our specific needs. The Think Tank will also undoubtedly contribute to the formulation of strategies and policies that will allow for the speedy implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action.
Lastly, but not least Mr. Chairman, let me commend the key role that the United Nations System has played and continues to play through the Office of the UN-OHRLLS to mobilize international support and resources for the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action. We are appealing to our bilateral and multilateral donors, international financiers and other relevant international organizations, to continue to provide Zimbabwe and its transit partners with necessary financial and technical assistance within the context of SDIs and Regional Integration Agenda.

I am confident that the Ministerial Declaration, that the meeting is about to adopt, will give a strong boost to the concerted efforts of the international community to adequately address the special needs of landlocked developing countries.

I thank you.