Mr Chairman
Colleague Ministers
Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

1. Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the delegation of the Kingdom of Swaziland, I wish to express my appreciation and deep gratitude to the Government and people of the Republic of Kazakhstan for hosting this important meeting for Landlocked Developing Countries as well as for the warm welcome and excellent hospitality extended to us since our arrival in Almaty. I also wish to commend the Government of Kazakhstan for the excellent arrangements and facilities put at our disposal for this meeting.

2. Mr Chairman, we are meeting at a very precarious time for the global economy when the modest gains made in 2010 after the recession are being eroded by the slowing down of emerging economies and sovereign debt problems in many of the economies that are traditional export destinations for products from our countries. Owing to its openness and over-dependence on these traditional world markets, Swaziland has been disproportionately affected by the fall out arising from the global financial and economic crisis. As a result, we have seen a rolling back of the economic successes achieved in the past to try and diversify the economy, grow the private sector, alleviate poverty and engender development. These challenges are further exacerbated by the combined adverse effects of transport costs, transit traffic difficulties, cumbersome customs procedures, and the lack of predictability regarding the timely arrival of goods at export destinations due to our lack of direct access to the seaports and distance therefrom as well as the remote location from world markets.

3. Nevertheless, Swaziland has made some strides to try and mitigate these challenges and improve the competitiveness of her traders. These include the full operationalization of ASYCUDA; the issuance of all Certificates of Origin by the Swaziland Revenue Authority which has cut costs and processing times for traders; and the ongoing work on reducing the number of documents and declaration points for both imports and exports. Also, at the level of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) in which Swaziland is a member, **Trade Facilitation and Infrastructure Development** have been incorporated as part of the five priority areas in the new SACU Work Programme adopted by the SACU Heads of State and Government. Work towards implementation of this Programme started in October 2010 with the development of an Action Plan which identified activities aimed at enhancing cooperation, improving compliance and facilitation of intra-SACU trade.

4. The most notable successes of this Action Plan to date include:
   (a) The development of a programme to improve trade partnerships and involve the private sector in the SACU-World Customs Organization (WCO) Customs Development Programme;
   (b) The development of guidelines and criteria for establishing national customs-to-business stakeholder forums has been completed;
   (c) The implementation of a national preferred trader programme has been adopted by all
Member States; and
(d) With the help of the World Customs Organisation, SACU Member States have developed a regional approach to risk management for SACU.

5. Chairperson, Swaziland firmly believes that our group of countries need to embark as a matter of urgency, on an aggressive drive to promote and strengthen not only foreign direct investment, but also domestic investment. Our Governments with the help of the international community, including cooperating partners should encourage and facilitate private sector development, including and in particular the popular or informal sector and cottage industries, through where possible, public private sector partnership (PPP), entrepreneurial development and support to small and medium enterprises

6 Swaziland, a net food importing and drought prone country; is also greatly concerned about the re-emergence of rising food prices which have been compounded by the negative impact of climate change. This has exacerbated her vulnerability and weakened her ability to achieve the MDGs. Due to the geographical location of our countries; the high transport cost makes the food stuffs even more expensive. Therefore, my delegation believes that there is need for our countries to commit to concrete and bold action on agricultural sector development, and formulation of appropriate national policies and strategies. This should be complemented by action at the global level to effectively address trade distorting measures such as export subsidies and restrictive practices. Overcoming this challenge requires multifaceted solutions which include, inter alia, addressing the effects of climate change in the agricultural sector, and adoption of appropriate technologies.

7. Chairman, my delegation fully supports the view that there is need to strengthen and deepen the coordination of LLDCs in trade negotiations at the WTO, giving special attention to freedom of transit and other relevant aspects of trade facilitation, Mr Chairman, because of the permanent geographical status of our countries, the issue of transit is more relevant and critical for LLDCs in the on-going Trade Facilitation negotiations at the WTO. My delegation therefore calls for continued work and active engagement by all Members on Article 11 of the Trade Facilitation Text with a view to improving the guarantees of freedom of transit enshrined in the GATT 1947. Special attention must also be paid to market access issues with particular emphasis on our development needs and supporting the accession process of the landlocked acceding countries, among others.

8. To effectively address the challenges already enumerated, I wish to urge the international community and our co-operating partners, including UNCTAD, UNDP, UNIDO, WTO and FAO; to assist LLDCs to move forward all issues of concern and interest to them. Moreover, we call upon these international development institutions to advocate for a relaxation of the discriminatory practice of marginalizing middle income countries in accessing trade and other development finance on concessional terms based only on a single GDP per capita criterion; particularly because unlike other developing countries, our countries do not have access to a unique AFT envelope at the global level.

9. Mr. Chairman, the ten-year review of the Almaty Programme of Action will come up soon and my delegation calls on all LLDCs to commit full and active engagement in the preparatory process for the review of this important Programme of Action. As well as participation in the Conference itself, at the highest level possible. Moreover, we need to invite at the earliest possible time, the international community and cooperating partners to actively participate in the preparation of a successor Programme of Action which in addition to transit trade and trade facilitation problems, should also address issues of growing significance to LLDCs, such as
South-South- and triangular cooperation; and enhanced transit transport connectivity through regional cooperation; and in the Conference itself.

10. Before concluding Mr. Chairman, I wish to thank most sincerely the UN-OHRLLS for funding participation of Ministers and leaders of delegations at this meeting. This financial support has made our participation possible, especially in view of the financial constraints facing many of our counties here present. My delegation also salutes the Permanent Mission of Paraguay in Geneva and Permanent Mission of LAOS in New York for their steering leadership in coordinating- and chairing the LLDC Group in their respective Chapters. Their diligence will facilitate successful deliberations during the next three days.

11. In conclusion, my delegation recommends unreservedly the adoption of the Draft Almaty Communiqué.