Fourth Trade Ministers Meeting of the Landlocked Developing Countries in Almaty, Kazakhstan from 14-16 September, 2012.

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies & Gentlemen!

I would like to thank and extend our appreciation for the hospitality of the people and government of the Republic of Kazakhstan. I would also like to felicitate your Excellency and your delegation for the excellent manner in which you have hosted the Meeting. I have no doubt about attaining our common goals given the commitments from the LLDs leaders and our development partners. Please be assured of the Royal Government of Bhutan’s commitment to the Almaty Programme of Action and our full support and cooperation.

Mr. Chairman,

Today’s meeting indeed is taking place at a crucial moment, when we are facing the consequences of a global economic and financial crisis and continues to struggle to recover from the impacts as developing countries, and more so as landlocked developing countries. Therefore, it calls for greater efforts in finding new strategies to unlock trade potentials to generate higher levels of sustainable economic growth.

Despite our concerted efforts, the economic growth and social well being of landlocked developing countries still remain very vulnerable. The pressing global challenges such as volatility of food prices, energy insecurity, climate change, financial and economic crisis have undermined our national efforts for development. In this regard, I urge the international community to not only maintain the current levels of official development assistance but to also further raise their commitments to support transit transport infrastructure development and trade facilitation projects in landlocked and transit developing countries.

It is our sincere belief that effective and close collaboration and cooperation between the landlocked developing countries and the respective transit neighbours are key to address the challenges and furthering our common goals, including attainment of five objectives of Almaty Declaration.
In the transit and transport area, the efforts made through South-South cooperation are most commendable. I would like to encourage further scaling up of efforts so that the LLDCs can mitigate its landlocked development challenges. This will no doubt lead to the acceleration of the Implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action.

For Bhutan, we have been fortunate to have India as our neighbour who has provided unfailing support to us in facilitating trade as well as removing the transit barriers.

The Aid for Trade Initiative is no doubt a fundamental tool to help countries compensate in some aspects of their landlockedness condition, thus improving their efficiency and economic competitiveness by improving the structural weaknesses of their economic systems and institutions.

In this regard, we see improvement of all weather safe roads and other means of transport as key to improve the productive capacity of LDC countries like ours. In the recent years, Bhutan has been investing substantive amount of resources in improving our internal road network with generous support from our development partner India. However, there are still constraints in the areas of railway connectivity, moving toward fully automated customs clearance and many more.

I understand that the outcome of this meeting is going to be an input for high level meeting including the Ten Year Review Conference of the Almaty Programme which will have far reaching importance of the implementation of the Programme. So it is important that we discuss and agree on common positions that reflect the issues and concerns of all Landlocked Developing Countries that will ensure sustainable economic growth and further improve trade potentials of the LLDCs.

I would like to take this opportunity to also commend the United Nations Office of High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States under the leadership of HE Chieck Diarra for its efforts and dedication; and request UN-OHRLLS to continue to mobilize and coordinate international support and resources for the effective implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and the Declaration.
Finally, I reaffirm the Royal Government of Bhutan’s full and firm commitment for the promotion and protection of our common interests.

Thank you and Tashi Delek!