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Statement

by

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and High Representative, for the Least
Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries
and Small Island Developing States**

at the

**Third Inter-Agency Consultative Group Meeting on the
Preparatory Process for the Comprehensive Ten-Year
Review Conference of the Almaty Programme of Action**

10 June 2013

**United Nations Secretariat, S-2726 and S-2727
New York**

His Excellency, Ambassador Saleumxay Kommasith, Permanent Representative of the Lao People's Democratic Republic to the United Nations, and Chair of the LLDC Group

Dear colleagues and friends,

It is my pleasure to welcome you today to this third Inter-Agency Consultative Meeting on the Preparatory Process for the Comprehensive Ten-Year Review Conference of the Almaty Programme of Action.

To start with, I would like to express my deep appreciation to Ambassador Saleumxay Kommasith for making the time to be with us and participate in this opening session. My special appreciation also goes to you all for the great importance that you and your organizations attach to the development concerns of the LLDCs and the successful preparation of the Ten-year Review conference. I know that some of you have made a long trip to be here with us today. Let me also welcome representatives from the Economic Commission for Africa, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Economic Commission for Europe, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and UNCTAD, who are joining the meeting via a video link. Thank you for being with us today, despite the very late hour for you.

Dear colleagues,

There has been some encouraging progress in implementing the Almaty Programme since 2003. Efforts have been made towards establishing secure and efficient transit transport systems and enhanced trade facilitation. The Almaty Programme has also managed to draw global attention to the pressing development challenges faced by the LLDCs. International support to LLDCs in the form of Official Development Assistance, Aid for Trade, South-South co-operation, debt relief, technical and capacity building assistance has increased over the review period.

Although beset by a multiplicity of setbacks in the global economy, the social and economic prospects of the LLDCs have continued to steadily improve. LLDCs are making significant, albeit decelerating progress towards the attainment of the MDGs. However, following a strong rebound from the global crisis, trade and economic performance of LLDCs has slowed down recently. The current global outlook remains subdued and downside risks could further threaten the recovery from the economic and financial crisis.

Despite the progress made, LLDCs remain vulnerable to external shocks and remain amongst some of the poorest countries in the world. Economic growth

and increased trade performance has not been accompanied by structural transformation and development of strong productive capacities to improve competitiveness of the exports.

LLDCs still continue to face high transport and trade transaction costs, on average 45% higher than the representative coastal country. These costs present a tremendous trade-reducing effect that has a direct negative impact on GDP and subsequently on their social and environmental development.

The ten-year review Conference on the Implementation of the Almaty programme of Action is very important, exactly because of these challenges that LLDCs are facing. The Conference will take place in 2014, while the international community is consulting on the post-2015 agenda and the sustainable development goals. This highly increases the significance of the Conference and presents an opportunity to link to the post-2015 process. It is essential that the needs and priorities of LLDCs are adequately considered and reflected in all of the post-2015 processes.

LLDCs are in a different position than they were in 2003. Many have become important destinations of trade and investment, thanks in part to the rise of South-South trade and cooperation. Flows of foreign direct investment to LLDCs have reached a record-high of \$35 billion in 2011, up from just \$9 billion in 2003. LLDCs share in world exports has more than doubled between 2003 and 2011, even though it still remains at just 1.22 per cent.

These developments also change our approach and put the spotlight on not only creating efficient transit systems, but also on focusing issues such as diversification of LLDCs exports and economies, increasing market access and addressing non-tariff barriers, and linking LLDCs to global value chains.

The review Conference presents the opportunity to formulate and adopt a renewed ambitious, strengthened and actionable international development framework that can adequately support LLDCs to tackle the persistent development needs linked to high transport and trade transaction costs, to address new and emerging issues such as the global economic crisis, climate change, land degradation, desertification and deforestation and food crises, as well as take advantage of new opportunities such as rising South-South cooperation.

Distinguished colleagues,

Allow me to express my great appreciation to your organizations that have been instrumental in contributing to the progress achieved in the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action up to now. Since the inception of the

programme, our respective institutions have worked together and individually towards resource mobilization, capacity building and monitoring of the implementation in LLDCs. Your active involvement is among the main contributors to the success achieved so far.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Turning to the preparations of the Ten-Year Review conference, as you all know the preparatory process is being undertaken in three main tracks: the intergovernmental track; the UN Inter-Agency track; and the Private Sector track. The preparatory process is moving well in all three tracks now. In March this year, the Euro-Asia Regional Review Meeting was organized by ESCAP and ECE jointly with the Government of Laos and my Office. The African regional review meeting will take place in July. I just came from Addis Ababa where I met with the Executive Secretary of ECA and had consultations regarding the organization of this meeting.

I am not going to elaborate on this, as I know that we have representatives from the regional commissions with us to brief on these meetings. Allow me just to say that your participation in the upcoming African regional meeting is very important to ensure its successful outcome.

We have also already held successfully a number of pre-conference events, including and the Brainstorming Meeting on the priorities for new development agenda for the LLDCs organized by my Office. I know that many of your organizations also actively engaged in the brainstorming meeting and contributed to the rich discussions we had over those two days. Thanks to your participation the meeting came up with very strong and useful recommendations for the new development agenda for LLDCs. My colleagues will brief you in more detail on the results of the brainstorming meeting later today.

Towards the end of last month, UNCTAD held the Global Services Summit in Beijing where I had the opportunity to highlight the special needs of LLDCs. On 15 April and 15 May 2013, I also briefed the UN Member States and UN system organizations on the progress and modalities on the preparatory process. With this, let me stop here as my colleagues are going to present more details on the status of preparations towards the Conference during the day.

I know that many of you are working hard on activities related to the preparatory process, including the organization of regional review meetings, thematic pre-conference events, substantive background reports and concrete deliverables for the Conference. In this regard I and my office are very keen to

hear an update on the status of your planned activities for the preparatory process.

It is my hope that in today's meeting we will be able:

1. Update each other on the status of the preparations for the regional review meetings and pre-conference thematic events, as well as on the events that were already held;
2. Consult on possible concrete deliverables for the Conference;
3. Consult on the preparatory process under the private sector track.

The Conference should provide an important platform for your organizations to launch special initiatives and deliverables in favour of LLDCs. I appeal to all of you to consult with colleagues and think and to come up with specific deliverables for the Conference before our next inter-agency meeting later this year.

To conclude, I look forward to continued co-operation with you during the preparatory process in the lead up to the Conference; during the Conference itself; as well as beyond the Conference. Allow me to underscore the importance of all of us working together in the context of this inter-agency group and I sincerely hope that our cooperation will continue to generate concrete results for LLDCs. In this spirit, I look forward to our productive consultations today.

Thank you for your kind attention.