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Statement

by

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Least Developed Countries
Landlocked Developing Countries
and
Small Island Developing States**

Closing Session of the Euro-Asia Regional Review Meeting

7 March 2013

Vientiane, Laos

His Excellency Mr. Sommad Pholsena, Minister of Public Works and Transport, Government of Lao Peoples Democratic Republic
Dr. Noeleen Heyzer, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP
Ambassador Saleumxay Kommasith, Permanent Representative of Lao PDR to the United Nations in New York and Chairperson, LLDC Coordination Bureau
Excellencies,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to express my sincere congratulations to you all on the successful conclusion of this Regional Review Meeting. I think we have made considerable progress in these three days and we now have a solid basis from this region for drafting the substantive outcome of the Second UN Conference on LLDCs.

Special thanks go to the Government and the people of Lao PDR for their warm hospitality and excellent arrangements for the Meeting. I particularly thank His Excellency Dr. Thongloun Sisoulith, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Government of Lao Peoples Democratic Republic, the officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and from other Ministries for their hard work. Your tireless efforts deserve our special praise.

I also thank all the participants from LLDCs, transit countries, development partners and the private sector.

I wish to recognize Your Excellency Minister of Public Works and Transport, Government of Lao Peoples Democratic Republic for ably and actively chairing this meeting. And Ambassador Saleumxay Kommasith, Permanent Representative of Lao PDR to the United Nations in New York and Chairperson, LLDC Coordination Bureau for negotiating the outcome document.

I also thank ESCAP and UN ECE for their collaboration in organising this regional review meeting.

During these three days, you all had substantive discussions on various aspects relating to the development of LLDCs. You undertook a comprehensive appraisal of what happened during the last ten years regarding the implementation of the APoA in this region highlighting the achievements, lessons learned, best practices and outstanding challenges and came up with a forward looking agenda.

What resonated was a convergence of opinion that a lot has been achieved so far, and we need to maintain and enhance these positive trends. However you also underscored that the Almaty Programme remains an unfinished agenda. Much more remains to be done in order for the LLDCs to be fully integrated into regional and global trading systems and for them to achieve an inclusive and sustained economic growth. You stressed that because of this, most of the actions called for in the Almaty Programme of Action remain relevant today. In addition new challenges have emerged that increased the development burden of the LLDCs.

You also stressed that LLDCs have a great opportunity of transforming their countries to be “land-linked” or to be “vibrant bridges” between their neighbours which can trigger economic growth. This opportunity needs to be fully harnessed. Let me stress here that connectivity is a great development multiplier as transport corridors become development corridors. It creates hubs of economic activities and promotes fostering of social and economic development. This is the lifeline of LLDCs economies.

I appreciate that you were all able to dig deep into the issues and put forward concrete, robust and forward-looking ideas and proposals as contained in the Vientiane Consensus. These will no doubt constitute important building-blocks for the next Programme of Action for the landlocked developing countries.

I would like therefore, to highlight a few of these forward looking suggestions.

1. The importance of increased investment into hard infrastructure for transport, ICT and energy for improving the connectivity and integration of LLDCs was emphasized. In a similar vein you stressed that investment into soft infrastructure in particular trade facilitation is at the heart of the LLDCs’ trading reality and needs to be scale up.
2. You have called for the deepening of regional integration and cooperation with neighbouring transit countries in building infrastructure, improving connectivity and addressing transit issues to ensure unhindered, efficient and reliable flow through the development of fundamental transit transport policies. I was very encouraged by the many examples that were presented which attests to this - such as the friendship bridges and road networks, one stop border posts,

simplification and harmonisation of laws, regulation and border crossing procedures to name just a few.

3. There was consensus that we have in place the key legal framework on transport and transit issues to promote the development of efficient transit transport systems that can significantly reduce the high transit transport costs. Effective implementation of the relevant international, regional and sub-regional conventions and agreements is the main vehicle to achieve this. This is a good example of harvesting of low hanging fruits that yield beneficial results to the LLDCs within a short time.
4. The development of productive capacities in LLDCs is critically important to enable them to structurally transform their economies, diversify the export basket, improve value addition and competitiveness, and enhance their beneficial participation in international trade and build resilience to external shocks. There has to be a strong coherence between the measures behind the border, at the border and beyond the border to ensure due benefits of globalization to the LLDCs. This is essential for promoting job-rich sustainable growth, and to achieve substantial poverty reduction and improvements in human well-being.
5. In the context of the new and persistent issues, you have stressed that they are impinging on the development prospects of the LLDCs in particular climate change and disasters and other development issues. Building resilience is a critical part of the development process now. Adaptation is now development.
6. Your discussions were very clear on the significance of international support measures that are vital to support the special needs of LLDCs through providing adequate financial resources, technology transfer, and capacity building assistance in particular for trade negotiations, WTO accession, customs and border management. In this respect the importance of enhancing ODA, Aid for trade disbursements, Market access, FDI and South-South cooperation was underscored. There is a need for enhanced and comprehensive global cooperation to LLDCs.

7. Your consensus also underscores the use of innovative mechanisms for financing infrastructure development and the importance of the private sector and the need to scale these up.
8. You have also pointed out not only about problems and challenges, but also about prospects and opportunities. There is a global dividend in promoting the causes of the LLDCs.

In conclusion, I once again wish to sincerely thank you all for your patience, active participation and insightful contributions. I am looking forward to continue collaborating closely with you in this preparatory process, during the Conference and beyond. I urge you to remain fully and constructively engaged in the preparatory process to advocate for and to promote the priorities of the LLDCs in the conference and into the Post 2015 development agenda.

It is very important that while we focus on the specific challenges of LLDCs, we must make sure that we are part of the global development discourse. Only then you get the necessary attention and priority to your issues.

Finally the strong and forward looking inputs are here. As you have outlined in the Vientiane Consensus, OHRLLS is fully committed to ensure that there is strong advocacy of LLDCs at all levels and that comprehensive measures are ensured on a sustainable basis to LLDCs to complement their national efforts and leadership.

Now the work begins. Congratulations once again for the job well done.

Thank you.