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Statement by H.E. Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya, Under-Secretary-General, and High Representative, for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States

at the

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

**Room XXII, Palais des Nations, Geneva
6 December 2012,**

His Excellency, Ambassador Yong Chanthalangsy, Permanent Representative of the Lao People's Democratic Republic to the United Nations in Geneva, and Global Chair of the LLDC Group

His Excellency, Ambassador Juan Esteban Aguirre Martinez, Permanent Representative of Paraguay to the United Nations in Geneva, and LLDC Group Coordinator on Trade and Development

Dear colleagues and friends,

It is my pleasure to welcome you today to this second Inter Agency Consultative Meeting on the Preparatory Process for the Comprehensive Ten-Year Review Conference of the Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries. This is my first meeting with you since I assumed duties as High Representative and I am glad to have this opportunity to work with you on this important Conference.

At the outset, I would like to express my deep appreciation to Ambassadors Yong Chanthalangsy, and Juan Esteban Aguirre Martinez, for making time to be with us and participate in this opening session in spite of their busy schedules. 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.

The Almaty Programme of Action was adopted in 2003 as a global partnership framework to help improve the integration of the LLDCs in the international trading system and to meet their special development challenges. The Programme has managed to bring the global attention to the pressing development challenges faced by the LLDCs. The special concerns of LLDCs have been recognized in the international development agenda, including the Millennium Development Goals, the multi-lateral negotiations in the WTO, the Doha Declaration adopted at the UNCTAD XIII Conference and the outcome document of the Rio+20 conference. 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.

Encouraging progress has been achieved towards establishing secure and efficient transit transport systems and enhanced trade facilitation. The LLDC's share of global exports increased from 0.5% in 2003 to just over 1% in 2010 and economic growth from 3.1 % in 2009 to 6.6 % in 2010.

On the social development front, the LLDCs have made some advances in net primary enrolment, gender parity in primary education, representation of women in decision-making, and in stemming the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Ladies and gentlemen

While this progress is heartening, the current global outlook is perilous as the recovery from the global economic and financial crisis remains fragile. Although the global economic growth rebounded in 2010 to 4.1% following the collapse in 2009, it fell to 2.7 % in 2011 and according to latest estimates from DESA it decreased further to 2.5% in 2012. Growth has remained very low in developed countries, particularly in Europe. Global trade has experienced a similar trend. The World Trade Organization has further downgraded its forecast for world trade growth to 2.5 % for the year 2012 as a whole, down from 3.7 %.

This global economic outlook has major implications to the LLDCs that are already at a disadvantage due to fundamental geographic obstacles and remoteness from major international markets. LLDCs' GDP growth is estimated to have decelerated to 5.5 percent in 2011, due to weak external demand and declining commodity prices. In addition economic growth has not been accompanied by structural transformation, economic diversification and strong productive capacities thereby leaving the LLDCs highly vulnerable to trade shocks.

Furthermore new development challenges have emerged over the last 9 years of implementing the APoA that are exacerbating the unique, longstanding geographical problems faced by LLDCs. These issues include fuel and food crises, climate change, land degradation, desertification and deforestation. There has also been an increased frequency of natural disasters in LLDCs such as the dzud experienced in Mongolia in 2010, the severe and frequent droughts being experienced in Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Swaziland, Ethiopia, Niger, Mali and Chad. Other issues such as inequalities and conflict have also affected the LLDCs.

These challenges heighten the need to intensify the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action in the remaining period. We also need to seize the opportunity presented by the ten year review conference to formulate and adopt a renewed ambitious, strengthened and actionable international development partnership framework that can support the LLDCs to adequately tackle the persistent development needs linked to high transport and trade transaction costs and the new and emerging issues

and enable them to achieve sustainable growth and the internationally agreed development goals.

As we look into the development of this future framework, broader issues can be better incorporated. For example, is there a way to give more prominence to other development concerns of LLDCs beyond the transport sector? How can we intensify and scale up trade facilitation initiatives that have proved to be effective? How can we build the resilience of LLDCs to climate change, external shocks and other multiple crises? What about the inequalities? How can we enhance their competitiveness? National ownership is critical, how can we foster national level ownership and follow-up? And what about strengthening the trade negotiation platform of LLDCs? These are just a few of the many questions that are very relevant to our preparations for the ten year review Conference.

Let me also point out that opportunities have emerged over the implementation period of the Almaty Programme that need to be fully harnessed to benefit the LLDCs. For example new technological developments, the discovery of natural resource wealth in some LLDCs, Aid for Trade, increased south-south cooperation, and the potential role of the services sector. It is also essential that the needs and priorities of LLDCs are adequately considered and included in the post-2015 process and the development of the sustainable development goals.

Dear colleagues and friends,

Now turning to the preparations of the Ten-Year Review conference, as agreed in our last meeting the preparatory process for the Conference is following three tracks including: the intergovernmental track; the UN system and other international organizations and regional organizations track; and the Private Sector track.

The preparatory process is moving ahead very satisfactorily particularly the intergovernmental and the inter-agency track. This year's resolution that sets out the modalities for the Conference has already been adopted by the Second Committee and awaits consideration by the General Assembly.

The first thematic pre-conference event on International Trade, Trade Facilitation and Aid for Trade was successfully held in September in Almaty Kazakhstan. I wish to express my sincere gratitude to you and your organisations for your support and active participation in the meeting. The meeting adopted a forward looking final outcome document with recommendations in the area of international trade, trade facilitation and

aid for trade that forms a good resource for the preparation of the outcome document of the conference.

I know that many of you are working hard on activities related to the preparatory process such as the preparation of the substantive background reports for the regional review meetings and conducting relevant research studies. In this regard I am very keen to hear about your planned activities for the preparatory process. I already know and I am very pleased that Europe and Asia are set on holding a joint regional review meeting from 5 to 7 March next year in Vientiane and in this regard, I would like to thank ESCAP, the ECE, and the Government of Laos for their hard work and spirit of collaboration.

My colleagues are going to present more details on the status of preparations and some of the next steps.

It is my sincere hope that in this meeting we will be able to accomplish the following four objectives:

1. Update each other on the status of the preparations for the Conference and identify areas for co-operation;
2. Consult on the preparatory process under the private sector track;
3. Consult on the substantive preparations, including pre-conference events, and key elements of the outcome of the Conference; and
4. Identify recommendations on the way forward.

To conclude let me underscore the importance of working together and building on the complementarities and inherent synergies that make this Inter-agency group unique.

I look forward to continued co-operation with you in the preparatory process of the Conference; during the Conference itself in 2014; and beyond the Conference. I hope that our co-operation will continue to produce tangible development results to LLDCs as it has done so far. In this spirit, I look forward to our fruitful deliberations today.

Thank you for your kind attention.