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Statement

by

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at the

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

**New York
Conference Room 6
10 February, 2012**

His Excellency, Mr. Jose Antonio Dos Santos, Permanent Representative of Paraguay to the United Nations, Current Chair of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries.

Her Excellency, Mrs. Byrganym Aitimova, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the United Nations.

Dear colleagues and friends,

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

At the outset, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to His Excellency, Ambassador Dos Santos of Paraguay who is the current Chair of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries for making time to be with us in this opening session and for agreeing to make a statement.

I especially welcome Her Excellency, Mrs. Byrganym Aitimova, and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the United Nations, whose Government has generously offered to host later this year the 4th Meeting of Trade Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries, and the High-Level Meeting on International Trade, Trade Facilitation and Aid for Trade. In this regard I am very grateful that she has personally dedicated to spend her time with us today despite her busy schedule to brief us on these two important meetings.

I would also like to recognize the presence of Ambassador Anwarul Chowdhury, Senior Special Advisor to the Office of the President of the General Assembly. He is also my predecessor as High Representative.

My special appreciation also goes to those of you that have made a long trip to be here with us today and to those of you from here who have decided to devote your day to this important development issue. Let me also welcome the representatives from the Economic Commission for Africa, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Economic Commission for Europe, the head office of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and its sub-regional Office in Kazakhstan, the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the World Trade Organisation who are joining us today via video-link.

Your attendance today in this inter-agency meeting underscores the great importance that you and your organizations attach to the development concerns of the landlocked developing countries, the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and the successful preparation and convening of the Ten-year Review conference.

Dear colleagues,

There has been some encouraging progress in implementing the Almaty Programme since 2003. Increasingly, both landlocked and transit developing countries have engaged in

important policy reforms with a view to remove physical and non-physical barriers to their effective participation in international trade. Substantial progress has been made in developing agreements where Landlocked Developing Countries and their neighbouring countries are pursuing harmonisation of transport and transit policies, laws, procedures and practices with transit countries. At the international level, there have been significant efforts to establish international conventions and agreements that provide frameworks for harmonisation and simplification of transit formalities and procedures and whose effective implementation can significantly support landlocked developing countries' access to the sea. However ratification and implementation of these conventions by the landlocked developing countries and their transit partners have been slow.

There have also been major efforts to improve the transport, communication and energy infrastructure and to foster the maintenance of the existing infrastructure at national, sub-regional and regional levels. Border facilities and procedures have been streamlined and harmonized leading to increased efficiency and fewer delays. For example: one stop border controls; a yellow or white card motor vehicle insurance schemes; and common visa sticker for drivers; the use of ICTs for customs clearance; the increased establishment of dry ports in many landlocked developing countries and many other transport and trade facilitation initiatives that your organizations have developed to support the Landlocked Developing Countries all of which I can not enumerate. This is making it easier for Landlocked Developing Countries to use neighbouring countries' ports and roads.

Distinguished colleagues

Allow me at this point 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. Since the inception of the programme, our respective institutions have worked hand in hand for resource mobilization, capacity building and monitoring of the implementation. Your active involvement, genuine partnership and sense of ownership are among the main contributors to the success achieved so far.

With regard to international support measures, flows of Official development assistance from traditional donors have continued to increase from \$13.8 billion in 2004 to \$24.8 billion in 2009. The Landlocked Developing Countries have experienced decreases in their debt as a result of debt relief delivered under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative and the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative. Foreign Direct Investment flows to Landlocked Developing Countries increased since 2003 though there was a decrease due to the global financial and economic crisis in 2009. There has been a continued increase in Aid for Trade commitments to Landlocked Developing Countries, which rose from \$4.1 billion in 2005 to \$7.8 billion in 2009. Landlocked developing countries have also benefitted from support through South-South cooperation.

With respect to trade, the proportion of merchandise exports of landlocked developing countries to total world exports had increased to 0.96 percent in 2008 from 0.47 percent in 2003. They however fell to 0.75 percent in 2009 because of the global financial and economic crisis. Even so it is disappointing to note that the proportion of their merchandise exports to total world exports has remained below one percent. It is also important to note that some landlocked developing countries are still in the process of accession to become

members of the World Trade Organisation and they need continued support so that they can obtain the benefits of the membership.

With respect to social and economic performance, the landlocked developing countries as a group showed improved economic performance with real GDP growth that increased from 4.3% in 2003 to 5.8% in 2008 but however fell to 3.6 percent in 2009 due to the global financial and economic crisis. DESA estimated that economic growth for the landlocked developing countries was around 6.7 percent in 2010 and 5.5 in 2011 indicating some recovery which however does not seem to be steady. On the social front, gains have been recorded in several MDGs, including primary education, gender equality, combating the spread of HIV/AIDS and increasing the proportion of people with access to improved water source. However, achieving food security, eradicating poverty and reducing child and maternal mortality remain major social development challenges.

Excellencies

Distinguished colleagues,

Although we have not yet done a comprehensive appraisal of the Almaty Programme of Action, preliminary indication show that while landlocked developing countries are making some progress with the international support provided through the implementation of the programme, there remain challenges to overcome. They still experience high transport and trade transaction costs and their transit transport infrastructure is still inadequate with some missing links. The limited progress in the Doha Round of trade negotiations is also holding back potential gains for landlocked developing countries from improvements in trade facilitation. As we discussed in the last inter-agency meeting emphasis towards building 'hard infrastructure' such as roads need to be accompanied by even greater efforts towards the 'soft' infrastructure such as logistics and other trade facilitation needs. Furthermore economic growth has not been accompanied by structural transformation and economic diversification and strong productive capacities. As a result, landlocked developing countries continue to be vulnerable to trade shocks due to commodity price volatility and other external shocks. These challenges are now exacerbated by emerging multiple global challenges that include rising food and fuel prices, economic and financial crises and climate change. Landlocked developing countries are also heavily affected by land degradation and desertification.

As the end of the first ten years of the Almaty Programme is drawing to a close, it is important that an ambitious and results-oriented agenda for landlocked developing countries is adopted that can truly make a positive difference. In this regard, we welcome the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 66/214, in which it decided to hold a comprehensive ten-year review conference of the Almaty Programme of Action in 2014.

The Conference will undertake a comprehensive appraisal of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action by the landlocked developing countries and their transit neighbours and the development partners, the UN system, other international, regional and sub-regional organizations and the international community. It will share best practices and lessons learned, identify obstacles and constraints encountered as well as actions and initiatives needed to overcome them. The Conference will also analyze emerging

challenges and opportunities facing the landlocked developing countries with a view to identify effective international and domestic policies.

It is in the context of this mandate that we have convened this inter-agency meeting so as to consult with you on the preparations for the Ten-Year Review conference. The organizations that you represent have different mandates and scopes of activities and it is important that we effectively harness these strengths in preparing for the review conference. My Office has prepared a draft concept note, a roadmap and a draft list of pre-conference events that Mr Erdenebileg is going to present to you so that we can consult each other and come up with a consensus.

Dear colleagues,

My Office is proposing three preparatory tracks for the Conference including: the intergovernmental track; the UN system and other international organizations and regional organizations track; and the Private Sector track. The role of my Office is to facilitate and effectively coordinate preparations within these tracks and also between them.

In this regard I am calling for contributions by all partners in the following major areas:

(1) My Office circulated to all participants, for your review, a preliminary list of proposed pre-conference events that your organisations will be interested in organising and sponsoring on priority themes of relevance to landlocked developing countries. The list is very preliminary and open for your additional suggestions and comments. The pre-conference events are very important as they would help raise the visibility of the Conference and draw the world's attention to the challenges facing landlocked developing countries.

(2) As you may be aware, substantive reviews at national, sub-regional and regional levels are important inputs to the Conference and I count on the UN Resident Coordinators system, Regional Commissions and all relevant partners to support the reviews as mandated by the General Assembly.

(3) Partners are also invited to make substantive contributions to the Ten Year review through preparations of studies and reports in the thematic areas relevant to your work including those that will be used as background documents for the pre-conference events. These studies or reports will provide important inputs to the draft outcome document of the Conference.

(4) I also would like to solicit your inputs on the possible side events that you would be interested in organising during the conference itself in 2014.

(5) I would like to invite partners to look at the preparatory process and the conference as an opportunity to announce concrete deliverables such as innovative projects or the conclusion of relevant bilateral or multi lateral agreements, and to showcase effective technical or financial assistance programmes that can support the landlocked developing countries in the new agenda/decade.

(6) I would like to call upon your organisation to designate a focal point for the Ten-Year Review Conference, who will have the overall responsibilities for planning, mobilizing and coordinating the efforts of your organization to the substantive and organizational preparations of the Conference.

Let me conclude by informing you that, My Office is working with the Government of Kazakhstan to prepare for the 4th Meeting of Trade Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries, and the High-Level Meeting on International Trade, Trade Facilitation and Aid for Trade. These meetings form a major part of this preparatory process and I would like to urge you to plan to participate. I would like to once again thank the Government of Kazakhstan for its generous support to host the meetings.

I would like to reemphasize that the Landlocked Developing Countries are counting on all of us to support them in their endeavor to overcome the development obstacles caused by their geography and in preparing for the successful convening of the Ten-Year Review Conference that will usher in a new development agenda. In this spirit, I look forward to our fruitful deliberations today.

Thank you for your kind attention.