

**Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked
Developing Countries (LLDCs), 3 November 2014
Opening Statement by the Federal President of the
Republic of Austria, Heinz Fischer**

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Distinguished Heads of State,
Honorable Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be able to welcome you all to the Second Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries here in Vienna. The presence of such a large number of high level representatives is a clear testimony of the importance of this conference and of the fact that landlocked developing countries face

particular challenges that need the understanding, the solidarity and continued support of the International Community.

Allow me at the outset to share with you a few thoughts on Austria's history and our experience as a relatively small, mountainous and landlocked country.

In 1918, after the catastrophic events of the First World War, Austria was reduced to only a fraction of its former national territory, and through the redrawing of its borders became a landlocked country. At that time many people had doubts as to

whether this small nation would be able to survive on its own.

I don't want to dwell on the details of our history, but want to make the point that I am proud and happy to be able to say that today, 100 years after the outbreak of WW I – which we are commemorating this year –, the Republic of Austria has become a strong, independent and prosperous nation state.

As one of 28 member states of the European Union, which Austria joined in 1995, we are now part of a huge common market of nearly 500 Mio. inhabitants, enjoying an unprecedented period of peace and prosperity. That does not mean that we have solved all our problems and that we can simply lean back and enjoy the fruits of past work: No, there are huge

challenges for us too, both at the political as well as at the economic level.

But thanks to our membership in the European Union, our young citizens are growing up in peaceful societies, and are privileged to enjoy freedom of movement. The fact that they can travel, study and work without obstacles in any EU-member country ensures a vivid exchange of values, ideas and lifestyles, and helps to realize economic potentials.

The economic benefits of integration into the common market of the European Union are obvious. Creating a single market has drastically reduced export and import costs. Goods can move freely, using a pan-European **infrastructure network**

which has few equals in the world in terms of quality and density.

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I am aware that the success story of Austria and the European Union cannot serve as a one-to-one model for the diverse group of LLDCs with their individual challenges. However, I believe that there is an important lesson to be learned for all LLDCs: **Landlocked countries need partners.** I therefore want to encourage all LLDCs and their bordering transit countries to seek **active regional cooperation.**

Many obstacles faced by LLDCs should be fairly easy to overcome in cooperation with **neighbouring transit countries**.

Ten years after the initial start of the Almaty Programme of Action, the vast majority of land locked developing countries have made important progress in achieving their development targets. All 32 landlocked developing countries can record economic gains and have seen an increase in total exports. However, as impressive as some of these achievements have been, I am convinced there is much more potential.

Given the cost-intensive infrastructure needed in landlocked developing countries, I also wish to underline the importance of **official development assistance to help LLDCs** in their endeavours. The European Union is among the major donors tackling trade-related obstacles, and the world's largest provider of 'aid for trade'. Together with the 'Everything but Arms'-liberalization of trade, these initiatives aim at a better integration into the world economy.

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The Millennium Development Goals have been an important tool to measure progress, to streamline

policies and to mobilise political and financial support. We are now in the phase of negotiating the post-2015 development agenda, and within this new framework we are about to redefine our development goals. We all want to keep the commitments that were made towards achieving the MDGs. But we also want to include new dimensions, such as a clear focus on sustainability, and introduce a more comprehensive framework to measure progress.

This conference is therefore taking place at the right time and will send a clear political message that the priorities and needs of LLDCs must be fully integrated in the new development agenda.

I wish you all fruitful deliberations during the upcoming days and look forward to the Vienna Declaration and the Vienna Programme of Action, as stepping stones towards a better future for land locked developing countries, and ultimately a better future for all of us.

Thank you for your attention.