



Statement by H.E. Mr. Zwelethu Mnisi

Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Swaziland at the United Nations (New York)

- H.E. Minister Sebastian Kurz, President of the Conference
- H.E. Mr Sam Kutesa, President of the General Assembly
- H.E. Mr Yamfwa D. Mukanga, Minister of Transport, Works Supply and Communications of the Republic of Zambia and Chair of the Group of LLDCs
- H.E. Mr Gyan Chandra Acharya, Secretary General of the Conference
- Excellencies
- Distinguished Delegates
- Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf on His Majesty's Government and the People of the Kingdom of Swaziland, we join others in expressing my country's deepest condolences to the Government and the People of the Republic of Zambia on the passing on of their President and fellow member of SADC.

Let me extend my congratulations to you on your election as President of the Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries. My Delegation would like to associate itself with the statement made by the Pluri-national State of Bolivia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Republic of Zambia as Chair of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs).

Mr. President,

The challenges faced by Landlocked Developing Countries, owing to the geographical disadvantage of having no territorial access to the sea, are well documented. In addition to preventing effective integration of our economies into the global trading system, our countries are further challenged by the combined adverse effects of high transport costs, transit traffic difficulties, cumbersome customs procedures and the lack of predictability regarding the timely arrival of goods at export destinations. Like most Landlocked Developing Countries, Swaziland is dependent on an undiversified, small basket of export products as well as a limited number of historical trading partners. These factors combined, have undermined the earnest efforts of Government to alleviate poverty, grow the private sector and foster development.

I am delighted, however, that since the Almaty Programme of Action was adopted in 2003 to address the special and peculiar needs of Landlocked Developed Countries, Swaziland has made some progress, especially in the area of transport-related infrastructure. For example, 90 percent of the roads that link us with our two neighbouring States are tarmac.

Similarly, in the area of air travel, we have recently completed the construction of King Mswati III International Airport, a new state of the art facility to better service the eastern region of Southern Africa which has been operational since September 2014. This facility has the capability of handling 2 jumbo jets simultaneously in line with the safety and security standards required internationally.

Mr. President,

Over the years we have also developed supportive strategies, which form part and parcel of the Almaty Programme of Action. With the assistance of our cooperating partners we have developed a national export strategy, a private sector development strategy and recently, an aid for trade strategy.

We have noted, however, that these strategies would only remain on paper and just grand and beautiful ideas, so long as there is no commitment to implement them. It is in this vein that we have developed implementation plans for these strategies, particularly for the aid for trade strategy, which we believe is sufficiently comprehensive to address the major trade-related challenges that we have as a landlocked developing country.

Mr. President,

Over the past 20 years, there has been an expansion in the number and scope of trade agreements between developed and developing economies and indeed between members of the 'global South'. LLDCs have also played a central role in the expansion of regional trade arrangements. During this phase of global trade integration, my country, Swaziland has not sat on the side lines; we are party to several integration processes including the EU - SADC; the South African Customs Union

(SACU); the Southern African Development Community and the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). We have also benefited from unilateral arrangements. Indeed, while these agreements have created a legal infrastructure that is supportive of trade, high transaction costs and limited regulatory convergence between customs authorities have frustrated the real expansion of trading and economic opportunities, particularly for LLDCs like Swaziland.

In view of the foregoing, my country is of the view that the efficiency gains from trade facilitation stand to increase the international competitiveness of LLDCs, while simultaneously providing welfare gains for domestic consumer businesses. Therefore, it remains in the interests of LLDCS to secure legally binding multilateral rules that will better allow our members to take advantage of improved market access conditions.

In this regard, I am pleased to mention that Swaziland is fully committed to the definitive implementation of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement, which was adopted in Bali, Indonesia in December 2013. Presently, we are finalizing our national internal processes and consultations, so that before the end of this year, we would have notified our Category "A" Measures of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement.

Mr. President,

I am delighted to also mention that His Majesty's Government has prioritized improving the investment climate in Swaziland. One of the initiatives we have undertaken is the establishment of the Investor Roadmap Unit, among other things, to improve our ranking in the ease of doing business.

For instance, in the World Bank Report of 2014, we have moved from 123 to 110, which we believe we on track to reach our target of being in top 60 by the year 2022, in line with our national vision.

Mr. President;

In conclusion, my delegation strongly believes that to effectively address the challenges already enumerated, as well as to fund the projects that we have prioritized in our aid-for-trade strategy document, requires the involvement of the international community and our co-operating partners, including UNCTAD, UNDP, UNIDO, WTO and FAO; to assist LLDCs to move forward all issues of concern and interest to them. Moreover, we call upon these international development institutions to advocate for a relaxation of the discriminatory practice of marginalizing middle income countries in accessing trade and other development finance on concessional terms based only on a single GDP per capita criterion; particularly because unlike other developing countries, our countries do not have access to a unique development envelope at the global level.

I thank you