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Country Statement

by

**H.E. Mr. Manasvi Srisodapol,
Special Envoy of the Deputy Prime Minister
and Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Kingdom of Thailand**

at

**The 2nd United Nations Conference
on Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs)**

**Vienna, Republic of Austria,
3-5 November 2014**

**Madame Chair,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,**

1. It is an honour for me to represent His Excellency General Tanasak Patimapragorn, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand at this highly important Conference. Allow me to convey the Thai delegation's sincere warm greetings to all delegates. Allow me also to congratulate the President and all elected members of the Bureau of the Conference. I also wish to express sincere appreciation to the Government of Austria for hosting this Conference in the magnificent city of Vienna. Further, I wish to express my deepest condolences to the people of Zambia on the loss of their President.

2. Today's Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries could not have been held at more opportune time. We are approaching the target year for MDGs and are actively preparing for an even more ambitious post-2015 Development Agenda. It is therefore appropriate to review **the Almaty Programme of Action** and prepare specific inputs for the **Post-2015 Development Agenda** from LLDCs perspective.

4. Since the adoption of the **Almaty Programme of Action** in 2003, there has been considerable progress, with LLDCs experiencing higher economic growth and trade volumes. Despite that, **LLDCs remains disadvantaged** in many aspects due to the landlocked nature, isolation from markets and high transport costs. Many LLDCs are also severely affected by **current and emerging global challenges** such as global financial crisis, climate change, natural disasters, epidemics and food crisis. These challenges hinder their competitiveness and obstruct their progress towards realizing sustainable development.

5. Thailand can associate itself with the concerns and aspirations of LLDCs. Thailand is a transit country for the only one landlocked developing country in Southeast Asia namely the Lao PDR. We believe that only **genuine partnership and cooperation on the basis of the mutual interest between LLDCs and transit countries** can ensure that the benefit from the global market and economic growth are distributed more evenly. As a transit country, Thailand attaches great importance to strengthening genuine partnership with LLDCs to create a **win-win solution** which would enable all of us to reach a shared prosperity together.

6. In this regard, we have in Thailand, our international development arm, called **Thailand International Development Cooperation Agency (TICA)**, in which LLDCs represent our top priorities in the international development cooperation. We have forged meaningful partnerships with LLDCs in the region, namely Bhutan, Lao PDR, Nepal and Mongolia through hundreds of projects in capacity building and human resources development in the form of grants and scholarships. The partnership with the Lao PDR, as Thailand's immediate neighbor and the only LLDCs in ASEAN has been especially strong and dynamic. Over the past decade, Thailand has extended almost 25 million USD of academic and technical cooperation, and over 130 million USD in loans and grants to our landlocked neighbor.

Mr. President,

7. **Deepening regional cooperation and integration** is one of the crucial elements to overcome the marginalization of LLDCs. The advent of a seamless ASEAN Community in 2015 cannot be complete and sustainable without the close cooperation between Thailand and the Lao PDR. With the **advent of the ASEAN Economic Community**, ASEAN will emerge as one of the world's top economies with even greater promise as we are embarking on a wider regional economic integration with other major economies in Asia and the Pacific.

8. **Enhanced regional connectivity** is a key to disperse wealth and plant development more evenly across borders. **On the software side**, it is indispensable to **improve institutional connectivity**, the standardization of rules and border management as well as the effective **mobilization of financial resources** from the international institutions and new framework of partnerships to fortify the **hardware** transport infrastructure in the region.

Mr. President,

9. History of the ancient Silk Road demonstrates the important role of the LLDCs **as land bridges** linking the ancient trade route between Asia and Europe. I wish to highlight ways in which the potential of LLDCs can be further unleashed:

10. **First, moving from being landlocked to landlinked economies**. To achieve this requires **predictable and efficient transport systems** as well as efficient transport facilities, seamless and effective logistic network for trade. The **integrated intermodal transport** facilities will help improve the efficiency of logistic system and reduce the cost for transportation and trade transaction. **On trade facilitation**, we need to address the bottlenecks at border interchange stations by standardizing the operational and technical requirements and harmonization of customs and rules.

11. This is why Thailand sees completing the **“missing link”** that aims to compliment the global transportation network as very important. Thailand is proud to be the first country to sign the **Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports** under ESCAP's framework in 2013. The dry port at Chiang Khong in the north of Thailand, R3A Highway and Four Thai-Lao Friendship Bridges over the Mekong River are used to support modal shift from road to rail and to water transit linking the Lao PDR to Thailand, China and other ASEAN countries as well as catering to increase trilateral trade between them.

12. Moreover, while enhancing transport connectivity, Thailand is working towards transforming existing **transport corridors into full-fledged economic corridors** in order to maximize the utilization of infrastructure linkages. To this end, we are

setting up **special economic zones (SEZs)** in border areas to enhance job creation, economic growth, and development along the transport corridors.

13. **Second, overcoming the limitation of being offline.** LLDCs stand to benefit tremendously from being bridged digitally. **ICT** is an important means to achieve fast, reliable and efficient transit system which will enhance their competitiveness, productivity, export, and business activities. **E-commerce** serves as the new entry point for LLDCs to participate in wider global supply chains and trade in services. **E-payment** and **paperless trade** would reduce delay at borders and transit procedures. Thailand has also expanded our **internet broadband networks** and **ICT community learning centers** in remote areas. The higher rate of internet penetration will help enhance creativity, innovation and problem-solving for entrepreneurs, policy makers and citizens.

14. **Third, productive capacity development and export product diversification is crucial** to poverty eradication as it can help them cope with external economic shocks, impacts of climate change and trade volatility. We understand the challenges of the inadequate infrastructure, low agricultural productivity and the decline in value of primary agricultural products in the global supply chain. Thus, we are ready to exchange our best practices in order to help enhance LLDCs' productivity, the value added export-content and services as well as practical entrepreneurial skills, particularly on **sustainable tourism, Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs)**, local entrepreneurship stimulus program known as **OTOP** (One Town One Product) and **agro-processing business**, where Thailand has accumulated significant experience, resilience and advancements.

Mr. President,

15. Much more can be done for the LLDCs. Thailand joins in the call to all transit countries, development partners, the United Nations, private sectors and all stakeholders to join hands in supporting the sustained and inclusive economic growth and development of LLDCs including through **foreign direct investment** on transport infrastructure and ICT. **Reliable financial resources** are also needed to ensure LLDCs' economic stability.

16. Last but not least, Thailand wishes to emphasize that the special challenges and needs of LLDCs must be recognized and addressed properly in the Post-2015 Development Agenda. In this regard, Thailand looks forward to the adoption of the Vienna Programme of Action for the upcoming decade and wishes to reaffirm our renewed commitment to work closely with the LLDCs and all members of the United Nations to make sure that the new development agenda will take into account the special needs of LLDCs.

Thank you.