

**Statement by H.E. Gen (Retd) Vijay Kumar Singh,
Minister of State for External Affairs,
Government of India
Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing
Countries (LLDCs)
Vienna, Austria, November 3, 2014**

**Madam President,
Distinguished Ministers and Heads of Delegations,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is an honor for me to participate in this Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries.

On behalf of the Government of India, I would like to express my deep appreciation to the Government of Austria for hosting this important Conference.

Madam President,

We would like to acknowledge the efforts of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States in his capacity as the Secretary General of the Conference.

We would also like to express our appreciation for the Permanent Representatives of Lao People's Democratic Republic and Sweden for their excellent mentoring of the preparatory process of the Conference and in finalizing the outcome document of the Conference.

India sees this 2nd Conference on LLDCs as an opportunity for reinvigorating political will and strengthening international cooperation in support of the development of the LLDCs.

This conference also comes at a very opportune time, just as the international community is gearing up to unveil a new global development agenda beyond 2015.

We therefore look forward not only to an ambitious roadmap for the progress and wellbeing of the LLDCs coming out of this Conference, but for the interests and concerns of the LLDCs to be addressed in the Post-2015 Development Agenda as well.

Madam President,

While India has a coastline of over 7,500 km, we are a large country with areas that are quite remote and not very well connected. We are conscious of the many disadvantages of remoteness and the additional costs and hardships that it can entail for the people inhabiting such areas.

India is, therefore, deeply sensitive to the unique challenges faced by the landlocked developing countries on account of their geography. However, these challenges can be overcome, as has been shown by our hosts Austria.

India has historic cultural and economic ties with the LLDCs in our region including Nepal, Bhutan and Afghanistan.

Our government has put a renewed emphasis on building the linkages between the countries in our immediate neighbourhood. We realize that connectivity and economic infrastructure are pre-requisites to economic growth, development and prosperity for our peoples.

We have implemented a number of measures to facilitate trade, including unilateral concessions for LLDCs; we are working on a number of infrastructure projects to build roads, rail connections, to build power plants to generate and share electricity etc.

Clearly, there is a lot of work to be done. And we stand ready as a willing partner.

We are also happy to see an upward trajectory in India's trade with the LLDCs.

India has a longstanding tradition of being a reliable partner in south-south cooperation sharing our limited means and expertise in a spirit of solidarity.

While this is not a substitute for the development assistance such as the ODA by the developed countries, we remain committed to continue or development partnership through trade measures, concessional loans and grants, training and scholarships and other forms of joint ventures.

Madam President

The Almaty Programme of Action played a seminal role in creating awareness about the special challenges faced by landlocked developing countries globally and placed their concerns firmly on the global development agenda, thereby increasing the visibility and recognition of such countries and their special needs at the international level.

In part due to this visibility and the follow-up to the Programme of Action, there was concrete progress in increasing the capacity and efficiency of transit transport systems of the LLDCs.

Indeed, it is a testimony to the enhanced global attention and cooperation on LLDC issues as a result of the Almaty Programme of Action that the economic and trade performance of LLDCs have recorded impressive growth rates.

Despite these successes, the LLDCs as a group continue to face daunting developmental challenges, not least due to the constraints imposed by their

geographical location. Despite high growth rates, the share of LLDCs in global trade remains modest and restricted to a few products.

The progress achieved under the Almaty Programme of Action has been uneven and not shared by all LLDCs. Landlocked developing countries remain fragile and vulnerable to external shocks, not only because of their high transport and transit costs, but also due to their lack of economic diversification, limited productive capacities and low export competitiveness and.

Many of the LLDCs have been unable to structurally transform their economies, diversify their production models, and move up the industrial value chain. They have found their developmental challenges compounded not only by the global economic and financial crisis but also by emerging issues such as climate change, desertification and land degradation.

As the global community charts a new path for development in the post-2015 period with the overarching objective of ending poverty and giving a life of dignity to all, the new development agenda for the LLDCs would need to address their concerns in a holistic manner.

It is imperative that LLDCs are able to generate and sustain robust economic growth and structurally transform their economies to be able to overcome the negative effects of their geographic constraints.

The new development agenda must also ensure enhanced availability of international financial and technological support to LLDCs in the spirit of a strengthened global partnership for their development.

Madam President,

An effective solution to the problems faced by the LLDCs must also address the constraints and challenges faced by the transit developing countries that neighbour landlocked developing countries in a holistic and integrated manner.

The fact that most of these transit developing countries face significant developmental challenges and constraints of their own places an inherent limitation to the extent of support they can provide to the LLDCs.

It is important therefore for the international community, development partners and the international organizations to give equal emphasis to supporting the efforts of the transit developing countries.

Madam President,

India believes that for an equitable, balanced and sustainable global growth, it is a must that the fruits of development and progress be shared with others. It is with this belief that India has been extending its steadfast support to strengthen the development process of LLDCs.

The financial contribution of US\$ 100,000/- by Government of India for the organization of this Conference was in line with this spirit of friendliness and cooperation with the LLDCs.

India enjoys close and historical ties with its landlocked neighbours and attaches the highest priority to further enhancing our friendly and good neighbourly relations, including through the strengthening of trade relations and cooperation on transit issues.

India's comprehensive agreements on trade and transit with both Nepal and Bhutan are crafted and implemented to bring the highest benefits to both countries and minimize additional costs to their economies. We have extended economic and technical support for infrastructure development and capacity building, apart from promoting regional transport and trade connectivity.

India has been in discussion with the Governments of Iran and Afghanistan, to see how we can collaborate on a project to develop Iran's Chahbahar Port which will greatly improve Afghanistan's access to the sea, and provide a significant boost to the economic reconstruction effort in the western parts of the country.

We are fully committed to further deepen and strengthen our cooperation and support to our landlocked neighbours and to partner them in their developmental efforts.

In conclusion, **Madam President**, we hope that the international community will be cognizant of the challenges and needs of the LLDCs and put in place international frameworks that will help them overcome these challenges and hardships. Let me also assure you that India stands ready to continue and strengthen its cooperation with the LLDCs to assist them in achieving their development objectives.

In this city of music and innovation, we hope the new development agenda for the LLDCs will be able to synergize international efforts and create the necessary support structure for our LLDC friends.

I thank you.
