

**Draft Speech by Hon. Neomal Perera, Deputy Minister of External Affairs
of Sri Lanka, Leader of the Sri Lanka Delegation to the
Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries :
3 – 5 November 2014, Vienna**

Madam President -

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

the Austrian Foreign Minister as President -

Let me begin by congratulating ~~you~~, ~~Mr. President~~, on ~~your~~ ^{his} assumption of this high office. Under ~~your~~ ^{his} exemplary stewardship, it is our firm belief that this important process will achieve success.

I would like to place on record our sincere appreciation to the Austrian Government for its commitment to promoting the interests of Landlocked Developing Countries. It has demonstrated this commitment fully by taking the lead in organizing this Conference.

I would like to commend as well, Mr. Gyan Chanrda Acharya, High Representative of the UN Secretary General and his Office for the tireless efforts and the initiative taken to make this event a reality.

The United Nations' leadership on important global issues such as this when a group of countries continues to be bogged down in the vortex of poverty and inequality arising inherently from their geographical locations and their attendant challenges is no doubt reassuring for many countries in the South.

Madam
~~Mr. President,~~

Sri Lanka is not a landlocked developing country. It is not even a small island developing country according to the current UN definition. Nor is our nation a least developed country. It is therefore obvious that we do not fall into any of the categories that come under the purview of the mandate of UN High Representative who is charged with addressing the special needs and challenges of the least developed, landlocked and small island developing countries.

If Sri Lanka is not falling into any of these categories, why are we here today?

First of all, Sri Lanka is an active participant in all international processes where such participation is sought, or is possible. Its participation in processes addressing development related issues under the aegis of the United Nations has been consistent. Sri Lanka has played this role traditionally in a vibrant and productive manner.

Secondly, solidarity and fraternity remain the basic pillars of Sri Lanka's Foreign Policy premised on the principle of non-alignment. It pursues an approach, which emphasizes enmity towards none and friendship towards all. It is in the category of special friends that most landlocked developing countries belong in.

Thirdly, adding a new element to its outreach policy, under the leadership of His Excellency President Mahinda Rajapaksa, Sri Lanka is beginning to actively participate in, and contribute to, South-South development initiatives, thereby demonstrating our good will and interest to engage with, and extend support to, friendly countries in need of support.

Sri Lanka's participation in the Second UN Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries today is in full manifestation of our commitment to effectively advancing all these policy imperatives. Promoting the interests of developing countries, standing especially in solidarity with those in our region, South Asia, which are landlocked- Afghanistan, Bhutan and Nepal- is both timely and important.

Madam
Mr. President,

We have always highlighted in the relevant development forums, the importance of North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation for enabling development in countries in the South. Our emphasis on South-South cooperation is because we realize that in the long term, it is necessary that countries among us which have the capacity, ability and political will step forward to lend support to those in dire need of it. We are conscious, however, that this emphasis does not seek to dilute or detract from, the value of North-South cooperation which is still critical for the advancement of many developing countries. North-South cooperation, with its South-South corollary providing a complementary approach towards international development cooperation, is imperative specially for uplifting the socio-economic conditions of peoples in the landlocked developing countries.

It is in this context that we take note of the great deal of substantive preparations that are going on now, with countries in the South and their partners in the North working together, with a view to enabling an outcome and a programme of action sensitive to the special needs and challenges of landlocked developing countries.

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Mr. President,

This brings me straight to the point under deliberation today: support for landlocked developing countries as we move towards evolving the post-2015 development agenda. An agenda for development post-2015, in our view, would not only put premium on inclusive and sustainable development, but in fact will be informed and strengthened by the lessons learnt in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals over the past 14 years. It has been our pertinent experience that goals set, however lofty they may be, would only sound hollow, in the absence of adequate financial and other resources required for their effective implementation. It is observed increasingly now that the difference between word and deed in international development discourses is becoming too ~~gaping~~ ^{wider} at a time when countries are bracing themselves for a switch-over from the MDG phase to an SDG era. The pace of development in landlocked developing countries demonstrates this graphically.

The Almaty Programme of Action is a case in point. The state of implementation of the programme of action adopted by the First UN Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries reveals that it is only a mixed outcome. Although it has seen progress in some areas, as a whole its implementation could have been better.

A review of implementation of Almaty Programme of Action, the evolving development scenario post-2015, continuing challenges faced by landlocked developing countries would all call for an integrated, comprehensive and result-oriented programme. Only such an outcome can help address structural impediments as well as economic and social challenges experienced by landlocked developing countries. It is our fervent expectation that the Vienna outcome will provide an appropriate package which will address the special needs, circumstances and challenges of these countries in a more holistic and pragmatic manner.

Madam

Mr. President,

As I conclude, I would like to reiterate that Sri Lanka would strongly support the achievement of such an outcome. We would also explore ways and means of supporting countries in the South within our ability, as part of our larger contribution to make the action programme a success. We believe that with commitment, political will, vision, and zeal, it is possible for all of us to galvanize our efforts to help one another and make the world a better place for all to live.

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