

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Martin Sajdik,
President of the Economic and Social Council,
At the Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked
Developing Countries**

3 November 2014

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- H.E. Minister Sebastian Kurz, President of the Conference
 - H.E. Mr. Sam Kutesa, President of the General Assembly
 - H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the UN
 - H.E. Mr. Heinz Fischer, President of Austria
 - 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

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for inviting me to participate and address the opening of the Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) here in my home country, Austria.

The challenges of LLDCs and the problems they face are matters that the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) regularly devotes time to throughout its meetings, in order to give visibility to their issues and to rally the international community and the UN system and all stakeholders to their cause.

The many pressing challenges LLDCs face, arising mainly from remoteness and distances from international markets are a real obstacle to their efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development. Their economies, therefore, need support from the international community and from all the stakeholders that have been identified in the Almaty Programme of Action.

In the Almaty Programme of Action, Member States recognised the need for a fundamental framework for genuine partnerships between landlocked and transit developing countries, and development partners at the national, bilateral, regional and global levels.

Distinguished delegates,

As globalization proceeds and the world is becoming more economically integrated, LLDCs need lasting solutions. In this regard LLDCs need to improve their economic diversification, value-addition and connectivity to global value chains.

This will require bold actions in many areas.

Negotiations cannot be easy considering the level of diversity among LLDCs, and in view of the ambitious actions required from transit countries and many other partners.

In this context we must remind ourselves that this conference only occurs once in a decade. As such, we have an opportunity and responsibility to turn the tide towards completely eradicating poverty and enhancing economic development in LLDCs and better integrate them into the world economy.

We cannot miss this chance.

Distinguished delegates,

Allow me to highlight the following four aspects that are in my view of high importance to LLDCs:

First, *investing in infrastructure*. LLDCs are most dependent on road and rail infrastructure, and yet they are particularly lagging behind in these sectors- This must change. Improvements in physical infrastructure in LLDCs but also in transit countries have a direct impact on economic development and enhance the human capital of the poor.

Second, *trade facilitation and cost cutting*: LLDCs are still facing the challenge of high transit and transaction cost. As 60 per cent of global trade is in intermediate goods, trade facilitation procedures are essential to the competitiveness of businesses, particularly for small- and medium-sized enterprises.

Cost cutting is possible through resolute efforts by LLDCs and their transit neighbours. This relates specifically to enhancing the Rule of Law, particularly to the fight against corruption. Reducing corruption means reducing transit costs. Corruption is not a phenomenon of poverty alone, there is also corruption among developed countries, as greed is of a global nature. So poverty cannot be an excuse for not to fight corruption. Reducing or even eliminating corruption would – in very real terms – facilitate trade.

Third, *South-South cooperation*: 22 out of 32 LLDCs, i.e. around 70%, have another LLDC as a neighbour. 14 out of 32, i.e. some 44 %, share borders with at least one of the BRICS countries, which are for LLDCs not only transit countries but rank also among their major trading partners. So it is also up to the LLDCs themselves – and the BRICS – to mitigate the detriments of remoteness. ECOSOC will highlight this aspect also in the High Level Political Forum of 2015.

And fourth, *implementation of the outcome document*. I assure you that the ECOSOC will play its role in reviewing progress made. In implementing the next Programme of Action that will be adopted here in Vienna, it is cardinal that the progress is carefully monitored.

In particular, I would urge UN institutions and others to provide appropriate support to LLDCs in building human capacities, data collection for monitoring and evaluation of the new programme, as well as addressing the challenges of different legal frameworks. In this, you can count on the support from the ECOSOC.

Distinguished delegates,

Allow me to also address the issue of partnerships.

I believe that it is only through genuine cooperation amongst all stakeholders that we can ultimately achieve our global development aspirations. Effective partnerships for development are proven mechanisms for successful sustainable development outcomes.

As we transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the post-2015 period, we must ensure that partnership mechanisms become central to the implementation of the new development agenda. This includes, in particular, LLDCs.

As a gateway to the UN for all non-state stakeholders, ECOSOC continues to provide a unique platform where governments, NGOs, business, academia and the philanthropic community, and others, can come together to forge ways for promoting sustainable development.

Since 2008, the Council has convened an Annual Partnerships Forum, bringing together a large diversity of development actors to focus on how we can partner to fulfil development objectives. It has also promoted partnerships for development through its Development Cooperation Forum, where Government-to-Government partnerships have been discussed since 2007.

I also believe that the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda will see a flowering of new partnerships in line with agreed global commitments.

Distinguished Delegates,

ECOSOC is committed to addressing the unique challenges of LLDCs. The Council will continue to give visibility to these challenges and to garner the support of the international community, UN system and all stakeholders in the post-2015 era.

I am convinced that the outcome document to be adopted at this conference will bring about progress in poverty eradication and sustainable development in LLDCs.

I wish you successful deliberations in the days ahead, and I truly hope that you will enjoy your stay in my home town, Vienna.

Thank you.