The Second United Nations Conference on LLDCs
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Opening Statement

H.E. Mohlabi K. Tseko, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Relations, the Kingdom of Lesotho

Co-Chair, High-level thematic roundtable on the Priorities of LLDCs and the Post-2015 Development Agenda

The President of the General Assembly
The President of ECOSOC
Excellences,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me at the outset to express my sincere gratitude to the United Nations for convening this once-in-a-decade conference on landlocked developing countries. In particular, I would like to thank the High Representative and UN Under-Secretary General Gyan Acharya and his office for steering the preparatory process and for staging the Conference, including this high-level roundtable.

I am privileged to have the UN Under-Secretary-General Gyan Acharya, who is also the Secretary-General of the Second UN Conference on LLDCs, as my distinguished co-chair of the event.

As we all know, it is a momentous period for LLDCs –, a group of countries that the international community has long recognized that they face special challenges.

This Second UN Conference on LLDCs, together with the entire post-2015 process is expected to produce ambitious but realistic development blueprints, with clear, specific and actionable sets of recommendations.

Of course, LLDCs stand to benefit from both processes, which is quite appropriate, considering their inherent and real disadvantage due to lack of territorial access to the sea, and inevitable reliance on their neighbours to conduct external trade.

In an econometric study conducted by Under Secretary-General’s office, landlockedness is estimated to cause an overall reduction of around 22 percent in the level of LLDCs’ development.
That study confirmed what many of us in landlocked developing countries have always known and said.

In fact, the World Bank, regional development banks, United Nation system organizations, including the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and UNCTAD, and renowned scholars such as Professor Jeffrey Sachs, Paul Collier and others, have all established that our countries perform worse than our transit developing neighbours.

The Almaty Programme of Action, the first ever United Nations development framework for our group of countries, has been critical in our development, and in shaping discussions and policy agenda pertaining to the geographical isolation of the world’s 32 LLDCs.

As we all know, the overarching goal of the post-2015 development agenda is to create a world in which no one is left behind, promote sustainable development and lead to the eradication of extreme poverty.

The Millennium Declaration, and the 8 time-bound goals and targets brought coordination and clarity in our common approach in tackling poverty and other social ills.

Our landlocked developing countries were among countries that benefitted from this global initiative, even though, in our view, remains an unfinished business. Extreme poverty among many of our countries remains rampant and deep - with a third of them ranking among the worst 20 countries on the Human Development Index of the United Nations.

It is, therefore, obvious that there cannot be a development agenda without a focus on landlocked developing countries. As the international community continues to engage on the Post-2015 development framework, the Sustainable Development Goals, Doha Rounds of WTO, and Financing for Development among others, we must be cognizant that in the absence of LLDC-specific actions, our countries will only continue to fall further behind.

Before I hand the floor to Under-Secretary General Acharya, it is my great honour to introduce to you our guest speaker.

We are pleased to have with us, H.E. Mr Sam Kahamba Kutesa, the President of the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, a distinguished diplomat and leader who has served in different capacities, including as Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uganda, one of the Landlocked Developing Countries.

Let us now, please welcome, H.E. Mr Kutesa, the President of General Assembly, for the keynote address.