Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries
3-5 November 2014, Vienna, Austria

High-level Thematic Dialogue on the Priorities of LLDC’s
In the Post-2015 development framework

Statement by Ms. Lakshmi Puri
Assistant Secretary-General/ Deputy Executive Director, UN Women

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates.

I would like to thank the Co-chairs, the President of the General Assembly, and the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States for giving us this opportunity to address the issues that relate to the holistic, sustainable development of LLDCs. And in that context, to address and help identify the priorities of LLDCs in the post-2015 development agenda.

I want to underline the importance of following a holistic approach and not only a sectoral approach, and how a holistic approach can be linked to the sectoral aspects that are addressed in the context of the next 10-year programme of action of the LLDCs.

From the holistic perspective, gender equality and women’s empowerment should indeed be a priority for the LLDCs in their sustainable development strategies, in their poverty-eradication strategies, in infrastructure development, in agriculture and rural development, in international trade and trade facilitation—there are gender dimensions in all of these areas. In sector-specific issues such as regional integration and cooperation, structural economic transformation, ICT, energy, and in every other aspect you look at, you cannot ignore half the population, not only in terms of the differential and disproportionate impact on half of the population. Indeed, it is equally important to foster and support women’s agency in order for the LLDCs to really make progress in all of these areas.

Therefore my strong plea to you: when you are looking at your next 10-year programme of action, you have to have a vision about how you are going to foster and develop the agency of women, and how you are going to address the constraints and specific challenges that LLDCs face and the differential impact those challenges have on women.

Turning to the Sustainable Development Goals, as has been said by other panelists, of course Goals 9 and 10 directly apply to the LLDCs, and we would very much emphasize Goal 2, Goal 7, and Goal 12 as being very relevant for LLDCs. And let me add Goal 5 – there is a strong
linkage with Goal 5 – to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.” This Goal is also to be taken into account and mainstreamed as was also suggested by other speakers in the LLDC strategies.

The SDGs framework builds on the experience of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including Goal 3 on gender equality and women’s empowerment. The SDGs also derive from the fact that the Rio+20 outcome very clearly stated that gender equality and women’s empowerment is a driver of sustainable development, not only in its social dimension but also in terms of being a driver for the economic growth of countries and for environmental sustainability of countries. From that perspective, we would very much urge that the LLDCs make this one of the priorities for their future, including in the context of the post-2015 development agenda.

An additional reason why gender equality should be emphasized in the context of the LLDCs’ priorities for the future, is the commemoration of the 20-year anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action. Many of the LLDCs have already reported from different continents and submitted their national reviews on the implementation of the Platform for Action. The next step in the process is the start of regional reviews and the global review, to be presented at the 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in March 2015. UN-Women hopes this historic conjunction of SDGs, post-2015 development agenda, Beijing+20, and your own LLDC Programme of Action will indeed result in a strong inter-linkage and prioritization of gender equality and women’s empowerment.

UN-Women and LLDCs have been partners in different areas, including operational activities and programme activities on the ground, advocacy, policy work, building partnerships, and the strengthening of the knowledge base. UN-Women’s investments in women around the world has resulted in important progress to the sustainable development of LLDCs.

Our work has shown to be important in supporting women’s economic empowerment and diversifying local economic activities in LLDCs. For example, UN-Women’s support to women’s economic empowerment in the agricultural sector in Rwanda, Niger, Kyrgyzstan and Ethiopia is a case in point. Our successful interventions demonstrate how women producers, workers, entrepreneurs, and service providers can have a big impact over broader local economic development.

In Bolivia, UN-Women has supported indigenous women entrepreneurs to enhance their enterprises, increase their income and improve the exercise of their rights—because it is mutually reinforcing. The enabler-beneficiary relationship between sustainable development of LLDCs and gender equality and women’s empowerment achievement is clear and needs to be recognized.

In conclusion, I urge you to set landmark, visionary agendas for both sustainable development and gender equality and women’s empowerment, and demonstrate strong leadership and commitment to advance women’s rights and counter agendas are inimical to women’s rights and to development itself.

In that sense, therefore, gender equality and women’s empowerment should be a priority reflected in the Vienna Declaration and Programme for Action 2014-2024, to be adopted at
this Conference. Otherwise, the objectives of LLDCs to achieve human security for all, to “leave no one behind” and “take everyone forward” will not be achieved.

Thank you for your attention.