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Statement

by

H.E. Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya

**As Secretary-General of the Second UN Conference on
LLDCs**

at the

**Opening plenary session of the
Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked
Developing Countries**

Vienna, 3-5 November 2014

Your excellency Mr. Heinz Fischer, President of Austria,
Your excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Your excellency, President of the General Assembly,
Your excellency, President of ECOSOC,
Your excellency Minister of Zambia and Chair of the Group of LLDCs,
Heads of state and Government,
Ministers, Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour to address this opening session, in my capacity as the Secretary-General of the Conference.

I would like to begin by thanking the Government of Austria for their steadfast commitment and support for the preparation of the Conference, their political leadership and their warm hospitality to all of us in Vienna.

Eleven years ago, we gathered in Almaty for the first ever conference dedicated to the LLDC issues. That was a historic moment where the international community made commitments to address the special challenges and needs of the landlocked developing countries.

Today, The gathering of leaders, Ministers, and representatives from governments and international organizations here clearly indicates the

collective will to step up our support to landlocked developing countries to fulfil their aspirations in the comity of nations.

The journey to Vienna has been long, but rewarding. This conference is the culmination of over two years of our preparation. We held three regional meetings. We helped LLDCs to prepare their national reports on the status of the situation. We organised 17 pre-conference events on various aspects of Landlocked countries challenges, working together with our partner institutions and member states. The preparatory process provided a critically important and timely opportunity for the landlocked and transit developing countries and their development partners to assess in depth the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action.

What I have seen over the last two years was dedication and commitment from all stakeholders. The landlocked developing countries, transit countries, development partners, the UN system, international and regional organisations and institutions, the private sector, civil society and academia and many others have contributed to the preparatory process for the Conference. The LLDCs in particular have played a lead role. I wish to appreciate the leadership role provided by Zambia as the current Chair and Laos as a previous chair for the LLDC group and Paraguay for leading

LLDCs on trade issues. The Bureau and all the members deserve our appreciation. I want to express my deep appreciation for the commitment and strong support that all of you have provided to the preparatory process.

As we all know, landlockedness is an immutable condition, which presents an impediment to competitiveness and beneficial integration into the global community with its attendant impact upon poverty alleviation and sustainable development. But this adverse situation should not be a barrier to them. With cooperation and collaboration with transit countries development partners, and right policies and investment, we can overcome these challenges. And there are many examples of that.

Holding the conference in Vienna propels us to focus our mind on positive side as well. First, Austria symbolizes how best to overcome landlocked status and be a leading developed country. Second, Austria is a major capital for finding a negotiated solution to many regional and global challenges. Therefore our hope is that the meeting here will come out with a forward looking vision and a call for action.

There have been some successes since 2003. LLDCs significantly expanded their trade, improved their infrastructures and recorded modest economic growth. But their progress has often been uneven and fragile. Much remains

to be done. Besides these structural challenges, they are also now disproportionately affected by climate change related impacts, desertification, land degradation to glacier melting. Strong national leadership and enhanced partnership and support from the transit countries and development partners can reinforce the level and scope of support and collaboration. That is why we are here today to galvanise that partnership and take it to a new level.

Let me reiterate the importance of this conference. It takes place only once every 10 years. And this time is also propitious as it is taking place before the finalisation of the post 2015 development agenda. We have all agreed that the post 2015 development agenda would be transformative, inclusive and should ensure life of dignity for all. LLDCs issues therefore rightly deserve due consideration in the formulation of the next global development agenda.

It is my hope that we will all engage over the next three days in many valuable discussions with a view to identify concrete recommendations for the way forward. We look forward to innovative multi-stakeholder approaches, mechanisms and partnerships to translate commitments into results for LLDCs. Apart from the plenary sessions. There will be four High-

Level Thematic Roundtables, almost twenty side events, as well as the Business and Investment Forum.

At its conclusion, the Conference will adopt an outcome document, the Programme of Action for the Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, which will set forth holistic and concrete areas of action. It will provide a forward looking vision for the development agenda for the LLDCs for the next decade.

We call for action that matches the magnitude of the challenges of being landlocked.

We should ensure that landlocked developing countries are accorded unhindered and efficient access to and from the sea, while promoting trade facilitation,

We should encourage collaboration to promote necessary infrastructure development and their maintenance.

Let us also ensure that landlocked developing countries fully benefit from globalisation and regional cooperation.

And finally, let us all ensure that the conference will substantially contribute to bring about a perceptible change in the lives of the people in LLDCs.

That indeed is the true barometer of our success.

It will only happen with a strengthened and enhanced global partnership that takes a multistakeholder approach, that is forward looking, action oriented and ambitious. All have a role to play.

I have every confidence that this Conference will rise to the occasion and firmly set the landlocked developing countries on the road to a meaningful integration into the global systems and ensure their sustainable development. After all, we are talking about the future of about 440 million people in LLDCs with a substantial number of them living below the poverty line. In a globalised world of today, we are all in this together.

It is in this spirit, let us all recommit ourselves to help overcome their challenges and fulfill their aspirations. Thank you very much for your attention.