

**Plenary statement delivered by Mr. Pierre Guislain, Senior Director,  
Transport and ICT Global Practice, World Bank Group**

**Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries**

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the World Bank Group, I am honored to be speaking to you today at this Second UN Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs). Let me begin by expressing appreciation to the Government of Austria for hosting this important event, and to the office of Under-Secretary-General Acharya for its tireless efforts in support of landlocked developing countries.

Home to 440 million of the world's population but representing only about 1% of world trade, land-locked developing countries have inherent geographic disadvantages compared to countries with seacoasts and deep-sea ports. Despite some gains in the past decade, these 32 countries remain marginalized in the global economy, facing costs of trade that are 70% higher than transit coastal countries. Most LLDCs are also in the "bottom billion", with an average GDP per capita of \$800, compared with \$2,800 for transit countries.

The Almaty Program of Action emphasized that to improve their connectivity landlocked countries cannot act alone: cooperation with their transit neighbors, and global partners, is crucial.

The World Bank Group plays its part, with investments and technical assistance of over \$2 billion per year to projects that contribute to the Almaty Program of Action objectives. This includes major regional transport corridor programs in Central Asia and broadband fiber connecting landlocked countries in Africa, for example. In addition to funding 'hard' infrastructure, the Bank has also worked closely with clients on the policy

interventions that underpin many LLDC success stories: from customs reform to better regulation of trucking and other transport segments.

Excellencies and distinguished guests,

The international community was given an important opportunity to help LLDCs by endorsing the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement negotiated in Bali last December. The World Bank Group strongly supports the TFA and is, with financial assistance from donor partners, already supporting implementation of the measures included in the TFA through technical assistance to interested LLDCs.

The World Bank Group strongly welcomes the new Program of Action for LLDCs in the Decade 2014-2024 and will actively support LLDCs and their transit neighbors through programs that : (i) work towards reduction of trade and transport costs along the main trade routes important to LLDCs; (ii) strengthen transport and logistics sectors by phasing out anti-competitive practices; (iii) improve intermodal connections, especially at the interface between ports and rail or roads, as well as in the aviation sector; and (iv) expand broadband coverage.

We encourage LLDCs and transit countries to jointly commit to specific targets along these critical communications corridors, including: (i) agreeing to increase port efficiency and throughput to at least global average standards; (ii) reducing number of days to import or export goods; (iii) reducing the number and cost of approvals, permits, licenses and controls, and accelerating the implementation of single window schemes for border crossings; (iv) mutual recognition of transport and transit rights , including backhaul rights for trucking, and (v) encouraging infrastructure sharing by using the rights of way of roads and railways and transmission lines to lay fiber or ducts that will help connect LLDCs to the internet and the world.

The World Bank also encourages LLDCs and transit countries to follow the UN Broadband Commission's recommendations, and in particular the adoption of a national broadband plan or strategy and making broadband affordable to all through adequate regulatory and market reforms.

In conclusion, please allow me to reiterate our strong commitment to work with you as clients and partners of the World Bank Group towards our common goal of ending extreme poverty and bolstering shared prosperity in the landlocked developing countries of the world.

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