Mr. Chair, Ambassador Sukhee Sukhbold, PR of Mongolia to the UN, Madame Fekita Utoikamanu, High Representative and USG of OHRLLS, Mr. Hongjoo Hahm, Dy Executive Secretary of UNESCAP, Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues,

We are now at the final stage of our Euro Asian Regional Midterm Review of the Vienna Programme of Action for the LLDCs for the Decade 2014-2024.

On behalf of my distinguished Colleague, and Co-facilitator, Amb Jan Kickert, Permanent Representative of Austria to the UN, who is most ably represented here in Bangkok by Ms. Johanna Lindner of the Austrian Mission in New York, and on my own behalf, I would like to extend our appreciation to ESCAP, ECE, and OHRLLS for convening this meeting, for the excellent preparations and arrangements that have been so fruitful. I also thank the USG and High Representative for extending to us the invitation to attend this important meeting.

The Euro Asian Midterm Review was the first of the three regional preparatory meetings mandated by UN General Assembly resolution 72/232. The sessions, which each centered on one of the six priority areas of the VPOA and three side events conducted over the past two days have been comprehensive, highly stimulating, and generated an excellent range of recommendations. The outcome of the Euro-Asia Regional review will serve as an important input to enrich and further inform deliberations in New York, as we move towards the elaboration of the outcome document of the High Level Mid Term Review of the VPOA. Together with the outcomes of the forthcoming regional review meetings in Africa and Latin America, and the outcomes of the various pre-conference events coordinated by UN OHRLLS, the report of the Secretary General on the implementation of the VPOA will also serve as critical inputs into the outcome document of the High Level MTR. As provided for in resolution 72/232 and 73/243, the High Level Mid Term Review, which will be convened in New York in December 2019, will adopt an intergovernmentally negotiated and agreed outcome in the form of a political declaration.

My Co-facilitator and I, have been appointed by the President of the General Assembly to lead the intergovernmental negotiations on the outcome document of the High Level MTR. We are gratified by the confidence that the President of the GA has reposed in us. We eagerly look forward to listening to the views of member states and other stakeholders, to being guided by your national perspectives, aspirations and priorities, as well as learning of your challenges and concerns. We are committed to an open and transparent process and look forward to working closely with all partners towards a successful outcome that will bolster the efforts of LLDCs to overcome the multifaceted challenges of being landlocked and to accelerate the march towards sustainable development.

In doing so, I would like to draw on our deliberations and make a few observations that cut across the effective implementation of the six priorities of the VPOA:

First partnerships. The VPOA provides a holistic and comprehensive approach to addressing the challenges faced by LLDCs, and contributing to the eradication of poverty that arises from landlockedness, by implementing the action plan on six priority areas. It also offers a model in partnerships for all stakeholders to work collectively to support LLDCs in overcoming the
challenges of lack of direct territorial access to the sea and remoteness, which constrain full integration into global markets and stunt productive capacities. Our Chair and speakers over the past two days have underscored the importance of partnerships and international cooperation in fostering an enabling environment for LLDCs, to supporting their development, capacity, and technological needs. Success over the remainder of the decade in implementation of the VPOA will hinge on the full and active participation of all stakeholders, LLDCs, transit countries, the UN System and relevant international and regional organizations, civil society and the private sector.

Second the principle of Leave No One Behind. This must remain central as we forge ahead if we are to make real progress in achieving sustainable development, eradicating poverty, and promoting sustained equitable growth in our countries. In doing so, we can ill afford not to take advantage of the full potential of the human capital we are all vested with in order to advance productive capacity and structural transformation. So perhaps it could be of interest to examine how a gender perspective can be incorporated as we take stock of our achievements, best practices, and formulate recommendations to accelerate the implementation of the VPOA.

Finally, I entirely agree with the USG Fekita when she said yesterday that the glass is half full. While the geographical realities and implications of landlockedness pose daunting challenges to LLDCs, these challenges also provide us with opportunities: Opportunities to learn from one another’s national experiences and best practices; opportunities to take advantage of exciting innovation in the field of science and technology that will allow LLDCs to transform their economies, to leapfrog and avoid conventional linear models of social and economic development and progress; and also opportunities to strengthen existing collaboration and forge new partnerships, that will eventually help us to unlock our potential, and transform our countries from landlocked to landlinked.

As I conclude with these thoughts, I thank all panelists, and delegations for their valuable contributions to our discussions, and wish you all a safe journey back home!

Thank you.