



The first regional meeting on the Mid-term Review of the Vienna Programme of Action concludes in Bangkok

Press Release

Bangkok, 12 February 2019-Today, senior government officials and experts from landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), transit developing countries and development partners, concluded in Bangkok, Thailand, a Euro-Asian regional meeting on the Mid-term Review of the Vienna Programme of Action (VPOA), identifying progress and challenges in the implementation of the VPOA in Europe and Asia.

The two-day meeting, jointly organized by the office of the High-Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Islands developing States (UN-OHRLLS), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), took stock of the implementation of the VPOA in Euro-Asia, identified and shared best practices and innovative approaches to accelerate the implementation of the VPOA and adopted an outcome document highlighting recommendations to overcome the challenges faced by the Euro-Asian LLDCs.

“While the trade area has made progress in terms of agreements signed, it is the ratification of other relevant international conventions by both LLDCs and the transit countries that has been relatively low over the review period”, said the High-Representative and Under-Secretary-General for OHRLLS, Ms. Fekita ‘Utoikamanu.

“To illustrate the challenge: in terms of international trade, the LLDCs continue to account for less than 1% of global merchandise trade. Exports remain concentrated around a few commodities, with low value addition and low technology content. This is troubling but above all it is cause for ACTION. We must work to reduce the high trade costs. Overcoming this obstacle remains fundamental to integrating LLDCs into global trade”, she added.

Participants in the Euro-Asian meeting adopted an outcome document highlighting the importance of strengthening regional and sub-regional cooperation on fundamental transit policies and accession to key international legal instruments; upgrading and maintaining existing road, rail, and information and communications technology (ICT) networks with the support of development partners, multilateral financial and development institutions, regional banks and organizations such as ESCAP, ECE, UN-OHRLLS and ITU.

“Many LLDCs in the region have strengthened their efforts to support the soft infrastructure required to facilitate trade - and attract the investment, finance, technology and services needed to improve productive capacity. All these efforts should contribute to strengthening LLDCs’ connectivity and integration into the region’s economy,” said United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ESCAP, Ms Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana.

“However, there remains great potential to deepen this integration by harmonizing policies to improve transit connectivity and support the creation of regional markets,” emphasized Ms. Alisjahbana.

The implementation of the VPoA constitutes an integral part of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the commitment of the international community engrained in this Agenda is to leave no one behind, including LLDCs.

In this context, transport is of particular importance for landlocked developing countries, emphasized UNECE Executive Secretary Olga Algayerova. **“At UNECE we work closely with LLDCs in the Euro-Asian region to support their integration into the global economy, through practical tools such as the TIR Convention – enabling the reduction of cross-border transport time for goods by up to 80% and costs by up to 38% – and projects to strengthen Euro Asian transport connectivity, which have helped prioritize over 300 infrastructure investment initiatives”**, she said.

The meeting, which is the first out of the three regional meetings scheduled to take place in the lead up to the upcoming Midterm Review in December, brought together senior government officials, the Euro-Asian LLDCs, as well as representatives of transit countries from the region and development partners.

*List of Euro-Asian LLDCs: Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bhutan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lao PDR, the Republic of Moldova, Mongolia, Nepal, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Uzbekistan.

Further Information:

-Euro-Asian Regional MTR website: <https://bit.ly/2CEBLAJ>

-OHRLLS Official Website: www.unohrlls.org

-OHRLLS Official Twitter & Facebook accounts: [@UNOHRLLS](https://twitter.com/UNOHRLLS)

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