

## **African landlocked developing countries and partners call for action to overcome challenges to sustainable development**

Press Release

Marrakech, 19 March 2019- Senior government officials and experts from landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), transit developing countries and development partners meeting in Morocco have called for stronger regional cooperation on transit policies and greater support in areas including connectivity in transport, energy and information and communication technologies infrastructure, export diversification, value addition and trade facilitation.

The two-day Africa regional meeting on the Midterm Review of the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA), jointly organized by the office of the High-Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Islands developing States (UNOHRLLS) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), identified progress and challenges in the implementation of the VPoA in the region, shared best practices and innovative approaches.

An outcome document highlighting recommendations to overcome the challenges faced by the 16 African LLDCs will provide substantive input to the high-level comprehensive midterm review of the Vienna Programme of Action for the Landlocked Countries planned to be held in December 2019 in New York. **“Today’s outcome highlights that efficient transit is vital to integrate landlocked developing countries into regional and global trade and reduce trade costs but the implementation of the relevant regional and international conventions on this has been relatively low”**, said Ms. Fekita ‘Utoikamanu the High-Representative and Under-Secretary-General for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Islands developing States (UNOHRLLS).

**“The importance of initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area and Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa is clear, these can bring positive prospects for African LLDCs’ further integration into regional and global networks”**, she added.

The outcome document highlights the importance of strengthening regional and sub-regional cooperation on fundamental transit policies and accession to key international legal instruments. It calls for 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 UNECA, UN-OHRLLS and ITU.

**“A distinctive feature of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is its emphasis on reaching the poorest and most vulnerable and leaving “no one behind” and its recognition that the Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) deserve special attention”,** said Adam Elhiraika, Director Macroeconomic Policy and Governance Division, at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA).

Therefore, **“vigorously pursuing the objectives of the African Continental free Trade Area (AfCFTA), aimed at achieving a comprehensive and mutually beneficial trade agreement among member states of the African Union (AU) will integrate LLDCs into the regional and global value chains”,** he added.

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.

The meeting, which is the second 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 African LLDCs, as well as representatives of transit countries from the region and development partners.

\*List of African LLDCs: Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Rwanda, South Sudan, Eswatini, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

**Further information:**

[Concept Note](#); [African Regional Midterm Review Website](#); [Mid-Term Review Website](#)

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