



**United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States
(UN-OHRLLS)**

**Summary Report of the 2019 Briefing Session to
Member States on the Comprehensive Midterm
Review of the Implementation of the Vienna
Programme of Action for LLDCs**

**20 November 2019 Conference Room E, United Nations Secretariat
Building**

Introduction

UN-OHRLLS organized a briefing session to all Member States on the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review on the Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the decade 2014-2024 (VPoA) scheduled to take place on 5 and 6 December 2019, at the United Nations Headquarters, New York. The briefing session was held on 20 November 2019 and the aim of the briefing was to appraise the Member States on the preparations for the Midterm Review.

The meeting was attended by 70 participants as shown in the list of participants presented in the annex of this report. The speakers at the briefing included Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, H.E. Mr. Julio César Arriola Ramírez, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Paraguay the Chair of the LLDC Group LLDC Group Chair; Mr. Bruno Rios, Senior Advisor, Office of the President of the General Assembly; and Ms. Claudia Gross, Intergovernmental Affairs Officer, Department for General Assembly and Conference Management.

Opening Remarks: Ms. Fekitamoeloa ‘Utoikamanu, Under- Secretary General and High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, UN-OHRLLS

In her opening remarks Ms. Fekitamoeloa ‘Utoikamanu, Under-Secretary-General, welcomed participants and explained that the VPoA Mid Term review will take on 5 and 6 December 2019 in New York. She introduced the panel members, H.E. Mr. Julio César Arriola, Chair of the LLDC Group; Mr. Bruno Rios, Senior Advisor, Office of the President of the General Assembly; and Ms. Claudia Gross, Intergovernmental Affairs Officer, Department for General Assembly and Conference Management.

Ms. Fekitamoeloa ‘Utoikamanu first contextualized the situation that the landlocked developing countries are facing. She indicated that LLDCs are one of the most vulnerable groups of countries disadvantaged by factors such as their geographical location, inadequate transport, transit infrastructure and cumbersome border crossing procedures. In fact, LLDCs pay almost twice what coastal countries pay to export and import which severely limits their ability to achieve sustainable development. She further emphasized that LLDCs are highly dependent on commodities and are in danger of desertification, land degradation and flooding. They also exhibit low productive capacities.

Ms. Fekitamoeloa ‘Utoikamanu expressed that the international community gathered in Vienna five years ago, to adopt the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014 -2024. She noted that the VPoA builds on the Almaty Programme of Action adopted in 2003 and is a comprehensive 10-year development plan. At the core of the plan is the agreement that we must address the special needs of the LLDCs. The plan calls for renewed and strengthened partnerships between landlocked and transit developing countries and their development partners.

The plan focuses on six priority action areas: Fundamental Transit Policy Issues;

Infrastructure development and maintenance; International Trade and Trade Facilitation; Regional Integration; Structural Economic Transformation; and Means of Implementation.

Ms. Fekitamoeloa 'Utoikamanu communicated that the preparations for the Midterm Review meeting were in their final stage. She noted that OHRLLS had coordinated the preparatory process including national level reviews by LLDCs. She added that a large majority of LLDCs submitted their national reports on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and regional review meetings were organized. She also shared that a retreat at Ambassadorial level was held regarding the VPoA. Ms. Fekitamoeloa 'Utoikamanu continued that there were a total of 22 pre-conference events which were organized that addressed topics relevant to landlocked developing countries ranging from transport infrastructure development; to Sustainable Energy; Aid for Trade; Science, Technology and Innovation; structural economic transformation; trade; transit Cooperation and Trade Facilitation; Corridor Development and Management; Climate change; ICT and digitalization and others.

With regard to intergovernmental consultations, the Ambassadors of Bhutan and Austria facilitated the intergovernmental negotiations on the outcome document. The outcome document, in the form of a High-Level Political Declaration, had been consensually agreed by the Member States and will be adopted during the midterm review.

Ms. Fekitamoeloa 'Utoikamanu highlighted that OHRLLS works closely with the Office of the President of the General Assembly. She stated that on 5 December, which is the first day of the Midterm Review, there will be a high-level opening session by the President of the General Assembly H.E. Mr. Tijjani Muhammad Bande and H.E. Secretary-General Mr. António Guterres. This will be followed by consideration for adoption of the Political Declaration and a plenary session. On 6 December, there will be a High-level panel on challenges and opportunities for the VPoA and its interlinkages with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Furthermore, there will be an Interactive Panel on promoting trade, trade facilitation and structural economic transformation in Landlocked Developing Countries and an Interactive Panel on regional integration and infrastructure connectivity.

Ms. Fekitamoeloa 'Utoikamanu noted that there will be a number of side events focusing on relevant key priorities of landlocked developing countries. The aim of the side events is to launch and discuss concrete deliverables, solutions and initiatives in support of LLDCs' long term sustainable development.

In closing, Ms. Fekitamoeloa 'Utoikamanu urged all UN Member States to participate in the Midterm Review at the highest level possible and to finalize delegations as soon as possible. She expressed her gratitude to the Governments of Austria, The People's Republic of China, India and the Russian Federation for their contribution towards supporting participation of LLDC delegates from the capitals. Lastly, Ms. Fekitamoeloa 'Utoikamanu expressed her hope that the Midterm Review produces effective global partnerships that help the peoples of the LLDCs on their road to greater integration in the global trading systems and achieve an inclusive and sustainable development for all as envisaged by Agenda 2030.

Statement by Chair of the LLDC Group

Mr. Julio César Arriola expressed that this was a very important time for LLDCs as the United Nations was getting ready to undertake a comprehensive look at the progress so far achieved by LLDCs toward attaining the Sustainable Development Goals and the objectives of the Vienna Programme of Action and, most importantly, mapping the way forward towards accelerating implementation. He stressed that the Programme of Action is based on renewed and strengthened partnerships between LLDCs, transit countries and development partners as well as strengthened partnerships within the context of South-South and triangular cooperation and with relevant international and regional organizations, public and private sector.

Mr. Julio César Arriola reiterated the emphasis on the full participation of all the relevant stakeholders in the Comprehensive High-level midterm review. He repeated the emphasis on commitment to achieving the global principle behind the 2030 Agenda of “leaving no one behind”. He expressed his gratitude to everyone’s support during the preparatory process and the Office of the PGA and Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and UN-OHRLLS for the ongoing preparations for the High-level midterm review.

Presentation by Mr. Bruno Rios, Senior Advisor, Office of the President of the General Assembly

Mr. Bruno Rios informed the meeting on the preparations that the PGA was undertaking for the Midterm Review. He explained the programme for the first day of the Review and Programme for the Second day. He encouraged Member States to participate in both days.

Presentation by Ms. Claudia Gross, Intergovernmental Affairs Officer, Department for General Assembly and Conference Management

Ms. Claudia Gross stated that the high-level midterm review of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024 will consist of two high-level plenary meetings on 5 December in the General Assembly Hall and interactive panel discussions on 6 December in the Trusteeship Council Chamber. The meetings on 5 December does not require special registration. Registration of official delegations arriving from capitals will be carried out by Protocol and Liaison Services. Missions and offices are required to submit their registration requests for the grounds pass by using the existing online e-Registration system, available through the e-deleGATE portal. Inscriptions on the list of speakers follow the standard procedure via e-deleGATE for the meeting under agenda item 21 (b). Ms. Claudia Gross concluded that for the interactive panel discussions on 6 December in Trusteeship Council Chamber, anyone with a valid grounds pass will be able to enter the room. There will be no established list of speakers. Requests for the floor will be indicated by pressing the microphone button.

Closing of the Meeting - There being no specific questions on the organization of the Midterm Review, Ms. Fekitamoeloa ‘Utoikamanu closed the meeting.

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