STATEMENT BY

DEPUTY PERMANENT SECRETARY

MS. ONTLAMETSE B. WARD

MINISTRY OF INVESTMENT, TRADE AND INDUSTRY OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

AT THE

"COMPREHENSIVE HIGH-LEVEL MIDTERM REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VIENNA PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR LLDC FOR THE DECADE 2014-2024"

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NEW YORK

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1. Let me express my gratitude to the President of the General Assembly and the Secretariat of the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States for the excellent organisation of this meeting.

2. Mr. President, it gives me great pleasure to indicate that this meeting comes at an opportune time for us to interrogate and reflect on our achievements and challenges in our efforts to implement the Vienna Programme of Action. As clearly articulated by the background papers by the OHRLLS, our countries are still faced with challenges emanating from being landlocked. The LLDCs are faced with high cost of trade due to weak transport infrastructure coupled with delays and inefficiencies associated with border management, including custom procedures and cumbersome documentation requirements. Implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and the development of infrastructure are essential to mitigate the challenges we LLDCs face in trying to connect to global markets.

3. Botswana has undertaken, and continues to make efforts to address these challenges. Mr. President, allow me to share Botswana’s national efforts aimed at improving interconnectivity and competitiveness. Let me first reiterate that Botswana’s national development priorities are growth and economic resilience; economic diversification; employment creation; and poverty alleviation. Botswana has put in place policies and programmes to achieve these objectives. These includes among others National Development Plan 11, Vision 2036, National Trade Policy, Economic Diversification Drive Strategy, and Industrial Development Policy.

4. Furthermore, infrastructure developments, including ICT, transport, and energy infrastructure have been afforded more prominence in the
development of our National Development Plan 11. To this end, Botswana Government is also actively pursuing strategies for regional cooperation on infrastructure development and integration as a means of creating more active trade routes and expanding market access. Botswana together with Namibia and South Africa have developed a Trans Kalahari Corridor, which is a highway aimed at facilitating faster and cheaper movement of goods between the three countries. Botswana has also signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the development of the North–South corridor, which will further link Botswana to other trading partners in the north and south.

5. Mr. President, Botswana and Zambia are in the process of constructing the Kazungula Bridge which is a joint project between the two countries aimed to further facilitating movements of goods and persons along the north-south corridor as well as to facilitate trade among the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA) and East African Countries (EAC) regional economic communities. This project is envisaged to be completed by mid-2020 and its construction is currently at 90% completion. The project also includes the establishment of a One Stop Border Post facility.

6. In relation to the above infrastructural development projects, Botswana further envisages the development of the Trans Kalahari Rail line to Namibia. The Rail line will also link to Zambia via the Kazungula road and Rail Bridge. These projects are expected to reduce transport costs and link Botswana to regional and global markets.

7. Mr. President, Botswana attaches great importance to the implementation of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) as attested by the fact that the country was one of the first to ratify the Agreement and to notify all categories of the Agreement. Botswana is undertaking reforms to facilitate the implementation of the Agreement. Botswana is grateful for the assistance of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) which has enabled us to develop the National Trade Facilitation roadmap as well as training for the National Trade
Facilitation Committee (NTFC) members. The Committee monitors implementation of the Agreement. Also note that Botswana has just completed the revision of the customs legislation which is aligned to the WTO TFA and the Revised Kyoto Convention.

8. At the regional level, the Southern African Custom Union (SACU), which Botswana is a Member, is in the process of finalising a Regional Trade Facilitation Programme, whilst the Southern African Development Community (SADC) adopted the Trade Facilitation Programme in March 2016 and its implementation is ongoing. SADC through its Industrial Development Programme is also making efforts to develop regional value chains. These efforts are aimed at facilitating regional integration which is one of the key priorities of the Vienna Programme of Action for the LLDCs. We reverently believe that building synergies at the regional level will greatly aid integration of the LLDCs in the Southern African region with the multilateral trading system.

9. Let me at this juncture, Mr. President, reiterate the importance of the support provided by development partners to us LLDCs. The support goes a long way in helping us to address the persistent challenges of our countries. Infrastructure development including transport, Information and Communication Technology, research amongst others, remain fundamental to the development of LLDCs. The development of these require both technical and financial assistance as well as legal, regulatory and administrative reforms. We therefore, call for increased, predictable and consistent international support in these areas.

10. As I conclude, allow me to share with you that Botswana has completed the review of the National Trade Policy (NTP) and National Export Strategy (NES) which are intended amongst others, contribute to economic and export diversification; improved global competitiveness; private sector development; citizen economic empowerment and poverty eradication. These policies were reviewed through the assistance of the United Nation Conference on Trade and Development (UNTAD) and Commonwealth Secretariat respectively.

11. Finally, allow me to express my Government’s appreciation to our development partners and international organisations for their
continued support and emphasize that we would not have done all the above without their support. We also fully support the Political Declaration adopted this morning and thank the Co-Facilitators for their tireless effort.

I thank you for your attention.