Statement of Mr. Odbayar Erdenetsogt, Executive Director of
the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries
at the Plenary of the Comprehensive High-level Midterm review on the
implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs
5 December 2019, New York

Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my profound honour and pleasure to address the Comprehensive High-level Midterm review meeting on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs. I thank the organizers for giving me this opportunity.

Our participation in this crucial event is a very special one because the International Think Tank is participating in this plenary session of the MTR meeting as a full-fledged intergovernmental organization for LLDCs.

The International Think Tank participated the first time in the 2nd UN conference for LLDCs in 2014 when the VPoA was approved and the ITTLLDC contributed to the VPoA with its research. The ITT also actively contributed to the successful implementation of the VPoA through its research, seminars and participated in the Expert Group meetings and Inter-Agency Consultative Group meetings on the follow-up and implementation of the VPoA.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform you about recent developments at the International Think Tank for LLDCs.

2018 marked a historic year for the International Think Tank for LLDCs as we successfully transformed from an organization under an interim management scheme to a fully operational intergovernmental organization for LLDCs.

As of today, 14 LLDCs have acceded or ratified the multilateral agreement on the establishment of the ITT. The current member states of the International Think Tank are Afghanistan, Armenia, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Nepal, Paraguay, Tajikistan, Niger and Azerbaijan.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to congratulate the Government of Azerbaijan for its recent accession to the Multilateral Agreement and its commitments to the ITT.

After the entry into force of the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of the International Think Tank on 6 October 2017, the Board of Governors of the ITT was established, which consists of representatives from all member states that are party to the multilateral agreement, and organized its first meeting in May 2018.
On June 2018, the intergovernmental inaugural meeting of the ITTLLDCs was successfully organized in cooperation with the Government of Mongolia and the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

The Meeting was not only a symbolic event for the inauguration of the ITT, but was a platform for thematic multilateral discussions on issues of relevance to LLDCs such as foreign direct investment and economic diversification of LLDCs; ICT Connectivity and LLDCs; and Infrastructure development, transit transport corridors and trade facilitation - In connection with Challenges and opportunities of LLDCs.

This year ITT finalized the comprehensive study on the Economic diversification of LLDC with with the case study of four countries, namely Bhutan, Mongolia, Nepal and Paraguay, which has already contributed to the Priority 5 Structural Economic Transformation of the VPoA.

Excellencies,

We work very closely with the United Nations’ system organizations, such as the Office of the High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS under the able leadership of USG Ms. Fekitamoeloa, UN-ESCAP, UNCTAD and WIPO to tackle challenges in implementation of the VPoA.

Our collaboration with UN system organizations covers a wide range of issues. Let me just give you the latest examples of our cooperation in support of LLDCs.

- in 2018, a sub-regional workshop on “Fostering Structural Transformation and Export Diversification in Selected Asian Landlocked Developing Countries” as part of a capacity-building project to promote structural transformation and export diversification in energy-exporting LLDCs in Asia in collaboration with UNCTAD,
- In 2019, the inter-regional meeting on “Partnership for innovation and technological capacity building for the Landlocked developing countries and landlocked least developed countries” in cooperation with the World Intellectual Property Organization, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia and Intellectual Property Office of Mongolia in Ulaanbaatar.
- The ITT also contributed and moderated Session #4 titled “Strengthening legal frameworks for corridor operations” of the Meeting on Best Practices in Corridor Development and Management for the Benefit of LLDCs & Transit Countries, which was organized by the UN-OHRLLS and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia on October, 2019 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.
- The ITT just concluded two events, namely “Subregional Workshop on ICT Co-deployment along Transport Infrastructure in East and North East Asia Subregion” and Mongolia’s Expert Capacity Building Workshop on “Addressing 2030 Agenda through Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Asia and the Pacific” in collaboration with the UN-ESCAP
In conclusion, I would like to re-emphasize our full commitment to the cause of LLDCs and we look forward to your recommendations and guidance for a coherent approach in the implementation of the ITTLLDCs’ agenda, especially with regard to the 2030 Agenda and the Vienna Programme of Action. We stand ready to support you in this endeavour.

Therefore, I would like to call on landlocked developing countries that have not yet ratified the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of an International Think Tank to do so at its earliest convenience and ask development partners and Friends of LLDCs to support and effectively utilize the International Think Tank for sharing experiences and know-how, research and addressing challenges in implementing both the VPoA and SDGs as noted in the Article 64 (j) of the VPoA.

Thank you for your kind attention.