Excellencies,

Thank you all for joining this important meeting.

We are all keenly aware of the geographical disadvantages faced by the world’s 32 landlocked developing countries.

They are remote.

They do not have access to the sea.

And other forms of connectivity -- roads, railways, the information superhighway -- are also lacking or underdeveloped.

All of this combines to increase costs, decrease opportunities, and impede their integration into the global and regional economies.

This has a negative impact on poverty alleviation and their sustainable development.

But with partnerships, these challenges can be overcome.

Cooperation among transit countries and development partners is crucial.

We need the right policy mix, increased investment, reliable transit infrastructure, efficient customs operations and improved access and use of technology.

We need cooperation from the international community to stem the massive amounts of resources that continue to flow out of landlocked developing countries in the form of illicit financial flows.

And we need to assist the landlocked developing countries that are in debt distress or at high risk of it.
We have the tools to eliminate distance and inefficiencies.

We also have the framework.

Five years ago, we adopted the Vienna Programme of Action -- a comprehensive and ambitious plan to achieve inclusive and sustainable economic growth, reduce poverty and ensure the integration of landlocked developing countries into the global economy.

Our shared hope is for a win-win solution for landlocked developing countries, transit countries and development partners. They all, and indeed we all, stand to benefit from ensuring a sustainable development path.

We have made headway in some key areas. Real gross domestic product per capita has increased in many landlocked developing countries.

Encouraging progress has been recorded on some indicators related to health, education, energy, gender equality and information and communication technology.

The Vienna Programme of Action is now better integrated into national development strategies and into the work of the UN development system.

Work is under way on transport connectivity, to develop transit and economic corridors.

The African Continental Free Trade Agreement and the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement provide opportunities for landlocked countries to link up to external markets and global value chains.

Landlocked developing countries have also benefited from modest increases in Official Development Assistance to them since 2014, and from increased aid for trade and South-South cooperation.

This is progress to build on at a time when landlocked developing countries continue to face major challenges.

There is much more work to be done.
Trade integration remains low.
They account for less than 1 per cent of global exports.
More than 80 per cent of their exports are primary commodities and natural resources.
Infrastructure remains inadequate.
Foreign direct investment, which is often a critical driver for building competitiveness, has continued to decline.
And like all countries, landlocked developing countries face the increasingly severe impacts of the global climate crisis.
Such challenges are even more severe, and growth is even more constrained, for the 17 landlocked countries that are also least developed countries.
They are heavily dependent on official development assistance, making it crucial for such aid to be increased and predictable – and for governments to be more effective in steering such aid to national priorities.
The midterm review is our chance to assess and renew our work and forge greater coherence and synergy among the Vienna Programme, the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and other relevant international frameworks.
Development partners need to work together to mobilize both domestic and external resources, and direct them to growth-inducing, high priority areas.
Innovative financing for infrastructure has to be scaled up.
We should also support landlocked developing countries in building up their private sector and enhancing the business environment
Enhancing technical assistance and capacity building support are crucial.
And since any policy and decision must rely on data, the strengthening of national statistical systems also is a must.
The Declaration you will adopt today calls on us to help turn landlocked developing countries into land-linked places of prosperity and opportunity.

Let us join forces to help the world’s 32 landlocked developing countries achieve sustainable transformations and better standard of living for the more than 500 million people who call these countries home.

The United Nations system, reformed and repositioned, remains strongly committed to supporting your efforts.

Thank you.