STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY H. E. DR. RIYAD MANSOUR, (STATE OF PALESTINE), CHAIR OF GROUP OF 77, AT THE COMPREHENSIVE HIGH-LEVEL MIDTERM REVIEW OF THE VIENNA PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (New York, 5 December 2019)

1. I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

2. At the outset, the Group would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this important midterm review.

3. This is a crucial time for the landlocked developing countries, as they undertake a comprehensive look at the progress so far achieved towards attaining the Sustainable Development Goals and the objectives of the Vienna Programme of Action and, most importantly, mapping the way forward towards accelerating implementation.

4. During the past 5 years, post the adoption of the Vienna Programme of Action in 2014, it is evident that efforts have been made towards its implementation. Whilst these efforts are being made, progress remains short of achieving the desired objectives and targets.

5. The 32 LLDCs continue to face special challenges due to the geographical remoteness, lack of direct access to the sea and isolation from world markets. These challenges are exacerbated by inadequate infrastructure, cumbersome border crossing procedures, structural deficiencies and limited capacities to deal with external shocks.

6. The report of the Secretary General which reviewed progress achieved on the implementation of the VPoA in the past 5 years indicated that a lot remains to be done to achieve the objectives of the Vienna Programme of Action and the SDGs by LLDCs. Currently one third of the LLDCs’ population is still living in poverty.

7. The Group underlines that infrastructure development plays a key role in reducing the cost of development for landlocked developing countries and that the development and maintenance of transit transport infrastructure, information and communications technology, and energy infrastructure are crucial for landlocked developing countries in order to reduce high trading costs, improve their competitiveness and become fully integrated into the global market.

8. Despite the importance of trade to achieving sustainable development, LLDCs participation in global trade remain quite marginal. The Group remains concerned with the fact that LLDCs account for less than 1% of global exports. Their share has decreased from 1.19% in 2014 to 0.98% in 2018. Many LLDCs are experiencing persistent trade deficits.
In addition to these challenges the impact of climate change and variability continue to undermine the efforts of the LLDCs to achieve sustainable development. Many LLDCs are in dryland regions where the impacts of climate change, desertification and land degradation are more evident.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

We all agree that these challenges are not insurmountable. It is clear that we need to redouble our efforts if the fundamental principle of the 2030 Agenda of “leaving no one behind” is to be fulfilled. The VPoA is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its full implementation is fundamental to attaining the SDGs in LLDCs.

It is encouraging that we have taken the commitment in the Political Declaration adopted minutes ago that we will all come together in durable and effective partnerships, between LLDCs and transit countries and development partners, as well as with a range of stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, academia and youth. We should live up to this commitment.

The Group would like to express its deep appreciation to the Permanent Representatives of Austria and Bhutan and their team for their successful role of co-facilitators of the Political Declaration.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

We reaffirm our commitment to the effective implementation of the Vienna Declaration and the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, and encourage that landlocked developing countries, transit countries, their development partners, the United Nations System and all other actors to implement the actions that have been agreed upon in the VPoA, in its six priority areas, namely: fundamental transit policy issues; infrastructure development and maintenance; international trade and trade facilitation; regional integration and cooperation; structural economic transformation; and means of implementation in a coordinated, coherent and expeditious manner.

The VPoA and the Call for Action to accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action as contained in the High Level Political Declaration outlines the actions to be undertaken by all stakeholders. Let us work together, and do what is needed to achieve the desired socioeconomic transformation of LLDCs. It is achievable and strong partnerships remain fundamental.

I thank you for your attention.