Honourable Ministers,
Mr. Secretary General,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I welcome delegations to the Midterm Review of the Vienna Programme of Action. I recognise the efforts of all Member States in coming to agreement on the Political Declaration which will be adopted shortly.

This Political Declaration is testament to the strength of multilateralism today, as the only vehicle which can effectively address cross-cutting issues. In this case we have addressed issues related to landlocked developing states, transit countries, and developed states.
The Political Declaration provides us with a roadmap by which we can align the objectives of the Vienna Programme of Action with the Sustainable Development Goals. The emphasis placed on poverty eradication, SDG 1, is a prerequisite for sustainable development. Indeed, I have designated poverty eradication as a key priority for the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly.

Landlocked developing countries are at risk of being left behind. One third of the population of landlocked developing countries live in extreme poverty and economic growth for landlocked developing countries has declined in the last five years.

Furthermore, many landlocked developing countries are below the range of high human development in UNDP’s Human Development Index. The average ranking of the landlocked developing countries lags behind the world average by 20 per cent; and out of the ten lowest-ranked countries, seven are landlocked. Many of these nations continue to struggle in the shadows of historical injustices.

Landlocked developing countries are highly vulnerable to the effects of the climate emergency, experiencing desertification, land degradation, drought, a loss of biodiversity and receding glaciers. No Member State is free from the effects of climate change but for those who are most vulnerable, the effects are compounded. Just nine months ago the landlocked
States of Malawi and Zimbabwe, were impacted by cyclone Idai, despite being many miles from the sea.

Undernourishment in landlocked developing countries reached an alarming rate of 23.2 per cent in 2016, and food insecurity affects 51.6 per cent of the population of landlocked developing countries, which is compounded by the effects of climate change.

Furthermore, communities in landlocked developing countries are being left behind in a rapidly developing world: 40 per cent of the population of landlocked developing countries do not have access to electricity.

We need to invest in infrastructure to ensure that everyone, everywhere, has the opportunity to fulfil their potential in a digital world. We cannot allow the digital divide to deepen.

Excellencies,

We must change the narrative. We must consider landlocked developing countries as land-linked developing countries.

Today’s process is important because of the mixed progress in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. The ranking of the landlocked developing countries improved by 1.5% from 2014 to 2018 in the Human Development Index.
Health, education and gender equality indicators show progress, such as the enrolment of girls in primary schools from 34.2 per cent in 2010 to 43.4 per cent in 2016.

On areas such as infrastructure and connectivity we have also seen progress, air carrier departures in landlocked developing countries increased by 8.4 per cent since the adoption of the Programme of Action, some trade corridors have achieved the targets of the Programme and participation in regional trade agreements increased in all regions since 2014.

Effective implementation of the Political Declaration requires partnerships with all States, as well as the private sector, civil society, youth, and academia.

The Political Declaration includes commitments to targets and accelerated action to remove all legal, social and economic barriers to achieve gender equality. With the buy-in of partners, we will take this step towards the realization of human rights for girls and women in landlocked developing countries.

Indeed, this works to the full enjoyment of human rights for every human being, as it is the *Universal* Declaration of Human Rights.

Excellencies,
I am greatly encouraged by Member States’ commitments including the agreements at the Financing for Development Forum, the BAPA+40 Conference held in Buenos Aires, and the Political Declaration adopted at the SDG Summit. Moreover, regional dialogues greatly contributed to this Midterm Review.

As we move forward, we need to ensure that all efforts are made to support the sustainable development of landlocked developing countries.

This includes combating illicit financial flows which are detrimental to domestic mobilization and the sustainability of public finances for example with e-government programs and grassroots anticorruption movements in many countries that have been successful in employing digital technologies in tackling illicit financial flows.

We need to strengthen trade financing for micro, small and medium sized enterprises and trade facilitation programmes.

Landlocked developing states need to continue to seek private sector investment, and work to improve economic governance and business regulations while we must provide technical support to facilitate bankable infrastructure and transport development projects.

The work done by multiple United Nations agencies, other international organizations, development partners and civil
society already shows the importance of partnerships in order to achieve the Vienna Programme of Action.

We will only achieve a better world for all, by working together.

Excellencies,

Our world today is marked by significant changes and we must ensure that a substantial foundation is laid so that all Member States can flourish. To ensure sustainable development for generations to come we must work together now. Our actions must be guided by empathy and the principles of humanity.

We must fully, effectively and timely implement the Vienna Programme of Action as integral to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to ensure that no one is left behind.

I look forward to today’s discussions and to your action to implement the commitments of the Political Declaration.

I thank you.

#####