STATEMENT

BY

H.E. LANG YABOU

AMBASSADOR & PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE

PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA TO THE UN

AT THE


WEDNESDAY 5TH DECEMBER 2019
Mr. President,
Distinguished delegates,

At the outset, allow me to thank the Secretary-General for his report contained in document A/74/113 on the Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action (VPOA) on Landlocked Least Developed Countries (LLDCs) 2014-2024. As the report itself observed, progress on the implementation of the Action has been somewhat mixed and hence the need for more action by all stakeholders.

LLDCs are countries in a special situation, especially, in terms of the challenges they continue to face in meeting their transit and transport needs. Africa alone has sixteen members in the LLDCs category and The Gambia, being a coastal country, stands in solidarity with them as we collectively confront the unique challenges that they face.

Mr. President,

With the entry into force of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the launch of the Single African Air Transport Market, which are major developments, a huge opportunity now exists with the potential of facilitating trade and transit between coastal and landlocked countries in Africa.

These initiatives should be seized upon as opportunities to advance the implementation of the VPOA. The capacity of African landlocked developing countries to harness the benefits of these agreement would undoubtedly benefit from the support of the UN system and all stakeholders.
Mr. President,

The report of the Secretary-General also highlighted a number of challenges that landlocked developing countries continue to encounter in their quest to implement the VPOA. While the volume of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) has increased from $24 Billion in 2014 to $28 Billion in 2017, the report observes that the increase was concentrated in only a few landlocked developing countries.

ODA plays a significant transformative role in the development agenda of developing countries in general, but more so in countries in special situations, like LLDCs. The Gambia, therefore calls on the international community to increase their ODA share for the benefit of more landlocked developing countries.

Mr. President,

The capacity of landlocked developing countries to harness the benefits of trade facilitation needs to be enhanced. In addition, their capacity to generate relevant statistical data for the implementation of the VPOA should also be enhanced through technical assistance from the UN system, the international community and regional partners.

Mr. President,

Greater regional cooperation, through trade facilitation, investments in joint infrastructural development of roads and other communication networks, sustainable regional energy grids and other regional initiatives between landlocked developing countries and transit countries can optimize the benefits of trade and commerce for all stakeholders.
In this regard, our Government has recently opened the Senegambia bridge which has drastically reduced the transit time for people and goods between Senegal and The Gambia and the region at large. We are also simplifying our border crossing operations and improving facilities at our port as a gateway for our neighbors, including the landlocked ones. At this juncture, we are also studying plans for having dry ports in the interior of the country with a view to further facilitating smooth flow of goods and services within the region.

The Gambia stands ready to support regional connectivity initiatives through an integrated approach to simplified border crossings management and our regional transport corridors. We call on the international community to partner with us and our neighbors with a view to facilitating our regional integration goals which will translate into benefits for our landlocked countries.

Mr. President,

Climate change is one of the major challenges for landlocked developing countries, especially, the absence of resilience-building capacities for most of our countries. The international community must redouble its efforts in providing necessary support for resilience-building in landlocked developing countries as well as increase their assistance for disaster risk reduction, including disaster preparedness, early warning and early action.

In conclusion, we call on the UN system, the international community and regional organizations to do more to enhance the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. Transit and landlocked developing countries must also enhance their engagement and partnership in their mutual desire to advance the goals of the VPOA and Agenda 2030.

I thank you all.