Address of Uzbekistan’s PR at the High-Level Midterm Review on the implementation of the VPoA for LLDCs
(December 5, 2019)

Mr. President,

First of all, let me commend you for convening this High-Level Meeting, to midterm review of the implementation of the Vienna Program of Action for Land Locked Developing Countries in order to address remaining challenges and identify opportunities for achieving targets set forth in the VPoA.

Mr. President,

Since the adoption of the Vienna Program of Action, Uzbekistan has been taking coherent steps for its implementation. Herein, the main focus is attached to its all six priority areas.

Today I would like to share with you information on Uzbekistan’s efforts in promoting one of the key priorities of the Program, namely regional cooperation in Central Asia which are conducive to achieving not only targets identified in the Vienna Program of Action but overall in the Sustainable Development Goals.

The current situation in our region differs from the one that we had not long ago. Thanks to joint efforts, the Central Asian countries within a short period of time have been able to create a fundamentally new political environment, raise the level of political trust, strengthen traditionally friendly and good neighborly relations among themselves that allowed to significantly expand multifaceted cooperation in the region.

In particular, the agreements with neighboring countries allowed Uzbekistan to open dozens of checkpoints on the borders, liberalized the visa regime and streamlined the transit procedures. Uzbekistan’s trade turnover with other states of Central Asia for the past few years has increased two folds and number of joint ventures – by 4 times.

At the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan, His Excellency Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Consultative meetings of the Heads of State of the Central Asian countries started to be convened. The first meeting in such a format took place in March of 2018 in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan, and the second one was held just last week in Tashkent.
During his address at the Second Consultative meeting the President of Uzbekistan has identified a number of perspective areas for deepening regional cooperation which are fully aligned with the Vienna Program of Action.

**First**, expanding cooperation in trade-economic, investment, transport-communication and energy areas. In particular, Uzbekistan proposed to convene a Central Asian investment forum and a first meeting of Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the five countries as well as to create a regional council on transport communications.

**Second**, holding regular meetings on various levels to discuss issues pertaining to advancing regional collaboration.

**Third**, jointly addressing ecological and water issues in Central Asia. In order to attract innovative technologies, introduce principles of "green economy" and prevent desertification, Uzbekistan proposed to efficiently use opportunities existing within the United Nations Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea Region which was created last year.

From Uzbekistan’s perspective bringing these initiatives to fruition would have positive impact on the implementation of the Vienna Program of Action.

Mr. President,

When we speak about Central Asia, we can’t help but to mention Afghanistan – the country which we consider a historical part of the single cultural-civilizational space of our region.

A stable Afghanistan is a prerequisite for the sustainable development of Central Asia as a whole.

Therefore, today Uzbekistan provides comprehensive assistance to the economic recovery of Afghanistan and its involvement into regional projects. We support such projects as TAPI, CASA-1000, construction of the railroad corridor «Mazari-Sharif – Herat» and a highway from Mazari-Sharif through Kabul to Peshawar as well as the practical implementation of various initiatives vital for Afghanistan in the areas of transport, energy, trade and education.

One of the important areas is to facilitate trade relations. In this regard, Uzbekistan has established an international logistical center «Termez-Cargo-Center» at the border with Afghanistan which is set to assist increasing export-import and transit cargo flow.

Mr. Chair,
Concluding, I would like to emphasize that today in Central Asia, we are firmly convinced that by deepening economic and trade ties, streamlining transport-transit networks, advancing infrastructural development we can achieve more substantial results in ensuring prosperity, well-being and worthy future for our population of 70 million.

Therefore, Uzbekistan remains strongly committed to continue close cooperation with neighboring states and other transit-countries to successfully implement the Vienna Program of Action for LLDCs and the SDGs as a whole.

Thank you, Mr. President.