STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY AMBASSADOR FREDERICK SHAVA TO BE DELIVERED AT THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY HIGH-LEVEL PLENARY MEETING ON THE COMPREHENSIVE MIDTERM REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VIENNA PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: 5 – 6 DECEMBER, 2019; UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK

Mr President,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates

On behalf of the delegation of Zimbabwe, let me begin by thanking the President of the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly, Ambassador Professor Tijjani Muhammad-Bande for convening this important high-level plenary meeting of the UN General Assembly on the Mid-Term Review of the Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action.

Mr. President,

It is now five years since the adoption of the Vienna Programme of Action and four years since the historic adoption of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals. The convening of this midterm review is both timely and relevant as it allows us to take stock of how far we have progressed and the gaps remaining with regards to the implementation of the VPoA. The Political Declaration that we have adopted today should give impetus to the implementation of the programme in the remaining five years up to 2024.

Mr. President,

We note progress that has been made in several key areas outlined in the Programme of Action, including: the harmonization of transport and transit policies and procedures with transit countries, the development of transport infrastructure and the expansion of trade. There has also been increased bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation, especially with regard to trade-facilitating infrastructure.

Nevertheless, the global economic scenario continues to be extremely challenging, more so for LLDCs. Prospects for global recovery are not encouraging, particularly with weak recovery in the developed world and growing turbulence in emerging economies.

The latest Secretary-General’s Report provides a sobering assessment of the task at hand. It points out that over the past five years, achievement in the implementation of the six priorities of the VPoA has been mixed. The progress achieved has been uneven and not shared by all LLDCs. One third of the LLDCs’ population is still living in
poverty and the LLDCs continue to account for less than one percent of the global trade. There has been limited progress on structural economic transformation, as demonstrated by the relatively low value-added contribution of the manufacturing sector in the LLDCs. Inadequate quality and deficiencies in the physical infrastructure remain and access to electricity in LLDCs remain below the world average. In addition, costs of ICT services in these countries remain very high.

While LLDCs have the primary responsibility for their own development, even with their best efforts, they cannot meet their development objectives on their own. Therefore, it is important to address the means of implementation regarding the needs of the LLDCs as they require sustained and unwavering cooperation in terms of financial and technical support. Engagement with the private sector is also essential, including through foreign direct investment and public-private partnerships.

Mr. President,

As we begin the journey of the last five years of implementing the Programme of Action, we must ensure that it is transformative and produces tangible benefits and improved livelihoods for all. In this regard, it will be essential that the international community pays greater attention to addressing the needs of countries facing unique development challenges.

Mr. President,

Zimbabwe, like many other LLDCs countries, is working tirelessly achieve the Sustainable Development Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). I am happy to report that we have made substantive progress towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals through our well planned and deliberate programmes geared towards the overarching goal of eradicating poverty in all its forms. The Government of Zimbabwe in October 2018, launched its development plan, the Transitional Stabilisation Programme (TSP) 2018-2020, which outlines socio-economic, corporate and governance reforms, key in facilitating the realization of the country’s vision, that of transforming Zimbabwe into an upper middle income economy by 2030.

In line with this, Zimbabwe continues to attach high importance to the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs, which is a key component of Agenda 2030, to ensure the country’s sustainable development and efficient integration into the global economy. This is buttressed by our mantra “Zimbabwe is open for Business” in which, under the new leadership of President Emmerson D. Mnangagwa, we have shifted attention to focus on policies aimed at aiding the country’s economic growth and recovery through carving a new course which creates a conducive investment environment.

Mr. President,
In Zimbabwe, our experience has shown that bilateral and regional cooperation play a crucial role in addressing the impact of landlockedness. Connectivity with the sub-region and the African region is the key. In this context, Zimbabwe is implementing a national policy on transforming itself from being land-locked into a land-linked country. Zimbabwe has identified transport and connectivity network, as key elements of its national development plans in order to develop linkages between national roads and enhance connectivity with the neighbouring countries.

Being at the very heart of the North-South transport corridor in the Southern Africa sub-region, Zimbabwe has a natural geographical advantage by virtue of being centrally situated. That makes us the gateway to and from the north. We border three countries with coastlines, namely Mozambique, South Africa and Namibia. We are actively engaged in the relevant multilateral processes aimed at further developing transit Corridors. Discussions are on-going with South Africa and Mozambique to map out plans for a Southern Corridor.

Mr. President,

At a broader regional level, Zimbabwe has played an active part in the process of ensuring long term sustainability and growth beyond reliance on export of primary commodities. As Chair of SADC in 2015, Zimbabwe spearheaded the adoption of the SADC Industrialisation Strategy, which seeks to engender major economic and technological transformation at national and regional levels; accelerate the growth momentum and enhance the comparative and competitive advantages of the economies of the SADC region.

Mr President,

The country's efforts are however taking place in the context of very challenging conditions due to the sanctions imposed on the country by some members of the United Nations. The sanctions have denied our country access to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank (WB) development finance and credit facilities. The unjustified and oppressive illegal sanctions continue to cause untold suffering to the ordinary people of our great country. Their direct and indirect debilitating impacts have equally been felt by our neighbours. On 18 August 2019, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Heads of State and Government Summit meeting in Dar-es-Salam, Tanzania, took a bold and historic decision to declare October 25, as the day on which the entire SADC region would collectively voice its disapproval and condemnation of the illegal sanctions imposed on our country, Zimbabwe. This SADC decision was also welcomed by the Non-Aligned Movement Heads of State and Government, during their Summit held from 25 to 26 October 2019 in Baku, Azerbaijan.

Our challenges have also been exacerbated by the El Nino-induced drought of 2015/16 and again of 2018/19 which has left over 5 million people food insecure, 51
percent of whom are women. To further compound the situation, Cyclone Idai that ravaged Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe in March 2019, left a trail of destruction, claiming the lives of 344 people with 189 others reported missing. The severity of this crisis was a stark reminder of the impact of Climate Change, particularly to countries which are most vulnerable.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, Zimbabwe stands ready to exchange relevant experience and best practices, with other LLDCs and to further strengthen cooperation aimed at addressing existing sustainable development challenges we face as Landlocked Developing Countries.

I thank you.