President of the General Assembly,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Colleagues,

It is an honour to be here with you today.

Overcoming the unique challenges faced by landlocked developing countries is a priority for the Economic and Social Council.

This priority is very much in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and its emphasis on countries in special situations.

The sustainable development of landlocked developing countries will be a crucial part of the decade of action and delivery we are now embarking on.

The recent SDG Summit called for accelerated action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. And the Vienna Programme of Action for landlocked developing countries must guide our revitalized efforts to achieve these goals.

Excellencies,

The 2030 Agenda addresses several key priorities for landlocked developing countries, including: facilitating sustainable and resilient infrastructure development, providing transport systems, ensuring economic diversification, technological growth and innovation. And not least, strengthening the means of implementation.

So far, progress in the achievement of the SDGs in landlocked developing countries has been mixed.

We have seen some encouraging results. For example, in 2005 the proportion of people in landlocked developing countries below the international poverty line was 42%.

By 2015, this fell to 30%.

This is certainly great progress, but still leaves a third of people in LLDCs in poverty.
Additionally, more and more people in LLDCs have access to safe drinking water and sanitation services. But still only at half the rate of the global average.

Progress has also been recorded in health and education related indicators - as well as on gender equality, and the empowerment of women and girls.

Excellencies,

In 2020, ECOSOC will provide a number of opportunities to focus on the priorities of the LLDCs, including the Financing for Development Forum, which will take place in April, followed by the Development Cooperation Forum in May.

These occasions will provide platforms for reality-based, action-oriented and results-focused discussions between all Member States and relevant stakeholders.

In July 2020, 50 countries - including 13 landlocked developing countries - will present their voluntary national reviews at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, and report on their progress towards achieving the SDGs.

It is truly encouraging to see how actively engaged many of the LLDCs are in the VNR process.

The VNRs present an important opportunity for LLDCs to learn from each other, and from other countries.

The VNR process is also a unique opportunity for countries to start a conversation on a shared sustainable development vision with all parts of their own government and society. It has the potential to accelerate national progress towards the SDGs.

Excellencies,

I look forward to working with landlocked developing countries - and indeed all Member States - in the decade of action and delivery.

Through our joint efforts, we can deliver on the global commitment at the heart of the 2030 Agenda - to leave no one behind, and to reach those furthest behind first.

Thank you.