Statement by Ambassador Ms. Sophia Tesfamariam during the Comprehensive High-Level Midterm review of the Vienna Program of Action for the Decade 2014-2024
5-6 December, 2019 New York

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Esteemed Colleagues,

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the State of Palestine on behalf of G77 and China.

At the offset let me acknowledge and thank my colleagues, Permanent Representatives of Bhutan and Austria for their great work on the facilitation of the Political Declaration of the High-Level Midterm Review.

It is a great honour for my delegation to take part in this meeting and make modest contributions to the discussions. As a transit country, we recognise and appreciate the importance of the crucial work that lies ahead in order for us to implement the Vienna Program of Action that was drafted and adopted under the common understanding that there was a need for an inventive, universal, and results oriented program of action.
Transformative, innovative and strengthened partnerships with landlocked countries can create the basis for, and boost, local, regional and international trade. Essentially, changing the economies of both the transit and landlocked states and realizing all-encompassing sustainable growth. The question we should all ask ourselves now is: how can we deliver on the commitment that we all agreed upon and more importantly, how much of that promise will we be able to deliver within these 5 remaining years.

There are thirty-two landlocked countries in the world, of which seventeen are least developed countries, some with large populations. The physical, economic and infrastructural challenges that Landlocked Developing countries face are often compounded by the fact that their transit neighbours are also least developed, and are tackling similar human, infrastructural and technical challenges as they are. We understand what it takes to address the developmental challenges of LLDCs, and will not repeat what has already been said by my colleagues today.

The Horn of Africa region has gone through tremendous transformations in the past year and a half. The new developments have shaped the momentum for regional economic integration, including the implementation of the priorities set in the Vienna Program of Action. The region is determined and committed to working together to transform into the new frontier of the global economy. This is the promise made to the 120 million people residing in the region, that have endured decades of war, turmoil and displacement.

Addressing implementation would require eliminating the obstacles that are preventing the millions in the LLDCs from achieving their aspirations for a better and higher standard of living. It would require revamping the unfair global trading systems, fulfilling the commitments to special developmental needs, promoting effective integration into the global economy and major economic regimes whose prescriptive and imposing modus operandi continue to undermine the ability of states and regions to chart their own policies. It is vital that we acknowledge that every region is bestowed with diverse challenges and opportunities and ought to be addressed as such.
Mr. President,

Despite the seemingly insurmountable challenges it faced in the last 20 years, including war and the imposition of a 9 year long unjust UN sanctions, Eritrea set its development priorities to include infrastructure development and has vigorously pursued this priority by mobilizing its internal resources, to connect just about every village and town in the country with roads and feeder roads, increasing access to education, health care and transportation in remote areas of the country. In addition to refurbishing and rehabilitating existing roads to neighboring states, it has also constructed new roads to connect with Sudan and Ethiopia.

There are major developments in infrastructure in Eritrea today, including rehabilitation of the strategic ports and roads in three key economic regions of the country. Eritrea’s two free trade zones are also being outfitted with the necessary infrastructures, to accommodate local and regional exports. Establish development of foreign trade links and serve as a conduit for local products like fruit, livestock, fish and minerals. Africa in general, and Eastern Africa in particular will benefit from the development of Eritrea’s strategic ports.

Eritrea is committed to the Vienna Program of Action so that LLDCs and transit countries can achieve the envisioned global development goals together.

Thank you.