5 December 2019

General Assembly High-level Plenary Meeting devoted to the Midterm Review on the Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024

Statement by Italy

Ambassador Mariangela Zappia

Mr. President,

Italy aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union. We would like to congratulate Austria and Bhutan for their effective co-facilitation of the Political Declaration adopted during the opening segment of this High Level meeting.

We are also grateful to the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Land-locked Developing Countries and Small Islands Developing States for its valuable support in the preparatory process.

Mr. President,

This Comprehensive High Level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action provides an important opportunity to reaffirm the support of the international community for the LLDCs: a group of Member States that face a spectrum of similar constraints and challenges - of geographic, commercial and environmental nature - in their efforts toward sustainable development.

As indicated in the relevant Report of the Secretary General, it is encouraging that in the first half of the decade 2014-2019 significant progress has been registered in most of the LLDCs, especially in terms of socio-economic development. However, these advancements are still insufficient and there is an evident need to increasing the efforts on the main areas of the Vienna Program of Action - access to the seas, trade, infrastructures, regional cooperation, structural economic transformation, international support - in order for the LLDC to accelerate towards the full realization of the SDGs.

From a strategic perspective, priority should be given to four lines of actions:
First, advancing regional integration. Neighboring transit countries are key to LLDCs exports and constitute potential end-markets for LLDCs’ products. Regional integration processes may improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of transport infrastructures, trade facilities and market mechanisms, thus stimulating domestic investments in the LLDCs and attracting foreign direct investments.

Second, improving LLDCs’ access to electricity and renewable energy sources. Access to energy is a prerequisite for any meaningful sustainable development strategy and renewable energy is increasingly indispensable. Italy has a consolidated experience in strengthening the capabilities of the LLDCs in the field of energy access from renewable sources, particularly in Africa, with an active involvement of the most relevant actors of the Italian private sector. As an example, I would mention the project carried out by Italy in Zambia, in the framework of the World Bank Group’s “Scaling Solar” program and with the active engagement of the Italian company ENEL. Similar initiatives are in place in other African LLDCs, such as Ethiopia, in the framework of National programs aimed at energy diversification and solar plants construction.

Third, promoting a greater role of the private sector. The growth of a development-oriented domestic private sector and the attraction of international investors are largely dependent on the establishment in the LLDCs of a favorable normative framework. This includes protecting and reinforcing property rights, strengthening the rule of law and democratic multi-level participation, granting to all vulnerable categories, in particular women and youth, equitable access to economic opportunities. It is also important to support the capacity of the LLDCs to manage complex investment-related negotiations. In this respect, I would like to recall that Italy has been the initial sponsor of the “Investment Support Programme for LDCs”, promoted by the Office of the High Representative and IDLO, to provide legal and professional assistance for investment-related negotiations and dispute settlement. This is relevant in this context, as 17 of the 32 LLDCs are also classified as Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

The fourth line of action is investing in human capital. Investing in education and training is a fundamental element of any long-term strategy for sustainable development. An increased level of education would facilitate the required increase in labor productivity and would open new possibilities for the LLDCs, especially for the most vulnerable categories, to tap the opportunities of an increasingly globalized economy. Italy devotes special attention to cooperation programs in this field, especially in Africa where half of the LLDCs are located.

Mr. President,

Let me conclude by reaffirming Italy’s long-term commitment to partner with the landlocked developing countries, both bilaterally as well as through the EU, for the successful implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the full achievement of the SDGs.