



Remarks

By

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Briefing to the Press on the Midterm Review of the Vienna Programme of Action

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Ambassador Julio César Arriola Ramírez, Permanent Representative of Paraguay,

Members of the Press,

It is my pleasure to join Ambassador Ramírez to speak about the Midterm Review of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries. The meeting is being chaired by the President of the General Assembly and taking place over the next two days here at headquarters.

The world's 32 Landlocked Developing Countries, or LLDCs, with a combined population of 509 million people, face very specific challenges.

This is a group of countries which faces the double challenge of development and limited access to international markets.

Simply by being landlocked, the level of development of LLDCs is estimated to be about 20% lower than it would be if they were not landlocked.

Recognising the need to continue supporting sustainable development of this group of countries, five years ago, the international community gathered in Vienna, Austria for the second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries.

The Conference adopted the Vienna Programme of Action with a straightforward goal: to adopt a development framework addressing the challenges of landlocked developing countries in a more comprehensive manner than ever before.

We are now midway through the Vienna Programme of Action and the Midterm Review is a critical moment for the international community to review progress, identify gaps and propose innovative solutions to accelerate implementation of the Programme of Action over the next five years.

The Midterm Review Meeting is the culmination of more than a year-long preparation. We organized a series of preconference thematic events, working together with our partner institutions and Member States, to undertake comprehensive analyses of the progress, constraints, and challenges on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. Three regional review meetings were held for the Europe and Asia region; Africa region and Latin America region. I would like to sincerely thank the United Nations Peace and Development Trust Fund, and the Governments of Austria, India and the Russian Federation for supporting

the preparatory process. The preparatory process has informed the Midterm Review with on the ground perspectives of the achievements and constraints faced by the LLDCs.

The good news is that over the last five years LLDCs have been making progress in key areas.

On economic growth, progress has been made by many LLDCs to increase real GDP per capita.

They are also making gains on social development with reductions in populations living in poverty, improvements in child and maternal health, and increases in the number of seats held by women in Parliament.

Infrastructure, a major priority for LLDCs, is also seeing improvements. The share in global freight transport by air has increased.

Encouragingly, there have been recent developments by LLDCs and their transit neighbours in signing agreements and building transport and economic corridors.

However, while this progress is critical, LLDCs continue to face major hurdles.

On average, LLDCs pay more than double in transport costs compared to their transit neighbours and take longer to send and receive goods from overseas markets.

Adding to transport and connectivity challenges, only one third of roads in LLDCs are paved.

The high cost of trade means competitiveness remains limited and of particular concern, is the decline in the share of LLDCs in global trade. They now account for less than 1 per cent of global exports.

Furthermore, most exports from LLDCs remain highly concentrated in a few primary commodities with limited capacity to produce high-value products.

While Official Development Assistance to LLDCs is on the rise, foreign direct investment has continued to decline.

It is clear that while this group of countries is making progress, we need to continue building on that momentum.

Scaled-up partnerships, strengthened regional integration and building resilient economies and societies can turn the 32 Landlocked Developing Countries into vibrant, prosperous and sustainable Land-Linked countries.

Over the next five short years, we hope to look back on the Vienna Programme of Action and say that the programme of action achieved concrete results, that it galvanized partnerships and that it brought the world together to work with Landlocked Developing Countries to overcome their unique challenges.

Thank you.