



Partnering for Accelerated Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action (VPOA) and achieving Sustainable Development in LLDC in the COVID-19 Era"



I am honoured to participate in this important annual meeting of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), for the first time, particularly that it comes shortly after my appointment as Minister of International Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Botswana.

Allow me to join other colleagues in commending you on your assumption of the Chairmanship, and the sterling job you have done in steering the work of our Group, especially during these difficult times occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Botswana fully endorses the theme for this year's meeting, *“Partnering for accelerated implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA) and achieving sustainable development in LLDCs”*. It is in sync with our collective aspiration of urgently resetting our economies in the debilitating aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

4. This meeting is timely as it allows us to reflect on our achievements and challenges as well as intensify our efforts to fast-track implementation of our collective blueprint, the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA).

5. It goes without saying, that the pandemic has gravely exacerbated the myriad of challenges already confronting us, both as landlocked and transit countries. The pandemic prevention and containment protocols,

now build on in our collective response to our common challenges besieging LLDCs.

8. We are most appreciative of the generous and wide-ranging support accorded to us by our development partners and international organisations, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and our development agenda.

9. We therefore fully concur that this platform is an ideal opportunity for us to renew our commitment to redouble our efforts to accelerate implementation of the Vienna Programme of A

creating more active trade routes and expanding market access.

12. In that regard, together with our neighbours, South Africa and Namibia, we have built a Trans Kalahari Corridor. This highway is aimed at facilitating faster and cheaper movement of goods and services between our countries.

13. Furthermore , Botswana and Zambia have embarked on the construction of the Kazungula Bridge project between two countries. This joint project is aimed at further facilitating movement of goods and persons, as well as trade,

