

Annual Ministerial Meeting of Foreign Ministers of Landlocked
Developing Countries

25 September 2019

3:00pm - 6:00pm

Conference Room 5

UN Headquarters, New York

Concept Note and Draft Agenda

Theme: Midterm review of the Vienna Programme of Action: Renewed strength to accelerate implementation and transformation in LLDCs

Background

Lack of territorial access to the sea, isolation and remoteness from world markets and high transport and transit costs impose constraints on the overall economic development and trade competitiveness of the 32 landlocked developing countries (LLDCs). LLDCs face substantially increased total expenses for transport and other transaction costs because of the additional border crossings and long distances from major markets. The high cost of trade is a major barrier to their ability to fully harness their trade and overall sustainable development potential. These challenges have major implications on economic growth, and social and environmental aspects of development including the achievement of the SDGs.

To address the challenges of LLDCs, the international community adopted in 2014 the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA) for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024. The VPoA, which is also an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Development, offers a holistic approach to improve the integration of LLDCs into the global economy through the following priority areas: Fundamental Transit Policy Issues; Infrastructure Development and Maintenance; International Trade and Trade Facilitation; Regional Integration and Cooperation, Structural Economic Transformation, and Means of Implementation. The full and effective implementation of VPoA is critical for LLDCs in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Midway through the Vienna Programme of Action implementation, some progress has been achieved in its implementation, but the progress still falls short of meeting the set targets. LLDCs have exhibited mixed progress in their economic development as real GDP growth for LLDCs declined from 5.6% in 2014 to 2.9% in 2016, lowest level since 1998. It recovered to 4.5% in 2017. The percentage of employed population below the poverty line in LLDCs declined from 26.8% in 2015 to 25.5% in 2017. LLDCs as a group improved the Human Development Index by only 1.5% between 2014 and 2018. However, the average HDI index for 2018 lags behind the world average by 20%.

Limited progress has also been achieved in infrastructure development, in particular, transport, energy and ICT. On transport, whilst some progress has been achieved in completing missing links and generally improving the quality of infrastructure for increased connectivity of LLDCs, there are persistent challenges and a lot remains to be done. Major constraints in developing and maintaining road and rail infrastructure connectivity include limited financial resources, institutional bottlenecks and limited skilled human resources.

On energy, the average proportion of population with access to electricity in LLDCs increased from 49.5% in 2014 to 56.3% in 2017, however, LLDCs still lag behind the world average of 88.8%. On ICT, LLDCs have experienced significant growth in mobile cellular subscriptions that increased from 66 per 100 people in 2014 to 142 in 2017 but still lag significantly behind the world average of 104. The proportion of individuals using internet in LLDCs increased from 17.3% in 2014 to 25.7% in 2017 but remains way below the world average of 48.6%. The cost for broadband continues to be higher than those of the coastal countries.

The above mentioned show that while some progress is being made to implement the VPoA, there are challenges that need to be addressed to achieve the VPoA objective and to improve the welfare of over 50 million people living in the LLDCs. The comprehensive high level midterm review scheduled to be held on 5 and 6 December 2019 offers the opportunity to devise how the implementation of the VPoA can be accelerated. The comprehensive high level midterm review shall review progress made by the LLDCs, transit countries and development partners in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. It is expected to highlight the key achievements, share best practices and lessons learned, identify obstacles and constraints encountered and suggest recommendations to further accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action.

Since the Ministerial meeting proceeds to the comprehensive high level midterm review, it provides an opportunity for LLDCs, transit countries and their development partners to exchange views on how the implementation of the VPoA can be accelerated. The meeting will review the progress made so far and how lessons from the first five years of implementation of the VPoA can be applied to the remaining five years.

The meeting will also be held during the 74th session of the UN General Assembly and alongside the high level General Debate including the Climate Summit, UN High Level Political Forum, and Financing for Development. The meeting will therefore provide collective views on issues discussed during the high level General Debate.

2. Objectives

The key objectives of the Ministerial Meeting include the following:

- Give boost and visibility to the Comprehensive high level midterm review of the Vienna Programme of Action,
- Solicit LLDCs collective views on the high-level general debates on climate change, High-level Political Forum and Financing for development,
- Identify priorities for the coming year, and
- Elect the Global Chair of the Group of LLDCs for the next two years in accordance with the Rule of Procedure of the Group of LLDCs.

3. Expected Outcome

The Ministerial Meeting will reinforce the political commitment to the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The meeting will adopt a Ministerial Declaration of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries. The meeting will also elect the new Chair for the Group of LLDCs for the years 2020/2021.

4. Participation

The Ministerial Meeting will be attended by Ministers and High-Level officials from the 32 LLDCs. Ministers and High-Level Officials from transit developing countries, development partners and representatives of UN systems and other international and regional organizations will also be invited to participate.

5. Documentation Available online

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