Report of the 20th Annual Ministerial Meeting of Landlocked Developing Countries

23 September 2021,

Location: Zoom Virtual Platform

Time: 10:00-12:00

***Theme*: Leaving no one behind: Sustainable Recovery from COVID-19 in LLDCs and accelerated implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the special Roadmap**

Executive Summary

On the 23rd of

The Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan and Global Chair of the LLDC Group with the support of United Nations Office of the High-Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) organized the Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Landlocked Developing Countries that was held on 23rd September 2021, in a virtual format on Zoom.

6. International Seabed Authority (ISA)	13. UN-OHRLLS
7. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)	

C. Opening Session

1. **H.E. Mr. Mukhtar Tileuberdi, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Global Chair of the Group of LLDCs** stated that although several milestones have been met under the VPoA, many challenges still remain. He pointed out that the COVID-19 pandemic has intensified some of the vulnerabilities of LLDCs and created long-lasting economic and social difficulties. The Roadmap for the Accelerated Implementation of the VPoA, adopted last year following the 2019 midterm review on the recommendation of Kazakhstan, has become even more important today.

2. H.E. Mr. Mukhtar Tileuberdi stressed that much more needs to be done considering the scale of needs in LLDCs. He commended OHRLLS for its coordinating role and urged members of the IACG to expedite implementation of projects listed in the Roadmap. He welcomed the recently released Report of the Secretary General on Implementation of the VPoA which noted that the COVID-19 pandemic threatens to reverse the hard-won gains made by LLDCs and highlights their unique vulnerabilities. Because of limited fiscal space, LLDCs are unable to implement recovery packages like those of developed countries. Without adequate assistance, LLDCs risk falling behind.

3. H.E. Mr. Mukhtar Tileuberdi stated that it was critical that the UN system and other international and regional organizations prioritize support to the recovery efforts of LLDCs. On behalf of the Group, he commended the Secretary-General for his strong leadership in helping countries tackle the impact of COVID-19. In the same vein, he stated that the Group requests the UN system to focus its support of LLDCs on those challenges that have been aggravated by COVID-19: commodity dependency, high trade costs, trade facilitation, inadequate infrastructure, and climate change, among others.

4. H.E. Mr. Mukhtar Tileuberdi emphasized the foremost importance of prioritizing vaccines for LLDCs. Vaccination rates in LLDCs remain low so increasing access to vaccines remains a prerequisite for recovery. He particularly requested the Secretary-General to continue to work for equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines and to bolster international support to LLDCs in their vaccination efforts. H.E. Mr. Mukhtar Tileuberdi then emphasized the importance of debt relief. As the global LLDC Chair,

President had previously called on creditors, including members of the G20, to support LLDCs with debt relief. This would be imperative to increase access to resources for health systems and stronger social protection nets. In addition to conventional debt suspension, debt relief measures could also include debt-to-health and debt-to-nature swaps, channeling funds to health systems and environmental protection.

5. During almost two years of its Chairmanship, H.E. Mr. Mukhtar Tileuberdi stated that Kazakhstan has been actively advocating for the interests of the LLDC Member States at the different international fora and meetings. In its capacity as the Chair of the Group, Kazakhstan presented 60 statements on behalf of the Group. The Chair participated in almost 70 bilateral and multilateral meetings, 6 Bureau and 7 Group Ambassadorial meetings, 12 separate Ambassadorial briefings with international Organizations, including one with participation of the UN Secretary-General and two with the Deputy Secretary-General. However, the experience of active Chairmanship clearly showed that such efforts need to be strengthened and complemented by constant coordination on a day-to-day basis in order to bring practical results even further. Such practical results come firstly from implementing specific projects dedicated to helping LLDCs to overcome their challenges. Tm0.0TQqram.m2 re0 g 12 Tf1 7(ti2 reWfur)6ndr02 13.1a36uj6rfri41.92rotection.

12. USG Rattray stated that for many developing countries, economic output is only projected to return to pre-pandemic levels in 2022 or 2023 economies remain fragile and are facing uncertain futures. Many LLDCs are still battling surges in new COVID-19 infections and securing vaccines remains their biggest challenge. COVID-19 has had a profound social and economic impact on LLDCs. The mid-term review of the Vienna Programme of Action already stated that progress, whilst welcome, was too slow, and the pandemic had halted even these gradual gains. Mr. Rattray noted that the Secretary-
the VPoA, highlighted that all key development indicators were regressing due to the
-2.4% in 2020. Foreign
Direct Investment contracted by 31 per cent. Similarly, remittances, which account for more than 10% of GDP in a quarter of LLDCs, declined by 6%. Several LLDCs are also at a high risk of debt distress. Food insecurity was on the rise due to disruptions in supply chains and price increases. Mr. Earle Courtenay Rattray expressed that the report

while taking into account other emerging global threats such as climate change, desertification and drought, which are gravely affecting the LLDCs. He noted that Botswana stands ready to facilitate the preparations for the conference, and look forward to welcoming all participants to Botswana to participate in the events that they intend to host during their tenure and beyond.

24. **H.E. Mr. Peter Launsky-Tieffenthal, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Austria,** presenting on behalf of Foreign Minister Alexander Schallanberg, stated that the pandemic underlined the importance of addressing the special challenges of LLDCs. The pandemic

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Agenda and the VPoA. Austria and the EU support the UN initiative for equitable access

27. For LLDCs to overcome structural barriers, she noted that effective regional integration and cooperation, especially around North and Central Asia was crucial since those regions could serve as bridges between Europe and Asia. For trade facilitation, Mongolia is committed to implementing the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. Mongol implementation of the agreement is currently at 56.3%. Ms. Batmunkh added that Mongolia is implementing the Mongolia Trade Portal and the preparatory work for the establishment of a single-window system was ongoing.

28. **H.E. Mr. Soltan bin Saad Al-Muraikhi, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Qatar** appreciated the relentless efforts by Kazakhstan as Chair of LLDCs in mobilizing support and further the interests of LLDCs. He noted that the pandemic was still causing economic headwinds, especially in LLDCs. He underscored the importance of partnership-based cooperation in supporting vulnerable economies to achieve more sustainable growth. He stated that Qatar is proud to host LDC5 in Doha from 23-

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procedures. As part of the VPoA priorities, in infrastructure development and maintenance, international trade and trade facilitation, Malawi has prioritized infrastructure development and intend to create an integrated transport system to be connected to the global economy. Mr. Mkaka expressed the importance of cooperation in recovering from the pandemic and making progress on VPoA goals.

45. **Mr. Xiangchen Zhang, Deputy Director-General of WTO** thanked the Chair for the invitation to this high-level meeting. He highlighted that LLDCs face many trade constraints which have been exacerbated during the pandemic. WTO did recent research which revealed the extent of trade constraints that LLDCs face to their unfavorable geography. He noted that the study is expected to be finalized by the WTO conference. He indicated that WTO, with cooperation with OHRLLS

53. H. E. Mr. Raúl Cano Ricciardi pointed out that the Covid-19 pandemic is likely to continue for some time and accentuate the negative impact for LLDCs. Already, the average GDP growth in landlocked developing countries decreased significantly from 4.3% in 2019 to -2.4% in 2020. Overcoming the negative impact of the pandemic on international trade, connectivity and freedom of transit is essential to guarantee adequate supply to the population and keep the economies and health systems functioning. H. E. Mr. Raúl Cano Ricciardi stated that the structural characteristics of Paraguay such as the size of its internal market require additional and differentiated efforts to stimulate its development.

54. H. E. Mr. Raúl Cano Ricciardi noted the adverse effects of climate change, which disproportionately affects landlocked developing countries. In addition to the climate disasters of greater intensity and frequency, other problems such as droughts seriously affect Paraguay, since the scarcity of water not only has consequences for its use in consumption and production activities, but also deprives Paraguay of its main source of clean and renewable electricity generation, recalling that Paraguay is a main producer of hydroelectric power, as well as its logistics corridors for international trade, through its rivers. H. E. Mr. Raúl Cano Ricciardi mentioned that LLDCs are in the final stage of implementation of the 2014-2024 Vienna Program and LLDCs must seriously consider the inclusion of issues related to climate change and the environment as a priority area when LLDCs convene for the Third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries, tentatively in 2024. H. E. Mr. Raúl Cano Ricciardi reiterated Paraguay's firm commitment to the cause of landlocked developing countries, and determination to always work to advocate for LLDCs interests and strengthen the Group's presence in international fora.

55. **Ambassador Sheikh Mohammed Belal, Managing Director of the Common Fund for Commodities (CFC)** talked about the unequal access to COVID-19 vaccines. He noted that more than 5.13 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccine have been administered globally and 33% of the world population has received at least one dose by the end of August 2021. But only 1.6% of people in low-income countries have received at least one dose. He added that while 82% of shots have been administered in high- and upper-middle-income countries, only 0,3%

and food safety worldwide. Learning from the food crisis of 2007-08 which caused widespread deprivation and suffering, H.E. Mr. Sheikh Mohammed Belal emphasized the importance for LLDCs of keeping markets open, trade flowing smoothly and supply chains functioning properly in order to avert the pandemic causing a global food security crisis.

57. H.E. Mr. Sheikh Mohammed Belal indicated that the private sector, in general, and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in particular, have an important role to play to respond to these challenges. In the recovery, SMEs drive a large share of employment creation, poverty alleviation and structural transformation. A competitive SME sector generates efficiency, foreign exchange earnings and incomes, and enhances the resilience of the economy as well as its capacity to recover. However, SMEs require support in most LLDCs. They have poor access to markets, lack adequate finance and are also found wanting in other areas including technology, skilled labor force, and critical infrastructure and utilities. These can be addressed in official development assistance (ODA) strategies to recognize the large infrastructure needs of low-income landlocked countries and the need for an increase in direct assistance to support large-scale investments in roads, railways, water, energy and information infrastructures.

58. To overcome these challenges, H.E. Mr. Sheikh Mohammed Belal added that the LLDCs can encourage investments in their productive sectors, taking advantage of their commodity endowments and support the emergence of a diversified economic systems by strategically re-investing commodity derived incomes. The CFC believes that the SME sector can be a valuable partner in achieving this goal. The CFC invests in small and medium-sized enterprises to empower primary producers, giving them the tools and resources to scale up on the value chain. The CFC adopts the impact investment approach in its work, to focus on

on the commodities market. From 2014 to the end of 2021, CFC expects to have approved 22 projects operating in LLDCs. The total value of these projects will exceed USD 100

possible, so that developing world are better prepared to withstand future crises and also develop both economic and health-related resilience.

60. H.E. Mr. Sheikh Mohammed Belal pointed out that

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67. **Mr. Dmitry Mariasin, Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe** started his statement by explaining how UNECE policy work supports the VPoA.

costs for road transportation. The Harmonization Convention increases efficiencies and revenues by ensuring simple and speedy treatment of cargo at borders. Mr. Dmitry Mariasin emphasized that further non-tariff measures reforms in the areas of trade facilitation and quality infrastructure are needed, with a focus on whole-of-government approaches and alignment of national objectives with the SDGs. UNECE hosts the UN Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT). Its recommendations and standards help to simplify and dematerialize cumbersome trade procedures, boost competitiveness, and access global markets. For example, the UN/CEFACT Single Window Recommendation establishes a single-entry point for all import-export documents. Mr. Dmitry Mariasin stated that UNECE can support LLD

textile and footwear value chains, via the UN-CEFACT Recommendation on Enhancing Traceability and Transparency. He confirmed that UNECE is already running a blockchain-enabled pilot that fosters due diligence and sustainability in cotton value chains.

68. **Dr. David Musabayana, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of the Republic of Zimbabwe** first congratulated Hon. Lemogang Kwape, Minister of International Affairs and Cooperation of Botswana for accepting the task of leading the

70. Dr. David Musabayana stated that Zimbabwe attaches great importance to the implementation of the VPoA. He stated that in November 2020 the Government of Zimbabwe launched its economic blueprint, the National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1), which charts policies, institutional reforms and national priorities needed, from 2021-2025, to achieve an upper middle-income economy under Vision 2030. All the six priority areas of the VPoA have been incorporated into the NDS1, especially in the area of infrastructure, trade facilitation and transit transport system, with a view to transforming Zimbabwe from a landlocked country into a land-linked transit route and a logistic hub.

71. Dr. David Musabayana stated that Zimbabwe continues to be hamstrung by the impact of Unilateral Coercive Measures imposed by some Western powers. He called for the removal of these illegal sanctions. Dr. David Musabayana stated that Zimbabwe is faced with financial constraints, high logistic costs, limited logistic capabilities, the impact of climate change, particularly recurring droughts, cyclones, floods and landslides that damage infrastructure and destroy lives and livelihoods

74. H.E. Mr. Phoxay Khaykhamphithoune stated that while Lao PDR is pursuing their ambitious target of graduating from LDC status, they are also exerting great efforts to transform from being landlocked into a land-linked country, which is in line with the s. H.E. Mr. Phoxay Khaykhamphithoune shared news that the grand opening of China-Laos high speed railway built under the Belt & Road Initiative will be observed in the coming months. He pointed out that the railway is a significant part of ambitious aspiration of creating better infrastructure along the economic corridor for regional integration and connectivity.

75. H.E. Mr. Phoxay Khaykhamphithoune urged the international community, especially the countries in a position to do so, to consider providing vaccine to LLDCs to ensure that every country has access to vaccine in an equitable and adequate manner. He also urged transit countries to facilitate and expedite the goods in their transit, especially in this difficult situation. H.E. Mr. Phoxay Khaykhamphithoune concluded by reiterating Lao

transit countries, development partners, UN agencies, international organizations and private sectors among others.

76. **Mr. Gurbuz Gonul, Director, Country Engagement and Partnership of International Renewable Energy Agency, IRENA** stated that enhancing access to affordable, reliable and sustainable energy is particularly important in the context of post-COVID recovery efforts in relation to essential services such as healthcare, water and sanitation and productive applications. He pointed out while notable progress has been made on energy access in recent years, the electricity access rate in LLDCs is still about 40 per cent.

77. Mr. Gurbuz Gonul remarked that there was now a consensus around renewable energy as the basis for green pathways that will facilitate global recovery from the pandemic. IRENA advocates for LLDCs to accelerate energy access and transition through renewable energy as part of post-covid recovery measures. Accelerating renewables deployment can bring a range of socio- economic benefits, including higher GDP, as well as a substantial increase in jobs and investments which are much needed to recover better from the COVID-19 - pandemic recovery demonstrates that each million-dollar invested in renewables and system flexibility would result in the creation of at least 25 jobs.

78. Under MoU with UN-OHRLLS, Mr. Gurbuz Gonul stated that IRENA is committed to supporting member states including LLDCs, establish comprehensive, supportive, integrative, enabling, and clear strategies that accelerate investments in the renewable

energy sector and support energy transition. This strengthened cooperation on energy transition is also reflected in the Roadmap for the Accelerated Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs. Under this framework, IRENA is committed to and is implementing support for LLDCs through technical advice and capacity building on policy, finance, and technology-related aspects of renewable energy. Under the roadmap, IRENA is developing a joint report with UN-OHRLLS on Scaling up Renewable Energy in LLDCs. The report which is at an advanced stage of development provides an overview of deployment trends and outlines possible actions to scale-

Bhutan is also experiencing a severe economic downturn from the pandemic. The economic growth projected at 6.1% for 2020 dropped to -6.3%.

82. Another concern that H.E. Ms. Doma Tshering raised for LLDCs was climate change which remained the biggest single threat to sustainable development. As a small landlocked developing country in the fragile mountainous ecosystem, climate change mitigation was a concern for Bhutan despite Bhutan already being carbon neutral. H.E. Ms. Doma Tshering mentioned that Himalayan glaciers are melting at an alarming rate. She emphasized the importance of laying the foundations of a decade long target of climate action. Partners must deliver on a commitment to mobilizing US$100 billion annually in climate finance, of which 50% should be allocated for adaptation and resilience, with more than half going to vulnerable countries. H.E. Ms. Doma Tshering concluded that Bhutan welcomes the adoption of the ministerial declaration. Bhutan committed to engaging with LLDCs and partners to ensure accelerated implementation of the VPoA which is truly a roadmap to full realization of the 2030 Agenda and its overarching goal of leaving no one behind.

83. **H.E. Mr. Mher Margaryan, Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations** firstly congratulated Mr. Courtenay Rattray on his appointment as USG and High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS. He expressed his concern that LLDCs have been affected by COVID-19 pandemic due to their structural constraints. H.E. Mr. Mher Margaryan mentioned that the VPoA represented a comprehensive framework for cooperation between LLDCs, transit countries and development partners in promoting integration of the landlocked countries into global markets and thus the implementation of the VPoA had

system. This state of affairs is being compounded by COVID-19 pandemic as it increases the risks of balance of payment crisis, food crisis and debt crisis for LLDCs. He noted that unsustainable assistance with conditionalities will only increase the debt burden of LLDCs. He asserted that India had extended assistance to developing countries in ways that unleashes their potential. H.E. Mr. T. S. Tirumurti pointed out that India has extended its hand to assist LLDC partners in their COVID-19 response with medical assistance including testing kits, protective gear, supply of medicines and vaccines and training program for building healthcare infrastructure.

92. H.E. Mr. T. S. Tirumurti showed that India has been extremely forthcoming in the context of LLDCs and provided extensive access and facilities to neighborhoods. India established the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN) Initiative to strengthen economic cooperation and transport connectivity. In 2017 India established the US$ 150 million India-UN Development Partnership Fund which is aimed at Southern-owned and led demand-driven, and transformational sustainable projects oriented towards the SDGs in developing countries particularly, LDCs and LLDCs. More broadly, India is undertaking extensive cooperation with LLDCs in the context of its development partnership program. In the landlocked countries of Africa, H.E. Mr. T. S. Tirumurti mentioned that India is undertaking substantial projects which directly contribute to enhance the quality of life of the people. It ranges from power projects and IT related projects to major infrastructure and water projects. H.E. Mr. T. S. Tirumurti committed that India will continue sharing the development experience and expertise to overcome challenges and achieve the 2030 Agenda.

93. **H.E. Ms. rs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey** stated that the humanitarian and socio-economic crises caused by COVID-19 have placed a disproportionate burden on countries with special circumstances.
coupled with COVID-19 restrictions, hT/F3 1S2 W*ni.00000d ve srup3(ti)-3(/F3 1S2o[n)-23t)8-3(he)[

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No objections. H.E. Mr. Mukhtar Tileuberdi announced the ministerial declaration was adopted.

H. Any Other Matter, Closing Session

H.E. Mr. Mukhtar Tileuberdi thanked everyone for the full participation in the meeting and adjourned the meeting.

Annex 1

MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

Annual Ministerial Meeting of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries

New York, 23 September 2021

PP1 We, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Landlocked Developing Countries, have met virtually on 23 September 2021, at the margins of the 76th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations to provide strategic guidance for the accelerated and full implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, and have held our deliberations under the theme " *Leaving no one behind: Sustainable Recovery from COVID-19 in Landlocked Developing Countries and accelerated implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the special Roadmap*",

PP2 ***Recalling***

Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, adopted by the General Assembly on 5 December 2019 in which the General Assembly reaffirmed its commitment to the full, effective and timely implementation of the VPoA,

PP4 ***Further recalling*** the Roadmap for accelerated implementation of the VPoA that we adopted at the margins of the high-level week of the 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly and recognizing its importance in accelerating the implementation of the VPoA and building back better after COVID-19,

PP5 ***Recognizing*** the importance of unfettered, efficient and cost-effective access for

2. **We express concern** that the unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on LLDCs is continuing unabated with little signs of a recovery. LLDCs continue to face multifaceted

number of people living in poverty, but it is also likely to stall long-standing efforts for economic development;

7. **We express** concern that the proportion of people covered by at least one social protection benefit is significantly lower in LLDCs at 14.2% compared to the global average of 46.9%. **We commit** to supporting the scaling up of effective social protection systems along with government spending on key services in order to safeguard the poor and vulnerable during the current and future crises. We call on development partners, the United Nations, and other international organizations to support LLDCs to expand social protection programmes and strengthen social safety nets to help prevent vulnerable groups from falling deeper into poverty and we call on international financial institutions, multilateral organizations and regional banks to provide quick balance-of-payment and budget support with limited conditionalities to LLDCs so as to enable them to respond adequately to this pandemic;

8. **We express deep concern** that a growing number of people are currently facing food insecurity since all the indicators of food insecurity have continued to exhibit a deteriorating trend due to COVID-19. In this regard, we call upon the international community especially our development partners to enhance their financial and in-kind

11. **We call upon** Member States and other relevant stakeholders to immediately take steps to prevent, within their respective legal frameworks, speculation and undue stockpiling that may hinder access to safe, effective and affordable essential medicines, vaccines, personal protective equipment and medical equipment as may be required to effectively address COVID-19;

12. **We welcome** the international commitment to support the financing of stimulus measures in countries in special situations, including LLDCs, in order to facilitate recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and call for the early realization of these commitments;

13. We **are concerned** that LLDCs continue to be disproportionately affected by the adverse impacts of climate change, desertification, land degradation, drought, melting glaciers, floods, including glacial lakes outbursts and other disasters due to their location, level of development, and greater reliance on climate sensitive sectors like agriculture. We note with concern that land covered by forests in LLDCs has declined from 17.2% in 2015 to 16.8% in 2020. we call on Member States, as well as relevant regional and international organizations to continue to support climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts and strengthening resilience. We further call on COP 26 UN Climate Change Conference to consider the impact of climate change on LLDCs in the deliberations and outcome**;**

14. **We recognize**

Risk Reduction and call upon development partners, UN system and other international and climate

change strategies as well as drought and disaster risk mitigation, preparedness and resilience policies and strategies, including early warning and early action systems and to integrate risk management into national development plans;

15. **We emphasize** that water is critical for sustainable development and the eradication of poverty and hunger and is indispensable for human development, health and wellbeing and a vital element of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and other relevant goals in the social, environmental and economic fields;

16. **We welcome** the initiative of the Government of Tajikistan to host jointly with the United Nations the High-Level International Conference on the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018-2028 to be held in Tajikistan in June 2022, which would serve as a platform for soliciting and consolidating inputs in preparation of the United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the

Implementation of the Objec

-2028 to be held in 2023 in New York;

17. **We invite** climate finance providers to improve access for LLDCs and we encourage the allocation of more resources to ex-ante instruments for building resilience, including new financing approaches which incentivize disaster risk reduction and sustainable reduction of

18. **We commend** the progress that has been made by LLDCs and transit developing countries in ratifying the World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade Facilitation, the revised Kyoto Convention, the TIR Convention and other relevant international conventions and we call upon LLDCs and transit countries to effec

of the role of the private sector, including international project finance, public-private partnerships and other non-traditional forms of finance;

22. **We reiterate**

including through remote learning, telemedicine, e-commerce, virtual meetings and working, accessing government services and non-physical transit and customs procedures.

UNDP, United Nations Regional Commissions, Common Fund for Commodities, World Bank, UNDP, ITC, and other partners to provide assistance to LLDCs to strengthen their capacity to participate in regional and global value chains;

of productive capacities in their development strategies. **We further stress** that national efforts of LLDCs need to be supported by an enabling international economic environment and financial, technical and capacity-building assistance towards building their productive capacities, enhancing diversification and value-addition, implementing industrial policies, and fostering structural economic transformation;

10. **We note** that the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures taken to mitigate its impact have had a particularly negative impact on service sectors such as tourism, retail, and hospitality, some labor-intensive sectors, small and medium-sized enterprises and the informal sector resulting in higher unemployment, particularly amongst vulnerable segments of society. **We therefore call on** development partners and international organizations to provide assistance to LLDCs to establish initiatives to support SMEs such as through provision of enhanced finance and access to credit, capacity building and employing ICTs and innovation in business operations that may help in building the -COVID-19 era;

11. **We emphasize** that building a conducive business environment for private sector

of domestic resource mobilization underscored by the principle of national ownership, also recognize that, while LLDCs have made considerable efforts to mobilize domestic resources and attract private investment, further progress is needed, and

19. **We welcome** the vigorous measures taken by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank Group, regional development banks and other multilateral and bilateral development to provide emergency health support, debt relief and other economic assistance to help countries respond to COVID-19, and call for greater prioritization of assistance to LLDCs.

    aggravated by COVID-19, such as commodity dependency, high trade costs, trade facilitation, inadequate infrastructure, climate change, among others;

20. **We call upon** countries of the South in the spirit of solidarity and South-South Cooperation,

31. **We call on** the United Nations system and the International Seabed Authority to support the LLDCs in awareness raising, capacity-building, technology transfer, and the sharing of experiences to facilitate the participation of LLDCs in the ocean economy and in ocean related norm setting discussions including in the ongoing discussions on the intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). We urge LLDCs that have not yet done so to ratify the UNCLOS;

32. **We recognize** the critical importance of the work of the International Think Tank for LLDCs in improving research and capacity development for the LLDCs and in promoting networking and collaboration among researchers and research institutions for the benefit of the LLDCs and call upon relevant international and regional organizations including UN-OHRLLS, UN-ESCAP, UNCTAD, UNDP, WTO and others, and research institutions, think tanks, and other stakeholders to strengthen collaboration on research and capacity building with the International Think Tank for LLDCs on all the priority areas of the Vienna Programme of Action and foster coherence in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action with the Sustainable Development Goals;

33. **We take note with appreciation** of the contributions made by the host country Mongolia and other LLDCs who are party to the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of an International Think Tank for LLDCs and call on development partners, Member States that are party to the Agreement, United Nations system, other international organizations and other stakeholders to provide voluntary contributions to the International Think Tank;

34. **We urge** all LLDCs that have not yet ratified the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of an International Think Tank for LLDCs to do so;

35. **We invite** development partners and the international financial and development institutions to make voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund established by the Secretary-

at the national, regional and global levels raising awareness on the special needs of LLDCs, build multi-stakeholder partnerships, and mobilize international support and resources in favour of the LLDCs;

37. **We welcome** the appointment of Mr. Courtenay Rattray as the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and we request the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS) to continue to work on its mandate in support of the LLDCs;

38. **We look forward to** hosting of the Ministerial Meeting on Transport for LLDCs on 5-7 April 2022, and underscore that increased transport connectivity is critical for LLDCs to become fully integrated in regional and global markets;

39. **We look** forward to the convening of the following upcoming global conferences: Food Systems Summit (13 September 2021 TBC); UN Climate Change Conference COP26 (1-12 November 2021); UN Second Global Sustainable Transport Conference (14-16 October 2021); the 15th UNCTAD Quadrennial Conference (3-7 October 2021); Ocean Conference 2022; WTO 12th Ministerial Conference (30 November 3 December 2021); the Worlr the

developing countries as the Global Chair of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries and look forward to its continued support to the promotion of the interests of the landlocked developing countries;

42. **We recall** the Rules of procedure of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries A/72/656). We congratulate the newly elected 2022-2023 Bureau under the Chairmanship of the Government of Botswana and commit to work closely with them to advance our development agenda;

43. **We underscore**

Annex 2

Group of Landlocked Developing Countries: composition by region (as of September 2021)

Africa

1. Botswana
2. Burkina Faso
3. Burundi
4. Central African Republic
5. Chad
6. Eswatini
7. Ethiopia
8. Lesotho
9. Malawi
10. Mali
11. Niger
12. Rwanda
13. South Sudan
14. Uganda
15. Zambia
16. Zimbabwe

Asia

17. Afghanistan
18. Bhutan
19. Kazakhstan
20. Kyrgyzstan
21.
22. Mongolia
23. Nepal
24. Tajikistan
25. Turkmenistan
26. Uzbekistan

Eastern Europe

27. Armenia
28. Azerbaijan

29. North Macedonia
30. Republic of Moldova

Latin America

31. Bolivia (Plurinational State of)
32. Paraguay

Annex 3

List of Participants:

1. Afghanistan

- H. E. Mohammad W. Naeemi, Deputy Permanent Representative

2. Armenia

- H. E. Mr. Mher Margaryan, Permanent Representative
- Araksya Babikyan, Attaché

3. Azerbaijan

- H.E. Mr. Jeyhun Bayramov, Minister of Foreign Affairs
- Billur Ahmadova, Attaché, billur.ahmadova@gmail.com

4. Bhutan

- H. E. Doma Tshering, Permanent Representative, dtshering@mfa.gov.bt

5. Bolivia

- H. E. Diego Rodríguez, Permanent Representatove

6. Botswana

- H. E. Dr. Lemogang Kwape, Minister of International Affairs and Cooperation

7. Eswatini

- Siphelele Dludlu, Counsellor

8. Ethiopia

- Anteneh Senbeta, Economic Coordinator

9. Kazakhstan

- H.E. Mukhtar Tileuberdi, Minister of Foreign of Affairs

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11. Lao PDR

- Alberto Caballero, Deputy Permanent Representative

18. Rwanda

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19. Tajikistan

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20. Uganda

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21. Uzbekistan

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22. Zimbabwe

- Garikai Manyanga, Counsellor

23. Austria

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