Good afternoon. Ladies and Gentlemen. My name is Mutsa Chasi representing Zimbabwe, one of the global Bureau members of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries. I will be the moderator of this session.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to you all to this pre-conference event on “Building the Resilience of Landlocked Developing Countries to the Impacts of Climate Change, Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought”. This event has been jointly organized by Office of the High Representative of the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Countries and Small Island Developing States, UNCCD and UNFCCC.

Landlocked Developing Countries face special challenges that are associated with their lack of direct territorial access to the sea and remoteness and isolation from world markets. They incur higher costs transportation and trade and as such are disadvantaged in their development as they can not fully utilise their trade potential.

Landlocked Developing Countries because of their geography are also disproportionately affected by climate change, desertification, land degradation and drought. A large proportion of their lands is under dryland ecosystems that are highly vulnerable to the impact of desertification and climate change. Degraded land and encroaching desertification foster extreme poverty, food insecurity and hunger and contribute to increased migrations, instability and other social crises.

The Almaty Programme of Action adopted by the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor
Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation, held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in 2003, aim to address the special needs and challenges faced by the LLDCs in achieving their development goals with a focus on transit cooperation. The first ten years of the Almaty Programme of Action is coming to an end, the UN General Assembly mandated the convening of a comprehensive ten-year review conference of the Almaty Programme of Action in 2014.

Today’s meeting, is part of the preparatory process leading up to the comprehensive ten year review conference of the Almaty Programme of Action to be held in 2014.

In this meeting I hope that we will:
1. Discuss how climate change, desertification and land degradation are affecting the overall development of our countries
2. Identify the measures that have worked well and what has not worked for our countries;
3. Identify any emerging opportunities under the various multilateral agreements and other international programme that our can take advantage of;
4. Identify priority actions and measures needed to adequately address the challenge of climate change, desertification and land degradation – clearly specifying those to be undertaken by our countries and those by the development partners.

Ideas and recommendations shared today will feed into the Outcome Document of the Second UN Conference on landlocked developing countries. I call upon all of you to engage actively and constructively in the debate today.

I thank you