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Opening Remarks by

Mr. Cheick Sidi Diarra

Under-Secretary-General
Special Adviser on Africa and High Representative
for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing
Countries and Small Island Developing States

delivered by Mr. Sandagdorj Erdenebileg,
Chief, UN-OHRLLS

at the Third Meeting of Trade Ministers
of Landlocked Developing Countries

**Ezulwini, Swaziland
21 October 2009**

His Excellency the Right Honourable Dr. Sibusiso Barnabas Dlamini, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland

Her Excellency the Honourable Senator Mashwama, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Trade of Swaziland

His Excellency the Honourable Mr. Lacognata, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Paraguay

His Excellency Ambassador Daou of Mali, Chair of the LLDC Group,

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

I am honoured to address this auspicious forum on behalf of Mr. Cheick Sidi Diarra, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, who could not be with us due to changes in the General Assembly session in New York.

Let me begin by thanking the Government and the People of Swaziland for hosting the Third Meeting of the Trade Ministers of the Landlocked Developing Countries in beautiful Ezulwini. I would like to express my sincere appreciation for their gracious hospitality and the excellent arrangements made for this Meeting. The Office of the High Representative is extremely pleased to co-sponsor this important gathering with the United Nations Development Programme.

Let me also take this opportunity to extend our thanks to the colleagues of the UNDP for their excellent cooperation.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates,

You meet during the difficult time when the international community faces the worst global economic crisis in recent memory. The crisis have hit landlocked developing countries hard. Therefore, it is particularly urgent for landlocked developing countries to strengthen their partnership and concerted actions to overcome the barriers that prevent them benefiting more fully from the economic opportunities available in global markets. Their special development needs must be accurately brought to the fore in the WTO trade negotiations. The outcome of the Doha Round should ensure that the gains from world trade are shared as equally as possible among all participants.

This Third Meeting of LLDCs Trade Ministers will go a long way to help you achieve those goals. The Ezulwini Declaration that you will adopt at the end of this meeting will strengthen your Group's collective bargaining power. It will also provide clear political guidance for its concerted and effective actions at the global level, particularly at the WTO to ensure that your voice is heard throughout the Doha negotiation process.

It is well established that trade is a powerful engine for economic growth, prosperity and higher standards of living. Fuller integration into the global trading system is indeed one of five priorities of the Almaty Programme. Despite some progress, the landlocked developing countries continue to face enormous challenges due to their inherent geographical disadvantages combined with inadequate transport infrastructure and cumbersome border crossing procedures. These lead to excessive trade transaction costs that so profoundly dampen their international competitiveness.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates,

The ongoing Doha Round negotiations on trade facilitation are expected to produce a win-win solution for business and consumers in both LLDCs and their transit neighbours. Conclusion of these negotiations is particularly important for the landlocked developing countries, which depend to a large extent on effective transit arrangements with their neighbours for access to foreign markets. Effective operationalization of the rules under articles V, VIII and X of the GATT is particularly urgent. Your concerted engagement must focus on reaching an agreement with binding rules that ensures improved conditions for transit, harmonized and transparent standards and a speedy movement of goods across the borders. And indeed this is the direction your Geneva based delegations have taken, also joining forces with major industrialized and transit developing countries. This is indeed a winning strategy, we wholeheartedly supported.

Another important area for attention for the LLDCs is the Aid-for-Trade Initiative which has entered an operational phase through a number of model aid-for-trade projects, with strong donor support. Landlocked countries in the Greater Mekong Sub-region and in Southern Africa have benefited. These best practices have shown that success depends on creating closer cooperation at the national level among relevant Government authorities in the areas of trade and finance, with the strong support of the development partners.

Demand-driven technical assistance and predictable and additional financial resources should be increasingly targeted to addressing critical bottlenecks such as lack of adequate transit transport infrastructure and human capital, design and implementation of trade facilitation measures and expansion of supply side capacities in landlocked developing countries.

Mr. Chairman, the challenges confronted by LLDCs are varied and numerous. These include: overcoming the effects of the global economic crisis; adapting to climate change and building greater resilience to it; more effective participation in WTO trade negotiations. We must also accelerate the reforms and cooperative efforts needed to

establish efficient transit transport networks for landlocked developing countries and their transit neighbours.

In conclusion, let me underscore the importance of the effective implementation of the Almaty Programme which constitutes a sound global framework to address the specific socio-economic, developmental challenges of the landlocked developing countries in a holistic manner. With a renewed sense of commitment, we all must continue our efforts to further strengthen the global partnership for the implementation of this Programme. Through these efforts we will translate our aspiration to become active and successful participants in the international economy into reality.

You can rest assured the United Nations as a whole, and my Office in particular, stands fully behind the landlocked developing countries and will continue to support your efforts toward that end.

I wish every success in your deliberations.