

**OPENING STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
PARAGUAY, H.E. DR. HECTOR LACOGNATA, AT THE MEETING OF
LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, EZULWINI, SWAZILAND**

Ezulwini, Swaziland, October 21st, 2009

His Excellency, the Honorable Dr. Sibusiso Barnabas Dlamini, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland,
His Excellency, the Honorable Senator Jabulile Mashwama, Minister of Trade and Industry of Swaziland,
Ministers, High Officials, Delegates of Member States,
His Excellency, Mr. Cheick Sidi Diarra, High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island States,
Senior Officials of UNCTAD, UNDP, WTO and other International organizations,
Observers and Special guests,
Panelists,
Ladies and Gentlemen;

First of all, I would like to thank the hospitality of the people and government of the Kingdom of Swaziland, who have made this event possible. My country is particularly satisfied that the Third Meeting of Trade Ministers of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries takes place in a nation of Africa, a continent with which we share common problems, but also a great deal of potential, as well as the dream to achieve the ever sought-after development for the welfare of our peoples.

This meeting takes place in a crucial moment, while we are facing the consequences of a global economic and financial crisis which impacts severely developing countries, and particularly landlocked developing countries.

The vulnerability situation of landlocked developing countries is a priority of Paraguay's foreign policy. This is the reason why, back in 1957, we promoted the adoption of United Nations Resolution No. 1028, whereby, for the first time, the needs of the countries in our situation were recognized.

From that moment on, we have taken important steps towards the international recognition of the problems and special needs of landlocked developing countries. However, it is necessary that we follow steadily on this path together, for the international community to recognize the extraordinary difficulties faced by our countries and show its solidarity through concrete measures that allow us to overcome poverty and improve the welfare of our peoples.

It was as a part of said efforts that the Meetings of Ministers of Trade of Landlocked Developing Countries were institutionalized, with the purpose of analyzing the situation of our countries, promote coordinated efforts to overcome the difficulties and reach common positions in the different negotiating forums.

For the Paraguayan delegation, it is an honour to coordinate the Group of landlocked developing countries in trade and development related issues. For us, trade must be an

instrument for development, not an obstacle. In this spirit, allow me to report some of the work and activities this coordination has been doing.

With the purpose of establishing a referential framework for the Doha Round negotiations, we met in Asuncion, Paraguay, in August of 2005, where we adopted the “Asuncion Platform for the negotiations of the Doha Development Round”. This was the first meeting of Trade Ministers of landlocked developing countries, aimed at the achieving common negotiation positions. In the same sense, we met at the margins of the WTO Ministerial Conference and, after that, we met in Ulan Bator, Mongolia, in August of 2007, to adjust and update our position, thus adopting the Ulan Bator Declaration. Finally, we cannot forget the successful meeting held last year in at the margins of the Twelfth United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

Within framework of the World Trade Organization, we have worked mainly in the area of Trade Facilitation, through the negotiation of several proposals for transit, with the goal of obtaining, in the least possible time frame, a legally binding instrument that contributes to the speeding of trade exchanges, the elimination of measures that make our trade more expensive and the fluid transit of goods.

Likewise Landlocked Developing Countries have gathered forces to give impulse to the Doha Development Round, so as to promote the elimination of export subsidies, a substantial reduction on domestic assistance that causes distortions to agricultural trade, and a preferential attention to the problem of cotton, one of great importance for our countries.

Regarding the issue of “Aid for Trade”, we have presented our concerns and requested, at the 2007 and 2009 Global Reviews of Aid for Trade, that special attention be ~~paid~~ given to our countries. The Aid for Trade Initiative can be a fundamental tool to help countries compensate in some aspects their landlockedness condition, thus improving their efficiency and economic competitiveness by helping to improve the structural weaknesses of their economic systems and institutions. In this regard, it is important to recall that in the last Global Review, the WTO’s Director General recognized the need to take into account the “specificities” of certain countries or groups of countries, among which he included landlocked developing countries.

The accession processes in the WTO is another important issue addressed by Landlocked Developing Countries, since eight of our members are currently negotiating their accession. This is a complicated, long, and expensive process. In its statements in the Working Groups Paraguay advocates for these countries, requesting that they are not asked for concessions beyond their economic, financial and development possibilities. Based on the cooperation spirit that brings us together, and the need to continue joining efforts in other forums, we consider this a subject that admits no delays.

Another important area of action where Paraguay has had the honour of coordinating the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries has been in the framework of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

Since the Ulan Bator meeting, and according to the priorities established by the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, we have pushed for the strengthening of the attention paid by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development to our countries,

specially in the framework of the 12th period of sessions, held in April of 2008 in Accra, Ghana, where an agreement that sets up the mandate of the Conference until 2012 was signed.

With the Accra Accord, the mandate of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development to continue its work in support of Landlocked Developing Countries was renewed and strengthened. Furthermore, we requested that, besides the issues of transport and infrastructure, the needs in matters of technical cooperation and investment be addressed.

In the same sense, we have continued to coordinate the work of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries in the sessions of the Trade and Development Board, held annually, as well as in the sessions of the Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget, and we succeeded in establishing the Multi-year expert meeting on transport and trade facilitation of great importance for our countries.

On investments matters, thanks to the recognition in the Accra Accord of the difficulties faced by our countries in attracting Foreign Direct Investment, the First Investment Forum for Landlocked Developing Countries was held, and impulse has been given for a special seminar on investment for landlocked developing countries, held in March of this year in Geneva.

Distinguished Ministers and Delegates,

The lack of access to the sea, the dependence on transit countries to transport our products, and the remoteness of seaports and International markets, are challenges that call for a common strategy. During years we have negotiated with our neighbours bilateral agreements that help overcome these disadvantages and facilitate the transit of goods and persons.

However, these agreements are not enough: either they do not contemplate all of our needs or they are just not implemented. This is why, now, we have the chance to build a multilateral policy that results in the design of international instruments that facilitate the relationship with transit countries, as well as our trade, and thus, help us to integrate more effectively into the multilateral trading system.

The WTO, the United Nations and its specialized organizations, in particular the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, are forums that allow us to promote the package of rules and measures destined to improve the conditions of Landlocked Developing Countries. This is why it is necessary to develop joint strategies to strengthen our positions.

This is also an opportunity to draw the attention of international financial donor institutions and donor countries on our situation, for the development of infrastructure, technology transfer, capacity building, among others, which will allow us to raise the level of competitiveness of landlocked developing countries.

I would not like to close my statement without thanking the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island States, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the World Trade Organization Secretariat, the International

Trade Centre, the Agency for Cooperation and Information for International Trade (ACICI), for the constant support given to the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries in Geneva.

Allow me to call on all members to work together, with solidarity and determination to overcome our difficulties, especially in this moment, when we face an unprecedented global economic and financial crisis, for we know that, when we work together, advantages multiply and obstacles are reduced.

Thank you very much.