



Statement

By

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At

**The High-level Plenary Meeting Devoted to the
Midterm Review of the Almaty Program of Action**

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Check against Delivery

Mr. President

Allow me to begin by expressing our deep appreciation for the organization of this important and timely high-level meeting as part of the ongoing 63rd United Nations General Assembly Sessions, which you are already presiding over efficiently. My delegation wishes to assure you of its readiness to render its utmost cooperation for an efficient discharge of your responsibility in this regard as well as in others relating to your high office.

I would also like to take this opportunity to commend the Secretary General for his in-depth and comprehensive report in relation to the issues that concern Landlocked Countries. No doubt, the report would make significant contribution to this review deliberation

Mr. President

We have carefully noted that the Secretary General's report has captured in detail developments that have taken place in landlocked developing countries since the launching of the Almaty Program of Action in 2003. As the report clearly indicates, a number of landlocked countries are giving due attention to the making of fundamental transit policies while engaging in infrastructural developments. Although these countries, like all others, are adversely affected by the toll of food and fuel price rises, their economies have also benefitted from this otherwise negative surge.

Mr. President

The fact that the needs of landlocked countries are getting a better attention in many international fora more than ever before is indeed reassuring. Certainly, their unique situation, and their commonly shared predicaments in particular, is becoming a major agenda before high-level multilateral trade discussions. In this regard, suffice it to mention the UNCTAD XII conference that took place this year in April in Ghana, and the UN Panel Discussion on investment needs

of LLDCs, which was conducted here yesterday. We are indeed encouraged by these positive trends.

In spite of these encouraging developments, however, landlocked countries continue to face several challenges due to their geographical handicap, which creates _ serious constraints in their effort to achieve their poverty reduction goals and improving the standard of living of their population. Thus, a lot remains to be done in terms of mobilizing concrete support so as to help better address the economic predicaments faced by these countries.

As clearly reflected in the Almaty Program of Action, the most important measures that should be taken to mitigate and do away with the difficulty of landlocked developing countries are realistic and suitable strategies crafted by themselves. The mutual collaboration with their neighboring costal states to create a mutually beneficial and efficient transit transport, customs and other relevant infrastructure systems is, of course, equally important. Most costal states that are adjacent to land locked countries are themselves faced with the lack of efficient infrastructure systems and find themselves in the midst of less integrated regional economic scenario.

Due to geographical distance as well as costly and cumbersome transit systems, landlocked developing countries require special market access that could give leverage to their less competitive position in the international market. They need financial and technical assistance in their endeavor to build and overhaul major infrastructure systems, which, among others, include railways, highways and dry ports. They need technical assistance in modernizing transit customs procedures.

Landlocked countries should be able to benefit from all the necessary supports they deserve in order to overcome their supply side trade constraints. It is high time we created the conditions that would enable us to see smooth and harmonious interplay between the Almaty Program of Action and the WTO Aid for Trade Initiative so as to meaningfully support the capacity of landlocked countries, of which most are least developed with huge supply side constraints.

Landlocked countries must continue to advocate that international laws and conventions should ascertain their rights for uninterrupted freedom of transit. They should strive to see improved international legal instruments such as the Law of the Sea and WTO GATT instruments, particularly in those parts that address issues pertaining to the relationship of landlocked countries vis-à-vis coastal neighbors. To this end, we should also engage in a concerted effort with other groupings, such as the G-77, to which most of us belong.

In order to better coordinate our efforts and avoid unnecessary duplication of efforts, we should also effectively liaise with our respective regional and groupings that we have in Africa, Asia and in Latin Americas, so as to solicit their valuable contributions in this important endeavor. Moreover, this could help avoid the possible risk of confusion with other similar needs of these groupings.

Mr. President

Ethiopia, for its part, has ventured to take a number of steps aimed at ensuring its competitive and comparative advantages in the realm of international trade. With a combination of an agricultural-led export-oriented strategy and an emphasis on the development of key infrastructure systems that are essential to bring about rapid growth, the country is making a promising stride on both fronts. It is also focusing on getting better export earnings and minimizing the difficulties of geographic barriers by focusing on non-traditional export items, such as flowers, that could easily be transported by air. Thanks to the diversification of, of among others, its export produces, Ethiopia has been able to register double-digit GDP growth over the past consecutive four years. This indeed tells a lot about Ethiopia's commitment to fulfill the ethos and principles of the Almaty Plan of Action.

The establishment of a new Dry Ports Services Enterprise early this year, the expansion of road networks within and along major transit corridors, the

improvement of the existing old railroad system, while venturing on the construction of new ones at the same time, and the overhauling of the telecommunications as well as energy sectors in the country are among the major schemes in this whole national endeavor.

As we pointed out at panel discussion on the attracting of FDI to LLDCs held here at UN yesterday, it would be important, Mr. Chairperson, to re-emphasize before this august gathering that the Government of Ethiopia raised and allocated its own resources to finance most of the commencement of all these huge projects. However, in the spirit of the Almaty Program of Action, we expect to receive timely and adequate financial and technical assistance from development partners, so as augment our endeavor to complete these important projects.

Mr. President

No doubt, this mid-term review of the Almaty Program of Action should take proper stock of lessons learned in our past with a view to further galvanizing the existing global partnership geared at assisting landlocked countries in the light of their special situation.

In this respect, it is worth noting that the outcome of the Africa Region meeting on the review of the Almaty Plan of Action that took place in mid June 2008 in Addis Ababa, under the auspices of UNORLLS and the UNECA had reflected, among others, that in order for the Almaty Program of Action to be more concrete in implementation, concerned bodies such as the UN OFFICE FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (UNOHRLS) and Regional financial mechanisms should take the lead in advocating and contributing to the pumping of new resources that are essential to address the needs of landlocked countries. It has also underlined the importance of coordinating our efforts with the group of LDCs, our WTO negotiators in

Geneva, particularly with regional groupings such as the Africa Group, in order to avoid unproductive duplication of efforts and, at the same time, strike the right balance in advocating for our common interests.

Mr. President

Finally, Mr. Chairman, my delegation wishes to seize this opportunity to reassure you and this august gathering that Ethiopia will do whatever is possible on its part for the full and unfettered implementation of the Alamty Program of Action, as well as the outcome of this important review deliberation. We should together strive for the concrete realization of the many ideal proposals forwarded since the inception of the Alamty Program of Action and must work in unison to further substantiate some of the already materialized positive results.

I thank you!