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## Second Committee

### Summary record of the 18th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 17 October 2017, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Jürgenson . . . . . (Estonia)  
*later:* Mr. Menelaou, (Vice-Chair) . . . . . (Cyprus)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

**Agenda item 22: Groups of countries in special situations**

- (a) **Follow-up to the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries** (A/72/270 and A/72/83-E/2017/60)
- (b) **Follow-up to the second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries** (A/72/272)

1. **Mr. Erdenebileg** (Chief, Policy Development, Coordination, Monitoring and Reporting Service of the United Nations Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States), introducing the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020” (A/72/83-E/2017/60), said that the report provided comprehensive information and analysis on recent progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 adopted in Istanbul. Average gross domestic product (GDP) growth for least developed countries remained below the target of the Istanbul Programme of Action and Sustainable Development Goals. Progress towards building productive capacity had been stagnant, and the share of world exports originating in the least developed countries had declined.

2. Despite substantial progress in human and social development, much remained to be done. Of particular concern was the persistently high maternal mortality rate. Between 2009 and 2015, nearly 32 million children in least developed countries had not been enrolled in school. Food insecurity was ongoing and famine threatened millions in South Sudan, Somalia and Yemen.

3. With the establishment of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries, target 17.8 of the Sustainable Development Goals had been achieved. He expressed gratitude to Turkey, the host country, and to Bangladesh, Norway, Sudan and the Philippines for their contributions. Stakeholders should now take appropriate measures to reverse the declining trend in official development assistance (ODA), foreign direct investment (FDI) and trade, all crucial for the sustainable development of least developed countries seeking to accelerate their graduation from that category. His Office would continue its efforts to

strengthen international support and resources in favour of least developed countries.

4. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on crisis mitigation and resilience-building for least developed countries (A/72/270), he said that the report highlighted various shocks and their impacts on sustainable development in least developed countries and put forward recommendations to strengthen the resilience of those countries. External shocks and crises hindered economic progress and undermined the capacity of least developed countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and graduate from that category. Another cause for concern was that many least developed countries lacked adequate capacity to obtain the full benefits of multilateral and other risk mitigation and resilience-building mechanisms

5. The Istanbul Programme of Action, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 emphasized the need for least developed countries to build resilience by reducing vulnerability and increasing capacity to respond to shocks. As those countries lacked resources for that purpose, the report urged the international community to consider establishing a comprehensive multi-stakeholder resilience-building mechanism for least developed countries by leveraging existing measures and initiatives. The least developed countries also needed increased international assistance to gain access to capital-market-based risk transfer mechanisms in the form of insurance and catastrophe bonds.

6. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024” (A/72/272), he said that landlocked developing countries as a group had experienced a decline in annual GDP growth. Despite improvements in the under-five mortality rate, the incidence rate of HIV, the prevalence of undernourishment and indicators for malaria and tuberculosis, their average rates for landlocked developing countries remained among the highest in the developing world.

7. Progress had been made in the ratification of key international conventions promoting trade and transport facilitation. However, missing links remained; there was an urgent need for substantial investment in expansion and maintenance of related infrastructure. Regarding information and communications technologies,

landlocked developing countries lagged behind other groups of countries and faced high costs for broadband.

8. As for international trade, the 32 landlocked developing countries had accounted for a low share of global merchandise exports in 2016, largely in commodities. While landlocked developing countries, with the support of development partners, continued to implement initiatives to speed up transit and border crossings, they were still not integrated into regional value chains. In the past several years, their share of manufacturing value added and agriculture value added had declined. Furthermore, both ODA and FDI flows had decreased; FDI had decreased drastically in 2015.

9. Despite notable progress in some priority areas, much remained to be done to achieve the objectives of the Vienna Programme of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals. The Vienna Programme of Action should be integrated into the follow-up processes of the 2030 Agenda in a coherent manner, including in the high-level political forum on sustainable development, and in the context of financing for development, science, technology and innovation.

10. **Ms. Edison** (Nigeria) said that women and children were very important to the achievement of sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda; those two population groups mirrored the extent of social development of countries and regions. She wondered what initiatives were being taken under the Programme of Action to address the issues of maternal health and out-of-school children, particularly girls, and to support efforts by least developed countries to graduate from that category.

11. **Mr. Erdenebileg** (Chief, Policy Development, Coordination, Monitoring and Reporting Service of the United Nations Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States) said that he appreciated the question regarding the Istanbul Programme of Action and agreed that women and children were of primordial importance for least developed countries. In line with the Istanbul Programme of Action, the United Nations system devoted special attention to the education of children and to the role and participation of women in the economy and the governance of least developed countries. It had created a specific support mechanism to raise the standard of living in those countries and attached great importance to women and children in determining the criteria for graduation from least developed country status. Noting that women in least developed countries were important participants in trade, he underscored the importance of trade and full

market access for goods originating from least developed countries

12. **The Chair** invited the Committee to engage in a general discussion on the item.

13. **Mr. Morejón Pazmiño** (Ecuador), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the principles of universality and inclusion were crucial to increasing the capacity of least developed countries to move forward in the priority areas set out in the Istanbul Programme of Action and to implement the 2030 Agenda. With enhanced, coordinated action from the international community, least developed countries could strengthen their collective capacity in all sectors and achieve structural transformation.

14. ODA remained the most significant source of external financing for development for least developed countries and provided a buffer to weather the impacts of a volatile global economic environment. The Group of 77 and China was deeply concerned by the decrease in ODA to least developed countries from countries members of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. That assistance had declined in nominal terms from US \$41 billion to US \$37.3 billion between 2014 and 2016. Preliminary data for 2016 showed that bilateral net ODA to least developed countries had further decreased by 3.9 per cent in real terms compared with 2015.

15. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda encouraged developed countries to set a target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income (GNI) as ODA to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of GNI to least developed countries. The Group of 77 and China called on all development partners to fulfil those objectives.

16. He expressed deep concern that least developed countries were disproportionately affected by systemic crises, including economic crises, volatility in commodity prices, epidemics, natural disasters and other environmental shocks. Such events not only hindered economic progress and worsened poverty but also undermined the capacity of those countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

17. The Group welcomed the launch of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries and lauded the Government of Turkey for hosting the Bank. The Group called on all relevant actors to continue providing financial support for its effective functioning.

18. Landlocked developing countries had special development needs due to their remoteness. Their geographical constraints significantly affected export

earnings, private capital inflow and domestic resource mobilization. The development of transportation, information and communications technology and energy infrastructure was fundamental to reducing high trade costs, helped them to fully integrate into the global market.

19. The Group of 77 and China remained committed to the effective implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and encouraged landlocked developing countries, transit countries, development partners, the United Nations system and all other actors to implement its six priority areas in a coherent, coordinated and expeditious manner. The Group of 77 and China looked forward to working closely and constructively with development partners during the discussion and negotiation of draft resolutions under item 22. It hoped that would lead to enhanced support for least developed countries and landlocked developing countries in their efforts to achieve sustainable, inclusive and meaningful development.

20. **Mr. Phansourivong** (Lao People's Democratic Republic), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that least developed countries and landlocked developing countries continued to face unique development challenges. ASEAN attached great importance to the commitments made by the international community in the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Istanbul Programme of Action and the Vienna Programme of Action and hoped that those commitments would continue to translate into concrete action. Countries in special situations could not overcome their development challenges, address geographical handicaps and structural vulnerabilities and eventually graduate from least developed status without support and cooperation from the international community.

21. ASEAN also recognized the existence of a development gap among its member States. To help its less developed members to build capacity, ASEAN was implementing the Initiative for ASEAN Integration Work Plan III. That broad plan would enable member countries to more effectively participate in ASEAN activities, making significant contributions to ASEAN community-building and to the maintenance and promotion of peace and development in that region and the world.

22. ASEAN remained committed to cooperating with development partners, transit countries and United Nations agencies to help countries in special situations realize their specific development objectives.

23. **Ms. Haque** (Bangladesh), speaking on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries, said that the pace of structural transformation in least developed countries was slower than in other developing countries. Many least developed countries faced multiple long-standing structural challenges and constraints: narrow production and export bases; stagnant trade and investment flows; decreasing productivity growth; weak governance of land and natural resources; and widespread poverty, hunger and malnutrition. Compounding those long-standing challenges were emerging challenges such as climate change, increasingly frequent natural disasters and public health emergencies, and conflicts, alongside declining commodity prices and rising capital outflows.

24. Without a structural transformation that tackled institutional and capacity constraints, least developed countries would remain vulnerable to economic, social and environmental shocks. Under the current growth trajectory, nearly 35 per cent of the population in those countries could still be living in extreme poverty in 2030.

25. The principle of country ownership remained crucial to accelerating progress towards sustainable development. The members of the Group of Least Developed Countries were committed to leading their own economic and development policies, strategies and plans to implement the internationally agreed development goals. As global partnership was fundamental to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Istanbul Programme of Action, the Group was concerned at the inward-looking and restrictive policies being adopted by some development partners. That approach was seriously affecting the efforts of least developed countries to implement their development plans. Financing for development remained the greatest challenge. The full and timely implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda was vital, especially with regard to the least developed countries. Increased South-South cooperation as a complement to North-South cooperation was crucial for their development.

26. The Group welcomed the findings and recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report on crisis mitigation and resilience-building for the least developed countries and invited the General Assembly to establish a comprehensive multi-stakeholder resilience-building mechanism for least developed countries that leveraged existing measures and initiatives.

27. The impacts of climate change significantly undermined development efforts. She welcomed donors'

pledges to contribute to the Least Developed Countries Fund and the Green Climate Fund and the broader access of least developed countries to those Funds. However, more funding was required to meet the adaptation needs of those countries and many were still facing difficulties in accessing and utilizing the Funds.

28. ODA remained the largest critical source of external financing for the development of least developed countries. The Group of Least Developed Countries was deeply concerned at the decline in ODA and called on all development partners to fulfil the related internationally agreed targets.

29. The declining trend in least developed countries' share of world merchandise exports must be reversed. The role of development partners in that regard would be significant. Greater foreign direct investment would be a means of increasing productive capacity and employment. She called for the implementation of target 17.5 under the Sustainable Development Goals on investment promotion regimes for least developed countries.

30. The Group welcomed the operationalization of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries and expressed its appreciation to the Government of Turkey for its generous contribution to the Technology Bank, which development partners should make every effort to support.

31. The United Nations development system must reposition itself to effectively support the most vulnerable countries in their efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. A stronger, more efficient development system with sufficient resources was required for the implementation, follow-up and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda, especially in least developed countries. The Group of Least Developed Countries looked forward to the December report of the Secretary-General in that regard.

32. Despite persistent challenges and constraints, several least developed countries had graduated from that status and others intended to graduate by 2020. The graduation and transition process should be strengthened to prevent the disruption of the development trajectory of those countries. Development partners must devise a package of benefits consistent with the critical economic needs of graduated countries to provide support after graduation and prevent their relapse into the least developed country category.

33. **Mr. Raushan** (Maldives), speaking on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), said that as a group of countries that faced significant challenges due to their specific circumstances, AOSIS expressed its

full solidarity with the least developed countries and landlocked developing countries. Eight members of AOSIS were least developed countries that were "sealocked" rather than landlocked. As island and coastal States, they understood the challenges of remoteness, limited connectivity, and poor infrastructure and transport.

34. It was important to fully integrate the Istanbul Programme of Action and Vienna Programme of Action into the 2030 Agenda, including by establishing links between their follow-up and review processes. While the 2030 Agenda provided an overarching framework to achieve sustainable development, the Programmes of Action offered targeted approaches to support countries in special situations in their efforts to achieve sustainable development and economic growth, taking into account their specific circumstances. Least developed countries that were also small island developing States faced insurmountable structural challenges from which they would never graduate — including limited access to resources and vulnerability to climate change — as well as economic and social challenges.

35. To ensure that countries in special situations were not left behind in 2030, the United Nations system must offer coordinated and coherent support specific to those countries, as highlighted in the 2016 quadrennial comprehensive policy review. International organizations, including the international financial institutions, must align their support programmes with the 2030 Agenda to ensure that the challenges facing countries in special situations were addressed in a holistic manner. Consideration should be given to transparent measurements of progress on sustainable development that went beyond per capita income, since they were crucial for all countries in special situations. Income-based indicators did not reflect the advancement, vulnerabilities or resilience of a society, or address the unique circumstances and specific challenges of each country. That distinction was important when assessing countries for graduation. Many least developed countries on track for graduation were extremely vulnerable to shocks, including large-scale disasters that could wipe out years of development gains. Better graduation policies that provided better safety nets for newly graduating countries would ensure a smoother and more successful transition from least developed country status.

36. AOSIS called on the Secretary-General to strengthen the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and related bodies with direct

mandates to countries in special situations. Assistance from Governments and the private sector would also be welcome to launch more public-private partnerships for infrastructure development and overall development. He urged all countries to meet their ODA commitments, as that support was crucial for countries in special situations.

37. **Mr. Kapambwe** (Zambia), speaking on behalf of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, said that the Group was concerned that progress in implementing the Vienna Programme of Action had been slow or had even been reversed in some areas. He noted, in particular, declining aid and foreign direct investment in those countries, and a drop in their share of global exports. The infrastructure gap remained large, transport costs continued to rise, and economic growth was declining.

38. Landlocked developing countries could not attain the Sustainable Development Goals without realizing the priority goals of the Vienna Programme of Action. Success in the new development agenda would require synergy and coherence between the implementation and follow-up of both processes. That would entail mainstreaming landlocked developing country issues into 2030 Agenda follow-up processes (high-level political forum on sustainable development, financing for development forum and the Global Infrastructure Forum), and mainstreaming the Vienna Programme of Action into the programmes of action of all United Nations organizations.

39. Another important area was the establishment and maintenance of secure, reliable, efficient and high-quality infrastructure and transit and transport systems, which remained critical to reducing transport and trade transaction costs and to enhancing the integration of landlocked developing countries into global markets. However, the magnitude of resources and investments in infrastructure development remained a challenge. He urged the international community to support the efforts of landlocked developing countries to develop and maintain transport, energy and information and communications technologies (ICT) infrastructure and called on development partners and multilateral and regional development banks to provide technical and financial assistance, facilitate investment and strengthen public-private partnerships.

40. With regard to trade, a critical issue for landlocked developing countries, the Group welcomed the entry into force of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Trade Facilitation and called on WTO members to expeditiously implement the Agreement. Technical, financial and capacity-building assistance,

including through enhanced aid for trade, were required to support trade facilitation efforts of landlocked developing countries.

41. Inclusive, sustainable industrialization was critical for the structural transformation of the economies of landlocked developing countries. The Group called on the international community to support those countries in the development and implementation of their industrial policies. Sharing innovative technologies, technical know-how and scientific knowledge would harness the economic potential of landlocked developing countries. He urged development partners to support regional integration, which enhanced the connectivity of landlocked developing countries. It was essential for landlocked developing countries and transit countries to work together to improve border agency cooperation and border-crossing policies.

42. He expressed concern that the provision of ODA was stagnating and called for enhanced ODA to landlocked developing countries to help them meet long-standing and emerging development challenges, including climate change.

43. The sharp decline in foreign direct investment was also worrisome. He encouraged Member States to facilitate FDI flows to landlocked developing countries and to support their efforts to attract FDI.

44. Lastly, the Group stressed the importance of continued support and international cooperation to confront climate change. Landlocked developing countries needed adequate and predictable financial resources to increase resilience and tackle land degradation, desertification and deforestation. He called on all development partners, Member States and the United Nations system to actively participate in the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. The Group recognized the efforts of the Secretary-General to reform the United Nations development system and emphasized the need for the reforms to centre on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, taking into account the particular challenges and needs of the landlocked developing countries.

45. **Ms. Nazaire** (Haiti), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that CARICOM continued to advocate for the full, efficient and timely implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action. Three years before that Programme's deadline, least developed countries continued to face interconnected global challenges that could seriously undermine the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the goals set out in the Istanbul

Programme of Action. It was important for the Istanbul Programme of Action to be fully integrated into the 2030 Agenda to support the efforts of least developed countries to enhance governance, eradicate extreme poverty in all its forms and dimensions and strengthen their productive capacity.

46. Aggregate growth in least developed countries would remain well below the target of Sustainable Development Goal 8 of at least 7 per cent GDP growth in the near term. That posed a risk to critical public expenditure on health care, education, social protection and climate change and would hinder progress in poverty reduction.

47. As ODA remained the greatest source of external development financing for most of the least developed countries, the Community was gravely concerned at its decline. CARICOM called on developed countries to make an extra effort to meet the target of 0.20 per cent of their gross national income to least developed countries.

48. Most of the least developed countries struggled to mobilize the domestic public resources that would provide a more sustainable means of financing poverty alleviation. Increasing domestic public finance would therefore be critical to advancing their ability to provide public goods and services, finance infrastructure and help manage macroeconomic stability. Going forward, coordination of support for domestic resource mobilization and recognition of the importance of country ownership would be crucial for the least developed countries. She stressed the importance of curbing illicit financial flows with a view to their elimination by 2030.

49. CARICOM was deeply concerned at the reduction in foreign direct investment in 2016, a trend which must be reversed. Specific investment promotion regimes for least developed countries should be implemented, in line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

50. Technology transfer was an essential element of capacity-building. CARICOM welcomed the operationalization of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries and called on all stakeholders to extend their full support to ensuring its success.

51. South-South cooperation offered least developed countries important opportunities for financing, particularly for infrastructure. Exchanges of information with partners that had faced similar challenges would be useful for addressing poverty eradication and structural transformation. It was encouraging that a growing number of countries intended to graduate from the least developed country

category by 2020. CARICOM called on the United Nations and its development partners to provide greater institutionalized and coordinated support before and during the graduation process in order to ensure a smooth and orderly transition.

52. Climate change remained a central challenge faced by least developed countries. Global warming and its consequences had taken a heavy toll on the Caribbean region in 2017 with back-to-back Hurricanes Irma and Maria. Repeated severe weather events had enduring negative impacts on productive capacity-building, economic and social progress and sustainable development. Her own country, Haiti, the only least developed country in CARICOM, was still recovering from the effects of Hurricane Matthew in 2016. It was crucial for all countries and stakeholders to further develop and implement concrete measures to build the resilience of least developed countries to help them confront climate change.

53. CARICOM welcomed the findings and recommendations of the Secretary-General's report on crisis mitigation and resilience-building and reiterated the urgent call for the establishment of a comprehensive, multi-stakeholder resilience-building mechanism for the least developed countries, easy access to climate finance and accelerated implementation of the Paris Agreement.

54. CARICOM looked forward to working with development partners to address the particular needs of developing countries, especially least developed countries, to ensure that they were not left behind. She trusted that greater success in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals would contribute to the efforts of many least developed countries to reach the targets of the Istanbul Programme of Action.

55. **Mr. Jaime Calderón** (El Salvador), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that CELAC recognized that all countries, including least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States, countries in situations of conflict and post-conflict, and a number of middle-income countries, faced specific challenges and needs in their quest for sustainable development. CELAC welcomed the efforts that had been made in preparation for the 2016 Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 and trusted that the results of the follow-up to the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries would be positive.

56. CELAC hailed the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Vienna Programme of Action for

Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024 (A/RES/69/137), as well as its implementation mandated in General Assembly 69/232.

57. CELAC remained committed to promoting the appropriate consideration of the special needs and challenges of landlocked developing countries and of least developed countries, in accordance with the Vienna Programme of Action and the Istanbul Programme of Action, respectively.

58. **Mr. Sinha** (India) said that, despite the opportunities for expansion of the global economy afforded by globalization, disparity in levels of development between countries remained stark and was worsening in some cases. Nearly 50 States Members of the United Nations were still in the least developed country category, a reflection of the huge challenges and work required to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As many least developed countries were former colonies and half of the landlocked developing countries were also least developed countries, it was important to facilitate their easy access to markets and supplies in a globalized economy. The total number of least developed countries had nearly doubled since the formalization of the concept in 1971. Only a few countries had progressed to graduate from that category.

59. The needs of countries in special situations were multifarious and well known. They ranged from economic diversification, education and training, and better infrastructure and connectivity to reduce trade costs to availability of raw materials and access to markets, access to affordable energy and emerging technology, manageable debt burden, better terms of international trade and investment, and access to financing for long-term development. Some countries were in need of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. All countries needed to build resilience to withstand natural disasters, economic shocks or pandemics.

60. The Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action in 2016 had been useful in assessing the challenges and opportunities facing least developed countries in the context of the 2030 Agenda. The 2014 Vienna Programme of Action, while similarly useful for understanding challenges, needed to be adapted to the 2030 Agenda, and would therefore require a midterm review, especially with regard to financing for development, science and technology, and innovation.

61. The establishment of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries would facilitate national capacity-building in intellectual property rights and scientific production, innovation and dissemination.

Least developed countries also required special support to improve preparation of project feasibility proposals to meet investor requirements and expedite project implementation. Concerns relating to ease of access to concessional financing must also be addressed.

62. Since the category of least developed countries had been established, India had partnered with those countries to build capacity, share technological expertise and provide financial assistance. His Government offered thousands of scholarships and training opportunities in priority areas each year, including agriculture, infrastructure, medicine, energy, banking and ICT. In 2008, India had become the first emerging economy to offer a duty-free preferential trade scheme to provide market access for least developed countries.

63. The three India-Africa Forum Summits and the Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation Summit had further crystallized the special relationship of India with least developed countries, especially countries in special situations. At the Third India-Africa Forum Summit in 2015, India had extended additional concessional credit of US \$10 million to African countries over a five-year period.

64. India, Brazil and South Africa had an active partnership with the United Nations Development Programme through the India, Brazil and South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation (known as the IBSA Fund) to assist developing countries, mainly least developed countries. In June, the India-United Nations Development Partnership Fund had been established to help countries work towards implementing the 2030 Agenda. India remained committed to working with countries in special situations to overcome the challenges they faced in that regard.

65. **Mr. Maslov** (Russian Federation) said that despite numerous endeavours and the assistance of the international community, least developed and landlocked developing countries continued to face challenges in achieving sustainable development. His country supported the steps taken by such countries to implement national development strategies and programmes. However, it would be vital to provide further support to strengthen their productive capacity, which would increase employment and economic diversification by broadening the range of available goods and services, with a greater proportion of assistance allocated to high technology. The Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries should play a key role in that regard.



66. The Russian Federation continued to offer broader access to its market for goods from the least developed countries by offering them preferential tariffs through the Eurasian Economic Union, from which 48 least developed countries currently benefited. The Russian Federation had provided such concessions in the amount of \$3.13 million in 2016; the figure for the first half of 2017 stood at roughly \$2 million.

67. His country was also making significant contributions to ensure global and regional food security despite volatile extractive and agricultural market prices. The Russian Federation was an active participant in international humanitarian efforts to provide food aid to other countries, both bilaterally and multilaterally. In the past five years, his country had provided food aid totalling more than \$220 million to 30 States through the World Food Programme alone. Russia was working with the World Food Programme to support school nutrition programmes in Central Asia and the Caucasus. In partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, was providing \$6 million in support of a three-year project to strengthen food security and agriculture in that region, as well as \$3.3 million to combat antimicrobial resistance in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

68. The Russian Federation attached great importance to the full participation of least developed countries in global and regional trade and economic processes. In that regard, it would be vital to implement the Vienna Programme of Action through partnerships such as the Greater Tumen Initiative, which linked North-east Asian countries, including Mongolia, China, South Korea and Russia. One of the main goals of that organization was to develop the transit capacity of its member States in order to enhance the distribution of goods and foodstuffs to South-east Asian countries and from those countries to the Eurasian market.

69. Lastly, the Russian project to modernize the port of Zarubino and a proposal to develop the Primorye 1 and Primorye 2 transit corridors would improve road and rail networks, border crossings and other infrastructure, and would also streamline access to global markets and make it less expensive for all countries, including the least developed countries.

70. **Ms. Nipomici** (Republic of Moldova) said that her Government remained committed to the development priorities in the Vienna Programme of Action as a tool for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. It was focusing, in particular, on creating an enabling business environment, attracting foreign direct investment, facilitating trade and access to new markets

and enhancing dialogue and cooperation with development partners.

71. In progressing towards the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, her Government had improved the business climate through the optimization of the regulatory framework and business support infrastructure, including the establishment of a start-up incubator, industrial parks and consultancy centres. It had also created a one-stop shop for all public services — a unique platform for citizens and the private sector to access information on more than 566 public services.

72. Free economic zones had been established in all regions of the country, offering customs and tax benefits to investors. Those zones had a positive impact on the diversification of Moldovan exports, and were changing the structure of the national economy and creating new jobs.

73. Successful implementation of the 2014 European Region-Republic of Moldova Association Agreement was contributing to further regional integration and to deepening commercial relations. The European Union had become the number one destination for Moldovan goods. Important structural reforms had also been implemented to streamline the customs administration system and improve the quality and efficiency of customs services.

74. Landlocked developing countries had made some progress in eradicating extreme poverty, eliminating hunger, ensuring healthy lives, guaranteeing access to education and promoting gender equality. Nevertheless, major barriers to sustainable development remained in those countries, including slow progress in infrastructure development, persistent trade deficits and limited industrialization. Significant support from development partners and international financial institutions would be critical to improve infrastructure, transport, renewable energy and the development of value added and highly productive sectors of the economy. In that regard, she welcomed the agreement reached at the 2017 Global Infrastructure Forum by the multilateral development banks to encourage private sector investment in infrastructure by co-financing projects and generating interest in public-private partnerships.

75. The United Nations development system must actively foster partnerships and mobilize and coordinate international support and resources to implement the Vienna Programme of Action. A true global partnership was required to leave no one behind, and the Republic of Moldova remained committed to working jointly towards sustainable development.

76. **Mr. Madisa** (Botswana) said that his country had made significant strides in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, which was aligned with many national development objectives set forth in his country's National Development Plan 11 and Vision 2036. That alignment would enable a coherent and integrated approach to economic growth and development.

77. Higher transit costs and cross-border delays hindered the integration of landlocked developing countries into the global trading system. Botswana had therefore signed a number of agreements to facilitate free movement of people and goods through its territory. Current initiatives included harmonization of regional legislation and cross-border transport permits, and the development of a regional integration strategy.

78. Insufficient and poor-quality infrastructure remained a major obstacle to the development of a viable transport and transit system. Existing facilities must be improved and maintained; road maintenance and design manuals were being developed to that end.

79. Trade agreements secured local access to world markets, competitive prices and industrial development opportunities, creating jobs and contributing to employment growth and poverty eradication. Trade facilitation measures were focusing on automated customs clearance and the consolidation of administrative documents.

80. The economy of Botswana was dominated by mining, especially diamond mining. To promote diversification and achieve structural economic transformation, targeted efforts were being made to develop the service, industry, tourism and agriculture sectors.

81. To achieve the successful implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the means of implementation and collaboration with all stakeholders would be crucial. Botswana, like other landlocked developing countries, would require technical assistance, capacity-building, and partnerships to that end. The Secretary-General's reforms should take into account the challenges and needs of landlocked developing countries by, inter alia, calling for the allocation of appropriate resources to the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

82. **Ms. Ochir** (Mongolia) said that the Vienna Programme of Action highlighted the importance of a supportive legal framework for transit policy. Mongolia had joined the key international and regional

conventions promoting trade and transport facilitation and had concluded relevant agreements on road transportation with its main trading partners.

83. Through the Belt and Road Initiative, Mongolia was working with China and Russia to build a tripartite economic corridor aimed at increasing trade, cross-border transportation and competitiveness. The three countries had agreed on its basic principles, coordination mechanism and priority projects in June 2016. As a focal point for that corridor, her Government would create an Investment and Research Centre in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

84. Secure, reliable and efficient infrastructure remained critical to reducing high costs of trade and transport and integrating landlocked developing countries into global markets. Mongolia, China and Russia had signed the Intergovernmental Agreement on International Road Transport along the Asian Highway Network, inaugurated in 2016 with a convoy of trucks travelling between Tianjin, Ulaanbaatar and Ulan-Ude.

85. Mongolia had hosted the International Conference on Regional Transport and Logistics Cooperation in October with a focus on multilateral cooperation for infrastructure development. Information and communications technology was key to promoting the productive capacity and international competitiveness of countries in special situations. The ICT industry of Mongolia had experienced rapid growth between 2012 and 2017. Internet penetration had increased from 28 per cent to 80 per cent, bandwidth had tripled from 22 to 61 gigabytes per second and approximately 90 per cent of Internet users were accessing the web via a mobile handset. Regulatory guidelines for next generation mobile systems had been approved in 2015, and mobile operators had successfully implemented 4G networks in the capital city, Ulaanbaatar, and some provinces.

86. The Mongolian satellite "MONGOLSAT-1" had been commercially launched in early 2017. The satellite would facilitate the launch of national digital satellite television, telecommunications and broadband services and the availability of data on agriculture, the environment, mining and emergency situations. The next phase would focus on the development of local content, promoting digital literacy, ensuring intellectual property rights and cybersecurity.

87. Trade facilitation was key to the integration of landlocked developing countries in global trade. Mongolia had ratified the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement in 2016 and valued its potential to reduce trade costs and enhance trade for landlocked developing countries through provisions on freedom of transit and special and differential treatment. Her Government had

recently established the National Trade and Transport Facilitation Committee to implement that Agreement and was studying the feasibility of implementing other free trade agreements with the Eurasian Economic Union, the Republic of Korea and China. The Economic Partnership Agreement with Japan had taken effect in June 2016.

88. Mongolia was keen to participate in regional processes and initiatives and was considering joining the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation and acceding to the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement. Although it had been eligible for the Special Incentive Arrangement for Sustainable Development and Good Governance of the European Commission since 2006, Mongolia continued to experience challenges in making effective use of that preferential treatment.

89. Mining continued to dominate the Mongolian economy, rendering it vulnerable to external shocks. Her Government would strive to diversify the economy with value added production. Particular emphasis would be placed on green development, information and communications technology, agriculture, manufacturing, energy and tourism. Mongolia was also receiving support from the European Union on economic diversification. Her country looked forward to the preliminary findings of a study being conducted by the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries on economic diversification. Mongolia remained fully committed to the timely implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action as an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

90. **Mr. Simon** (Ethiopia) noted the disproportionate exposure of least developed countries to the impact of external economic shocks, including commodity price volatility, as well as to the effects of climate change and natural disasters, and said that under current conditions, 35 per cent of the population of least developed countries would still be living in poverty in 2030. Since the battle of achieving the 2030 Agenda would be won or lost in the least developed countries, it would be vital for development partners to fulfil their commitments to least developed countries under the 2030 Agenda, as well as their commitments under the Istanbul Programme of Action. As the 2030 Agenda encouraged revitalized and genuine partnership, least developed countries should be the primary beneficiaries of international cooperation.

91. Noting that there had been a net drop in ODA to least developed countries over the past year, he stressed the need for it to be more predictable and aligned with national priorities. His delegation wished to thank

development partners that continued to meet their ODA commitments and called for resource allocation within the United Nations development system to assign priority to the least developed countries.

92. It was important to recognize the particular vulnerabilities of the landlocked developing countries and to ensure appropriate follow-up to the Vienna Programme of Action, with a view to supporting those countries and accelerating their progress in the areas of poverty reduction, structural transformation, trade, transport and infrastructure, inter alia. In that connection, a midterm review of the Vienna Programme of Action would provide an opportunity to track progress, identify gaps and take appropriate measures for its full implementation.

93. Ethiopia had mainstreamed the Istanbul Programme of Action and the Vienna Programme of Action into its first and second national plans for growth and transformation and was well aware of the double challenges it faced as both a least developed country and a landlocked developing country. It called on the international community to provide financial and technical support to countries in special situations in a manner consistent with their national priorities and the 2030 Agenda.

94. **Ms. Pardungyotee** (Thailand) stressed the importance of international cooperation in advancing the specific needs of least developed countries and landlocked developing countries endowed with human and natural resources that could contribute to global economic growth. Thailand commended the initiatives that had been launched to implement both the Istanbul Programme of Action and Vienna Programme of Action and welcomed the recent establishment of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries.

95. Underscoring the crucial role of South-South and triangular cooperation as complements to North-South cooperation, she said that Thailand had shared its sufficiency economy philosophy by partnering with 10 countries in the Asia-Pacific region and Africa. An additional 15 countries had expressed interest in similar links to help them advance towards their Sustainable Development Goals. Likewise, as part of its commitment under the World Trade Organization, Thailand had granted duty free, quota free market access to some 7,000 items that accounted for nearly 73 per cent of imported goods originating from least developed countries. In the same spirit, it had also signed free trade agreements with a number of least developed countries and looked forward to expanding such bilateral cooperation in the future.

96. Connectivity played a critical role in enhancing trade, by facilitating shipment and transportation of goods, improving market access and expanding markets online, which further helped to bridge intra- and interregional economic inequalities. Among Thai initiatives in that regard were the ASEAN Highway Network, the Asian Highway network and the series of international routes such as the Greater Mekong Subregion, the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multisectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation. Her delegation wished to commend the international stakeholders and international financial institutions, including the Asian Development Bank, whose support had been so valuable in promoting all those projects.

97. Located in one of the world's most disaster-prone regions, Thailand understood the importance of maintaining effective and efficient disaster risk reduction programmes. It continued to make regular contributions to the Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami established by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and had recently pledged \$150,000 to assist the ongoing humanitarian response and reconstruction efforts for people affected by Hurricane Irma.

98. **Mr. Tobgye** (Bhutan) said that the Committee for Development Policy would consider Bhutan for graduation at its third triennial review in March 2018. While reaching that threshold could be viewed as testament to his country's successful collaboration with its international partners, many challenges remained. Although Bhutan had met the graduation criteria on income and human assets, it trailed badly on the economic vulnerability index, which was critical for sustained economic growth and development.

99. The experience of other countries had highlighted the importance of ensuring a smooth transition and continued support after graduation. However, several of Bhutan's development partners had already begun withdrawing support from the country because of its modest success. Although Bhutan had integrated the Sustainable Development Goals and key provisions of the Istanbul Programme of Action and the Vienna Programme of Action into its latest five-year plan, it would need to achieve tremendous economic progress in order to graduate in a smooth and sustained manner.

100. Only the successful transition experience of graduating countries would motivate other least developed countries to pursue graduation with confidence and certainty. For that reason, Bhutan called on the international community and its development

partners, including the United Nations development system, to continue their support rather than retreat as the country approached such a key moment in its development. Graduation should be rewarded, not punished.

101. **Mr. Hikmatov** (Tajikistan) said that the constraints Tajikistan shared with other landlocked developing countries had been the main obstacle to its fuller integration in the global trading system. Reaffirming his country's commitment to the provisions of the Vienna Programme of Action and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, he said that their full implementation would be fundamental to the achievement by landlocked developing countries of the development goals of the 2030 Agenda.

102. Since trade was an essential springboard for development, Tajikistan had embarked on a series of improvements to its transportation and communication sectors with a view to enhancing regional trade. To that end, it was pursuing simplified customs procedures and had established new tax benefits to encourage investment in four recently created economic zones. In addition, the country had recently signed the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of an International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries and welcomed its entry into force. The Think Tank would advance the interests of individual countries and would amplify their collective voice by improving their analytical and research capabilities.

103. Despite progress in certain areas, Tajikistan still faced multisectoral challenges that had prevented it from achieving the Millennium Development Goals. If not properly approached, those same developmental lags would negatively impact its ability to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. For that reason, Tajikistan called for the removal of all artificial and economically unsubstantiated barriers that hampered the streamlining of cooperation and partnerships in the areas of transportation and communication.

104. Climate change and natural disasters also negatively impacted development. More than 2,000 people suffered every year as a consequence of desertification, land degradation and glacial melting, causing further economic and social damage to the country.

105. However, the effects of being landlocked were not entirely negative. Tajikistan's lack of access to the sea had spurred it to seek alternative paths to development. The country had undertaken a vigorous infrastructure programme to build tunnels, bridges, modern roads and railways, along with high-voltage power plants and

transmission lines. The construction of interregional transmission line projects aimed at exporting electricity from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to Afghanistan and Pakistan and farther south, to India and Iran, would be of prime importance. Such projects could become a major engine for trade facilitation, industrial production and the provision of energy security in the region.

106. He urged the United Nations to continue to help Tajikistan attract donor countries, and expressed the hope that international organizations and financial institutions would provide much-needed technical and financial assistance in the form of grants and concessional financing for the implementation of regional and interregional development projects.

107. **Mr. Kafle** (Nepal) said that, 45 years after the United Nations had first recognized the plight of least developed countries, their number had grown from 25 to 47. Of those, only five had managed to graduate, while many others had slipped further into poverty. Although the Istanbul Programme of Action aimed to graduate half of the remaining least developed countries by 2020, that ambitious goal would require a sustainable and smooth transition supported by enhanced, predictable and continued international assistance as envisaged by the 2014 Kathmandu Declaration of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.

108. The core issue was ensuring the means of implementation. While expressing his country's appreciation to those countries that had met their ODA commitments, he urged others to follow suit by designating 0.20 per cent of their gross domestic product for least developed countries. Productive capacity-building and the transfer and diffusion of technologies would also be vital to the development of the least developed countries. In that connection, Nepal wished to thank Turkey for hosting the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries and called for relevant stakeholders to support its successful operation.

109. Countries that were both least developed countries and landlocked developing countries were doubly challenged, due to the high cost of doing business and pursuing development projects, and their increased jeopardy from natural disasters and climate change. Landlockedness increased the cost of development by 20 per cent and doubled the cost of exports in comparison with those of transit countries. Landlocked developing countries urgently needed to participate in global value chains in order to move from "landlockedness" to land-linkedness. In that context, Nepal welcomed the entry into force of the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of an International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries and

called for adequate support for its effective operationalization. At the national level, it was prioritizing the development of connectivity, trade facilitation, and investment.

110. He stressed that the repositioning of the United Nations development system should focus on countries in special situations, and reiterated the importance of maintaining the momentum of, inter alia, the 2030 Agenda, the Istanbul Programme of Action, the Vienna Programme of Action, the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway (Samoa Pathway), the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Sendai Framework and the Paris Agreement, which would necessitate commitments, cooperation and concerted efforts from all sides.

111. **Mr. Tobing** (Indonesia) said that it would be crucial to enhance support for the Istanbul Programme of Action, the Samoa Pathway, the Vienna Programme of Action and Agenda 2063 of the African Union and mainstream them into the operational activities of the United Nations development system., While official development assistance remained the largest external source of financing for many least developed countries and provided a buffer against the impacts of external shocks, investment in those countries was urgently needed to diversify their economies and prevent overreliance on limited export commodities. Debt restructuring should be a priority for vulnerable countries impacted by conflict or natural disasters. South-South and triangular cooperation would be crucial for capacity-building in countries in special situations, particularly in disaster risk reduction capacities, developing appropriate social protection systems, and accelerating the use of ICT for development.

112. It would also be vital to develop transparent metrics that went beyond per capita income to monitor progress on sustainable development. Such measurements should recognize poverty in all its forms and dimensions and should also take into account the various structural vulnerabilities faced by countries in special situations.

113. Indonesia would host several key events in 2018, including the Archipelagic and Island States Forum, to lay out concrete actions related to Sustainable Development Goal 14, on life below water, and climate change mitigation, and the Indonesia-Africa Forum to expand economic cooperation and promote technical cooperation for African countries.

114. **Mr. Fox-Drummond Gough** (Brazil) said that Brazil attached great importance to addressing the specific challenges facing both least developed and

landlocked developing countries. The slow and uneven pace of recovery in the world economy, already an impediment to progress towards sustainable development, posed especially steep challenges for such countries. At the Midterm Review of the Istanbul Programme of Action, the goal of graduating half the least developed countries by 2020 had been reaffirmed. In that regard, Brazil reiterated its commitment to contribute towards that goal in the remainder of the decade and commended the establishment of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries. Science, technology and innovation had a crucial role to play in overcoming structural barriers to development, especially in the least developed countries. He urged Member States and all stakeholders to provide the necessary continued support for the effective functioning of the Technology Bank. Technology transfer on favourable terms would also be essential.

115. Brazil also recognized the special needs of the landlocked developing countries as reflected in the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. It looked forward to participating in the forthcoming midterm review of the Vienna Programme of Action and was committed to ensuring its full implementation.

116. Moreover, the Brazilian Agency for Cooperation had supported numerous endeavours to support development in both least developed countries and landlocked developing countries as part of its commitment to South-South cooperation. Its initiatives in that regard included projects in Latin America, Africa and Asia, in such areas as agriculture, education, health, debt relief, technical cooperation and institutional capacity-building,

117. *Mr. Menelaou (Cyprus), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

118. **Mr. Bourisli** (Kuwait) said that while a number of countries in special situations had made progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, such countries still faced obstacles that were not under their control, including climate-change-related natural disasters and the failure of donors and development partners to fulfil their obligations. For the tenth straight year, his country had allocated 10 per cent of its foreign assistance to least developed countries to United Nations agencies, funds and programmes. It regularly met its ODA commitment and in several recent years had contributed twice the agreed-upon percentage. The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development provided technical assistance, preferential loans or outright grants for hundreds of projects in over three dozen least developed countries. Over 100 States had received assistance from the Fund since its founding, and it was

budgeting \$15 billion to finance development projects for the 2015–2030 period. In 2012, as the host of the first Asia Cooperation Dialogue summit, his country had called for \$2 billion to be set aside for least developed countries in Asia. In 2013, the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development had been directed to provide \$1 billion in preferential loans to African countries over the 2013–2018 period.

119. **Mr. Zhang Yanhua** (China) said that despite the emphasis of the 2030 Agenda on leaving no one behind, vulnerable groups such as the least developed countries and landlocked developing countries were facing an uphill battle in achieving development. With only three years left for implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action, concerted effort by the international community would be required to meet the goal of graduating half the least developed countries by 2020.

120. It was also vital for all countries, especially developed countries, to honour their commitments under the Vienna Programme of Action and actively promote its six priority areas. China reiterated its firm support for countries challenged by their lack of access to the sea. It had recently hosted the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, attended by more than 1500 delegates from over 130 countries and more than 70 international organizations. China stood ready to enhance connectivity with countries along the Belt and Road corridor so that they could exchange knowledge and engage in mutually beneficial cooperation.

121. Moreover, China had been providing assistance to the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States within the framework of South-South cooperation. It was implementing measures proposed by President Xi Jinping in support of those countries and proceeding with the Group of 20 Initiative on Supporting Industrialization in Africa and the Least Developed Countries, launched at the Hangzhou Summit in September 2016. China had written off the debt of certain eligible countries, set up a South-South Climate Cooperation Fund, provided aid for trade, increased its investment in the least developed countries and extended zero tariff treatment to products under 97 per cent of imported tariff lines. Since 2008, China had been the largest export market for the least developed countries and had received some 23 per cent of their exports. Meanwhile, China had also become the largest source of direct investment in the least developed countries. His country stood ready to continue its support of the development of the least developed countries and landlocked developing countries with a view to implementing the 2030 Agenda.

122. **Mr. Maope** (Lesotho) said that Lesotho had already mainstreamed the goals of the Istanbul Programme of Action into its National Development Agenda, National Vision 2020 and National Strategic Development Plan 2012–2017 with a view towards graduating as a least developed country in the near future. Implementation of the country's development plan had been slow, but a number of reforms had recently been introduced to fast-track its implementation. To address unemployment, especially youth unemployment, his Government had developed a strategy to facilitate private investment and job creation.

123. Given its double challenge as a landlocked developing country, Lesotho was also in the process of integrating the objectives and framework of the Vienna Programme of Action into its national plans and programmes. A member of the Southern African Development Community, Lesotho was using that organization's Regional Infrastructure Development Master Plan as a blueprint for improving the free movement of vehicles from one member State across the territories of others in order to facilitate trade. Lesotho was also a member of the South African Customs Union, which faced the challenge of harmonizing customs practices throughout the region.

124. Lastly, Lesotho urged the international community and international financial institutions to help the least developed countries and landlocked developing countries build resilience through increased technical and financial assistance. It also encouraged development partners to increase official development assistance to those countries.

125. **Ms. Khaing** (Myanmar) said that the structural transformation in both least developed and landlocked developing countries had been slower than in other developing countries, owing to a drop in trade and investment and limited institutional capacities, alongside economic and political crises and natural disasters. It was also clear that the Sustainable Development Goals could not be met without the least developed countries. However, their ability to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the goals set out in the Istanbul Programme of Action would be contingent on a global partnership.

126. Stressing the importance of official development assistance, which had declined in 2016, and in particular, the need for development partners to meet the target of 0.15–0.20 per cent of gross national income (GNI) to the least developed countries, she said that Myanmar was concerned by the economic repercussions that had followed the global decline in commodity prices and the overall slowdown in world trade and

called on development and trading partners for enhanced support in that regard. To stimulate foreign direct investment, a major catalyst for development, it was more important than ever for international partners to set up investment promotion regimes for the least developed countries, as enshrined in both the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda. Her delegation also welcomed the operationalization of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries and urged development partners to support it.

127. Given the direct linkage between the goals and targets of the Istanbul Programme of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals, Myanmar had integrated both sets of goals into its National Comprehensive Development Plan and national economic development policy. However, despite greater national investment in education, health care and social protection programmes aimed at promoting the well-being of women and girls, Myanmar was still not on track to meet its targets under the Istanbul Programme of Action more than halfway through the implementation period. It was acutely vulnerable to the impact of climate change, but its limited institutional capacity prevented it from accessing climate finance. Given that poverty was still widespread in many least developed countries, tailored support to meet the specific requirements of each least developed country would be needed to implement the Istanbul Programme of Action and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, while still ensuring respect for national ownership and leadership.

128. **Mr. Diarra** (Mali) said that his country was doubly implicated in the agenda item under consideration, since Mali was both a least developed country and a landlocked developing country. As part of its implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, Mali had adopted a strategy for diversifying its access to the sea and negotiated transit agreements with its immediate neighbours that covered the movement of goods by sea, road and rail. It had also established mechanisms that governed the transportation of merchandise from ports such as Dakar, Abidjan, Conakry, Tema, Nouakchott and Cotonou and organized the private transportation sector into legally constituted professional organizations that included the Malian Truck Carriers Association and the Malian Truck Drivers Association.

129. Those encouraging results should not hide the numerous challenges Mali would need to address on its path to economic and social development. In addition to the problem of access, the high cost of transporting goods from other countries to Mali was an impediment to trade, and to the country's economic progress. His

delegation believed that mutually beneficial agreements should be worked out by all stakeholders.

130. As the least developed countries would face immense challenges in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, including lack of resources, famine, malnutrition and poverty, implementation of the provisions of the Istanbul Programme of Action would be crucial. While welcoming the operationalization of the Technology Bank, she said that the developed countries should increase their support to least developed and landlocked developing countries seeking to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by strengthening their productive capacity. She urged them to scale up direct foreign investment and international cooperation, and meet their official development assistance commitments to ensure that no one would be left behind.

131. **Ms. Hamdouni** (Morocco) said that the international community should take specific action to integrate the least developed countries and landlocked developing countries more fully into global trade. It would be vital to assist them in developing their air and maritime transportation systems, and their telecommunications capacity, and to facilitate their access to foreign markets.

132. At the same time, those countries urgently needed foreign direct investment that would set them on the path to an economy based on sustainable development, tapping their natural wealth and potential to create employment opportunities in such areas as ecotourism, fishing, forestry and renewable energy. Diversifying their economies, in particular by bolstering the manufacturing sector and improving their productive capacity, would be crucial for achieving sustainable growth and building resilience. It was also critical to honour commitments made to the least developed countries and small island developing States in order to help them overcome the challenges they faced, including through increased official development assistance, within a bilateral or multilateral framework.

133. The Kingdom of Morocco had always been attuned to the problems of the least developed countries and small island developing States. It shared their hope for implementing the Istanbul Programme of Action and the recommendations put forward in the Samoa Pathway, in tandem with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It also maintained close cooperative relationships with those countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, in particular with respect to the transfer of knowledge, expertise and technical assistance. Morocco stood ready to share its experience

and resources with them in various realms in the context of South-South cooperation.

134. **Mr. Chigejo** (Zimbabwe) said that there was an urgent need for sustained international support to accelerate implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action; greater coherence and synergies between the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and other global development frameworks, such as the 2030 Agenda; and the support of development partners for landlocked developing countries' efforts to mainstream the Vienna Programme of Action into their national development programmes.

135. Developing sustainable and resilient infrastructure was a prerequisite for achieving many of the Sustainable Development Goals and a key ingredient for economic growth. Yet many landlocked developing countries continued to grapple with inadequate infrastructure due to limited financial resources. In that context, Zimbabwe called on its bilateral and multilateral development partners to help close infrastructure financing gaps by increasing their support to landlocked developing countries for infrastructure development and maintenance projects.

136. As a landlocked country, Zimbabwe had begun a series of efforts to harmonize, simplify and standardize the rules and documentation for cross-border movements of goods and people as part of its implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. The creation of one-stop border posts such as the one at the Chirundu border in collaboration with Zambia had prompted Zimbabwe to make overtures to its other neighbours with a view towards establishing similar posts. In that regard, Zimbabwe had established a joint technical committee with South Africa to develop the legal framework for establishing such a post at the Beitbridge crossing, the largest and busiest land border post in Southern Africa. The goal was to achieve the seamless flow of goods, people and vehicles, as well as to improve trade through efficient customs clearance procedures.

137. At the same time, Zimbabwe had begun the process of upgrading and modernizing both the physical and soft infrastructure at all the country's border posts with a view to enhancing border management systems. The Government had also embarked on a process of highway rehabilitation, including the Beitbridge-Chirundu highway, which formed part of the country's north-south corridor and facilitated trade within the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa. Zimbabwe would welcome the support of development partners for similar projects to link its highways with those of Botswana and Mozambique.



138. Lastly, Zimbabwe wished to stress the crucial need for landlocked developing countries to implement Priority 5 of the Vienna Programme of Action, on structural economic transformation, in order to ease their dependence on the export of primary commodities. Zimbabwe was working on adding value to its agricultural and mining products and other natural resources in the context of value addition and beneficiation programmes that could make its products more competitive on international markets. While such programmes were an important step in the country's efforts to achieve industrialization, their success depended on effective funding mechanisms for development of the relevant technologies and skills.

139. **Mr. Nkhoma** (Zambia) said that, in expectation of becoming a prosperous middle-income nation by 2030, Zambia had been systematically mainstreaming international initiatives such as the Istanbul Programme of Action, the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda into its national five-year development plans, using an integrated multisectoral approach. With the aim of graduating from least developed country status, it had emphasized building productive capacities in order to sustain high economic growth, enhance human and social development, and promote rural development, trade and good governance. Increased domestic resource mobilization, the fulfilment of ODA commitments and multilateral flows would all be vital to that end.

140. After a steep decline in growth in late 2015 and 2016, attributable to exogenous shocks, poor rainfall that had affected electricity generation, and lax fiscal policy, the Zambian economy had begun to rebound, spurred by good climate, rising world copper prices and domestic policies that stabilized the economy. Growth of 4 per cent was projected for 2017; however, achievement of sustained high and inclusive growth would require a stable macroeconomic environment. To that end, investment was being targeted at growth sectors such as agriculture, energy, science and technology, and infrastructure (particularly transport infrastructure). Promotion of value addition in agriculture would be key to achieving poverty reduction, particularly in the rural areas, and ensuring food security. To enhance human development, investments were being made in such areas as energy, water and sanitation, education, health and skills development

141. Structural transformation would be urgent for countries in line to graduate from the category of least developed countries. Zambia remained committed to achieving sustainable and inclusive economic growth that would enable it to graduate before 2020, as

enshrined in the Milan Declaration for the Graduation of African Least Developed Countries.

142. **Mr. Philakone** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that least developed countries and landlocked developing countries would not be able to meet their special development needs without the support and cooperation of the international community. As both a least developed and a landlocked developing country, his country continued to face multidimensional challenges to development, including limited productive capacity, inadequate infrastructure and isolation from world markets, all of which hindered its integration into both regional and global trading systems. With the aim of eradicating poverty and graduating from least developed country status, Zambia had been mainstreaming the Sustainable Development Goal indicators, the Istanbul Programme of Action and the Vienna Programme of Action into its 2016–2020 National Socioeconomic Development Plan.

143. Development of the transport sector had been identified as key to national socioeconomic progress and would be crucial for the country's transformation from a landlocked to a "land-linked" nation. With that goal in mind, the Government had increased investment in infrastructure, in particular roads and railways that linked the country with the Asian Highway Network. One example was the ongoing rail cooperation project with China, which was part of the country's regional connectivity cooperation initiatives.

144. His Government was committed to achieving its transformation from landlocked to land-linked status by mobilizing its full domestic potential for infrastructure development. It also wished to express its gratitude to its development partners, including transit countries and United Nations agencies.

145. **Ms. Raushan** (Maldives), said that countries in special situations required ongoing help to build resilience and strengthen their capacity to bounce back from shocks. Enduring partnerships were vital to level the playing field for such countries. Maldives had graduated from the list of least developed countries seven years earlier in what had been a tumultuous process, and stood ready to share its experience with other countries.

146. Her country still faced challenges that included the prohibitive cost of providing basic services and building critical infrastructure; it was fully aware that the gains it had achieved could easily be reversed by a single natural disaster or extreme climate event. It would be imperative for the United Nations to recognize not only the specific conditions of vulnerable nations but also to ensure that the challenges of individual countries, as set

forth in their national action plans, were factored into all aspects of the Organization's programming to ensure that no country was left behind.

147. The current criteria for graduation did not take into account the resilience of each country in withstanding the shocks that inevitably followed graduation. When a small island State with a small, extremely dependent economy and only one or two industries lost its protections as a least developed country, it inevitably became more vulnerable. Such a country was more likely to be impacted by external shocks and less able to overcome its challenges without external assistance.

148. Yet graduation affected those countries' eligibility for official development assistance, concessional financing and preferential treatment in export markets. Beyond reliance on indicators such as gross domestic income, it would be vital to adopt a more holistic approach to determining graduation criteria — one that took into account the unique and persistent challenges faced by landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. That was a reality that could not be escaped. The international community should seize the opportunity to assist all countries in special situations, not only in order to implement the 2030 Agenda but also to provide their citizens with a more prosperous future.

149. **Mr. Costa Chaves** (Timor-Leste) said that, as a small island State, Timor-Leste was well aware of the multiple development challenges that disproportionately affected countries in special situations. In addition to their vulnerability to volatile food and energy prices and the effects of climate change, most such countries were highly dependent on aid and remained on the margins of the global economy, owing to their small size, remoteness and isolation from major international markets, and to prohibitive trade transaction costs. Timor-Leste welcomed the establishment of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries and believed that partnerships between Governments, the private sector and civil society at all levels were fundamental to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

150. Timor-Leste was also a country with experience of conflict and, as such, had shared support and expertise on elections and resource management in the extraction industry with the small group of fragile and conflict-affected States (g7+ group), in addition to advocating for the principles set out in the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States.

151. During its presidency of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries from 2014 to 2016, Timor-Leste had hosted representatives of Governments, the private sector and civil society from Europe, Africa,

Asia and South America to explore opportunities for economic cooperation and the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 16. More recently, it had hosted a global conference to develop a road map for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals in fragile and conflict-affected States that had brought together a wide array of representatives.

152. Timor-Leste urged additional and predictable financing to help least developed countries, small island developing States and countries emerging from conflict or in conflict or fragile situations, as well as the Non-Self-Governing Territories, to guarantee that no one would be left behind. In that regard, his country supported the Secretary-General's proposal regarding a global financing pact to ensure adequate funding for implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals based on previously agreed commitments.

153. **Ms. Muraki-Gottlieb** (Observer for the International Chamber of Commerce) said that enhanced open trade could play a key role in accelerating and promoting economic growth in developing countries. Easier, faster and less costly cross-border transactions would allow inclusive global trade to flourish and would particularly benefit smaller and mid-sized companies in developing countries and emerging economies.

154. The Trade Facilitation Agreement of the World Trade Organization (WTO) had entered into force in February and was now an official part of the multilateral trading system with the potential to add more than \$1 trillion to global trade flows. By reducing red tape at borders, thereby speeding up customs procedures, and by incorporating technological advances in transactions, its effective implementation could reduce trade costs by an average of 14.3 per cent, according to the WTO, with greater benefits likely to accrue to developing countries.

155. Moreover, the Agreement could create 20 million jobs, with the vast majority in developing countries. The WTO also estimated that least developed countries were likely to see an increase of up to 35 per cent in the number of new products they could export, which would boost export diversification and participation in global value chains. More efficient border procedures would positively affect investment decisions, and likely attract increased foreign direct investment. The Agreement also fostered coordination of stakeholders at the national level, with special provisions for developing and least developed countries.

156. The International Chamber of Commerce had championed the Trade Facilitation Agreement because of its potential to make global trade more inclusive. It would now be up to individual Governments to

maximize that potential. Together with the World Economic Forum and the Center for International Private Enterprise, her organization had joined the Governments of Australia, Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States to launch the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation, a public-private platform to support effective implementation of the Agreement by leveraging business expertise, leadership and resources in coordination with international bodies, donors and associations.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*