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Chair: Mr. Skinner-Klée Arenales (Guatemala)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 23: Groups of countries in special situations (A/73/417)

(a) Follow-up to the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (A/73/80–E/2018/58, A/73/291 and A/73/455)

(b) Follow-up to the second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries (A/73/297)

1. **Ms. Schroderus-Fox** (Director, United Nations Office of the High Representative for the 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/73/80–E/2018/58), said that news was mixed for the least developed countries, which were not on track to achieve the targets of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 (Istanbul Programme of Action) or the Sustainable Development Goals in many areas. While gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in those countries had increased between 2011 and 2016, it was not rising quickly enough to achieve poverty eradication by 2020. An improved enabling environment for the private sector was also necessary.

2. In least developed countries the largest sector for employment, agriculture, only generated 26 per cent of value added in GDP, indicating the need for increased productivity. School enrolment rates in those countries had improved but more progress was required. Maternal and infant mortality rates there remained high, as did youth unemployment, and the persistently high percentage of urban slum dwellers was a cause for concern, given the expected growth of urban populations. Meanwhile, natural disasters were expected to increase and had already affected around 23 million people in least developed countries. The last three years had been the warmest on record.

3. At the same time, considerable progress had also been made, including increases in mobile cellular subscriptions, internet coverage, mobile broadband coverage and access to electricity. The recently inaugurated Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries had begun its work, constituting the achievement of the first Sustainable Development Goal target, namely 17.8. In addition, advances had been made in certain areas of governance and capacity-building.

4. There was a clear need to accelerate implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action. Although increased bilateral aid in 2017 from the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD/DAC) had reversed several years of decline, aid and government revenue needed to be allocated to priority sectors and official development assistance (ODA) targets met. Measures to improve the recently deteriorating trade performance were also required.

5. The investment promotion regime for least developed countries must be implemented to reverse declining foreign direct investment (FDI). Decreasing debt sustainability in those countries also needed attention. A major drive by all stakeholders was critical to achieve the goals of the Istanbul Programme of Action in its remaining two years. Thereafter, momentum must be maintained and accelerated. Member States were invited to consider holding a Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries to appraise implementation of the Programme of Action and decide on subsequent action.

6. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation, effectiveness and added value of smooth transition measures and graduation support (A/73/291), she said that the Istanbul Programme of Action had been the first global plan aimed at enabling half of the least developed countries to meet the criteria for graduation from that category by 2020. Recent developments regarding graduation indicated that poverty eradication and sustainable development efforts were bearing fruit. In the 2018 triennial review of the least developed country category by the Committee for Development Policy, the graduation criteria had been met by 12 least developed countries, of which 4 had been recommended for graduation and three would be considered for graduation in 2021.

7. The report underlined the importance of ensuring that graduation did not disrupt the graduating country’s development. It could be concluded from prior experiences that the developmental progress of such countries had continued, mainly with respect to gross national income (GNI) per capita and human development. A smooth transition strategy could be valuable in ensuring that countries followed a path to sustainable graduation by determining any potential loss of benefits, identifying effective responses and adjusting institutional and legal frameworks to comply with international obligations.

8. Continued and revitalized efforts would be required to accelerate graduation. A package of benefits for graduated countries was proposed to avoid

jeopardizing their developmental progress and provide graduation incentives that might include addressing challenges and potential impacts of graduation; capacity-building for accessing finance; graduation awareness-building among credit rating and other agencies; support for reaping trade benefits; enhanced technical assistance regarding intellectual property rights; support for Sustainable Development Goal costing, funding and monitoring; and the provision of a platform for showcasing progress and investment opportunities. As a growing number of least developed countries were meeting the graduation criteria, the international community needed to focus more on graduation and smooth transition processes in order to ensure sustainable development and irreversible graduation, which would help to achieve poverty eradication and make sure that no one was left behind.

9. 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/73/297), she said that landlocked developing countries exhibited mixed progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and implementing that Programme of Action. Landlocked developing countries still accounted for less than 1 per cent of global merchandise trade, and their exports remained undiversified, comprising mainly primary commodities. Although they continued efforts to integrate into regional and global trade and diversify their economies, such countries still fell short of levels that could achieve the Goals.

10. To date, 24 of 26 landlocked developing countries that were members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) had ratified its Trade Facilitation Agreement, although their implementation of that instrument was lagging due to capacity constraints. As few other relevant international conventions had been ratified by landlocked developing countries and transit countries during the review period, it was important to continue supporting those countries. Economic blocs and initiatives provided opportunities for the further integration of landlocked developing countries into regional trade. Infrastructure, transport, energy, and information and communications technologies (ICTs) also remained inadequate.

11. ODA was still an important source of financing for landlocked developing countries but was insufficient to address their needs. FDI was low and concentrated in certain areas. Given the limited progress on many priority areas of the Vienna Programme of Action, those countries required continued and enhanced investment and technical assistance for further infrastructure development, trade facilitation and structural

transformation in particular. Landlocked developing countries and transit countries needed greater cooperation and deeper regional integration to improve their trade potential.

12. The report also provided an update on preparations for the comprehensive high-level midterm review on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. Her Office was working closely with the United Nations regional commissions to organize regional reviews for the first half of 2019. Moreover, the International Think Tank for the Landlocked Developing Countries had been inaugurated as the first ever intergovernmental body to provide research and policy advice and strengthen the analytical capacities of landlocked developing countries on issues important to their development.

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

14. **Mr. Ligoya** (Malawi) said that a country was determined to be ready for graduation when criteria based on GNI and other economic indicators had been met three times. However, graduating countries were facing many challenges as a result of losing the entire package of benefits and flexibilities relating to least developed country status following graduation.

15. **Ms. Schroderus-Fox** (Director, United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States) said that, while graduation was a hard-won achievement worthy of celebration, many least developed countries were concerned at losing certain specific benefits. More information was needed, as was more work on incentives and support for graduating countries. The United Nations had formed a task force of different key agencies that was chaired by her Office and was debating how the United Nations could better support countries in the graduation process.

16. **Mr. El Ashmawy** (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that globalization continued to increase, but its significant benefits were yet to be shared equitably, particularly with least developed countries. While the world economy had rebounded from the global financial crisis and the economies of the least developed countries were experiencing growth, those countries remained particularly challenged. Their GDP growth rate posed a serious risk to the 2030 timeline, and poverty eradication was unlikely to be achieved by 2030.

17. Climate change, natural disasters, pandemics, and unprecedented human mobility and displacements remained immense challenges for the least developed

countries. Avoiding trade-offs with Sustainable Development Goals because of national budget constraints required improved access to international climate finance in order to support adaptation, mitigation and sustainable development, especially for those countries and small island developing States. The current stalemate in approving and replenishing the Green Climate Fund must be quickly resolved.

18. The 4 per cent increase in bilateral aid from OECD/DAC members in 2017 was a welcome development, but aid predictability and the alignment of aid with the national priorities of least developed countries were essential for the sustainable implementation of development plans. Development partners must fulfil and exceed their ODA commitment of providing 0.15–0.20 per cent of GNI to those countries.

19. The Group welcomed the establishment of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries in Turkey and the financial and in-kind contributions made by several countries, calling on others to contribute. Graduating and newly graduated countries required tailored support to ensure a smooth transition as well as sustainable and irreversible graduation. With the Istanbul Programme of Action ending in 2020, Member States should decide, during the current session of the General Assembly, on the arrangements for the holding of the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in 2021.

20. Highlighting the special development needs and challenges of landlocked developing countries and underlining the importance of timely, full and effective implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action in synergy and coherence with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Group stressed the need to continue preparations for the high-level midterm review on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action in 2019, including consultations on adopting an intergovernmentally negotiated and agreed outcome in the form of a political declaration pursuant to General Assembly resolution [72/232](#). In addition to examining progress by landlocked developing countries, transit countries and development partners in implementing that Programme of Action, the midterm review should be an occasion to share best practices and lessons learned, identify existing and emerging challenges as well as countermeasures, and launch specific global initiatives to further accelerate implementation of the Programme of Action.

21. The landlockedness, remoteness and geographical constraints of landlocked developing countries raised development costs and presented key developmental

challenges that seriously impeded productive capacity, industrialization, export earnings, private capital, investment inflow and domestic resource mobilization, affecting the sustainable development of those countries. Drought, desertification, frequent disasters and climate change impacts further aggravated the difficulties they faced. Infrastructure development was key in reducing development costs in landlocked developing countries, which were 20 per cent higher than in coastal States. The development and maintenance of transit transport infrastructure, energy infrastructure and ICTs were crucial for those countries to reduce trading costs, improve competitiveness and integrate fully into the global market.

22. Lastly, it was important to mainstream the Vienna Programme of Action in the plans and programmes of landlocked developing countries, transit countries, development partners, international financial institutions and United Nations organizations, and to meet all commitments in that Programme of Action urgently. Support measures, including ODA, technology transfer, investment and partnerships needed to be further enhanced. Welcoming in that context the full operationalization and research progress of the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries in Mongolia, the Group invited voluntary contributions for that body from Member States, international organizations and the private sector.

23. **Mr. Phansourivong** (Lao People's Democratic Republic), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that the least developed and landlocked developing countries had made progress in implementing the Istanbul and Vienna Programmes of Action but still faced major national development constraints, including poverty, low productive capacity, commodity export dependence, rudimentary economic transformation, limited market access, transport bottlenecks, and high vulnerability to external shocks and climate change impacts. The development of those countries must be accorded special priority, as such challenges were unlikely to be overcome without international assistance.

24. ASEAN called on development partners to continue assisting countries in special situations to implement the Programmes of Action as well as national development plans and global development agendas, including the 2030 Agenda. For its part, ASEAN had launched the Initiative for ASEAN Integration in 2002, which aimed to narrow the gap between more and less developed ASEAN member States and to help the latter accelerate their regional and global economic integration. To create a more competitive and inclusive economic region, the ASEAN Economic Community

was also implementing a number of economic, developmental and technological initiatives that had contributed significantly to alleviating poverty, narrowing the development gap and promoting sustainable development.

25. **Mr. Ligoya** (Malawi), speaking on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries, said that implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action had produced positive signs of economic growth for their countries but projected growth was still far off the pre-crisis level. While poverty had been declining in least developed countries, the pace was not sufficient to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 1, and around 35 per cent of their populations would remain in extreme poverty by 2030 at the current rate of economic growth. The focused attention of the international community was required if the 2030 Agenda was to be realized.

26. A key focus of the Istanbul Programme of Action was the beneficial integration of least developed countries into the world economy by increasing market size, improving competitiveness and enhancing regional connectivity. As that Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda aimed at doubling the share of total global exports of least developed countries, their continued regression in that area was of grave concern. Full implementation of decisions adopted at the WTO Ministerial Conference in favour of least developed countries could significantly help to accelerate growth in least developed country exports. However, with only two years left to implement the Istanbul Programme of Action, international support was declining. He therefore urged Member States to agree to hold the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in 2021. The ODA targets agreed in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development must also be met in full.

27. There had been little progress on structural transformation for greater diversification in the economies of least developed countries: the contribution of manufacturing value added to GDP had increased by around 1.4 per cent over the five years to 2016; services accounted for almost half of the growth in those countries, and agriculture for around one quarter. Mobile cellular subscriptions in least developed countries had increased, but internet penetration had only reached 16 per cent by 2016, and only 39 per cent of people had access to electricity. Universal Internet and energy access would require significant increases in new investments.

28. Although school enrolment rates had improved, two fifths of all out-of-school children and adolescents

in the world were in least developed countries. Maternal and infant mortality remained high, as did youth unemployment. There had been some progress on gender equality and women's empowerment, but more must be done to achieve gender-related goals and targets.

29. Least developed countries remained highly vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters. The special report on global warming of 1.5 °C issued recently by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change suggested that an increase of half a degree Celsius in the global average temperature would have devastating impacts on the planet, with vulnerable countries disproportionately affected. Ambitious action at all levels was therefore essential to limit global warming to 1.5 °C. Calling on development partners to fulfil their commitment to mobilize \$100 billion annually by 2020 through the Green Climate Fund, he looked forward to the full implementation of the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

30. The Group welcomed the establishment of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries, which needed to begin its work as soon as possible, especially on capacity-building for science, technology and innovation and on the transfer of technology to that category of country. He invited financial support from donors to make the Technology Bank meaningfully operational.

31. There had been encouraging movement in graduation from the least developed country category, which represented long-term socioeconomic progress but also the loss of all category-specific benefits. Graduation must be sustainable and irreversible. Some graduating countries had concerns to be addressed, particularly regarding susceptibility to environmental and other shocks. Graduating and graduated countries required continued support to sustain their development trajectory.

32. The special priorities of least developed countries must be fully translated while the repositioning of the United Nations development system was under way. He called for the strengthening of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States in order to provide extended and targeted assistance.

33. **Mr. Arriola Ramírez** (Paraguay), speaking on behalf of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, said that their Ministers of Foreign Affairs had produced a concrete forward-looking declaration reflecting their ambitions for progress following a

meeting in September 2018 on revitalizing partnerships for enhanced implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda. The Group continued to attach great importance to the key role of international instruments such as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 in achieving sustainable development in landlocked developing countries.

34. Progress in implementing the Vienna Programme of Action had been slow or insufficient in many areas, as evidenced by the declining economic growth of landlocked developing countries and their limited and declining participation in international trade. Faster implementation of the Programme of Action called for the development of reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, trade facilitation measures such as the ratification and implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement by landlocked developing countries, and structural economic transformation for true competitiveness. He urged the international community to provide landlocked developing countries with enhanced support to address those challenges.

35. The high-level midterm review of the Vienna Programme of Action to be held in 2019 offered an important opportunity for landlocked developing countries, transit countries, development partners, United Nations system organizations and other actors to take stock of their achievements and remaining challenges, as well as available options for accelerating implementation of the Programme. The Group called on all Member States to engage in preparations for and participation in the review.

36. Enhanced collaborations, strengthened partnerships and innovative solutions were essential for enabling landlocked developing countries to advance on a sustainable development path that left no one behind. The United Nations development system should prioritize the economic sectors and productive capacity-building in landlocked developing countries. It should enhance support to those countries for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

37. **Mr. Escalante Hasbún** (El Salvador), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that all countries faced specific daily challenges as they worked towards sustainable development, but national averages based on per capita income did not always fully reflect the particularities, needs and challenges of developing countries. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda required the development of transparent measures of progress in sustainable development that recognized poverty in all its forms and dimensions, the socioeconomic and

environmental dimensions of domestic production, and structural gaps at all levels.

38. Methodologies must also be devised to better account for the complex and diverse realities of middle-income countries. CELAC member States were concerned that access to concessional finance was reduced as their incomes increased, and that they might therefore be unable to access sufficient affordable financing from other sources. In that context, they looked forward to the high-level meeting of the General Assembly in December 2018 to discuss the gaps and challenges of middle-income countries in implementing the 2030 Agenda. They also reaffirmed their commitment to promoting appropriate consideration of the special needs and particular challenges of landlocked developing countries and least developed countries in accordance with the Vienna and Istanbul Programmes of Action.

39. CELAC supported the mid-term review of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries and anticipated positive monitoring results from the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. Welcoming the operationalization of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries and the progress on operationalizing the Technology Facilitation Mechanism, CELAC countries encouraged all development partners to provide financial and technical assistance in order to ensure the full and effective implementation of both initiatives. They also welcomed the adoption and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

40. CELAC countries encouraged the active participation of all Member States in the comprehensive high-level midterm review on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action in 2019, which was important for implementation of the 2030 Agenda by landlocked developing countries. The outcome should be renewed efforts to accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action.

41. **Mr. Sinha** (India) said that he commended the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States for its efforts in establishing the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries, which confirmed his Government's belief that progress was best achieved through international cooperation, in the spirit of which India had made its financial contribution to the trust fund of the Bank.

42. The success of the resolve of Member States to leave no one behind would be measured against the progress of countries in special situations. Not all

countries had fully shared in the socioeconomic progress witnessed in the world over recent decades. Least developed countries were highly disadvantaged developmentally, faced severe structural impediments to growth and were vulnerable to external economic shocks, natural and human-made disasters and communicable diseases. Similarly, landlocked developing countries faced structural challenges related to their geographical disadvantages, resulting in disproportionately high transport and trade costs that hindered their competitiveness, integration into world markets, economic growth and sustainable development. Least developed and landlocked developing countries therefore deserved special attention under the provisions of the Istanbul and Vienna Programmes of Action, whose midterm reviews provided an opportunity for increased synergy with Agenda 2030.

43. India remained fully committed to supporting the rapid growth and development of countries in special situations through its development assistance, which was aimed at enhancing productive capacity-building, institutional strength, infrastructure development, technical expertise and financial assistance to create long-term sustainability. The three India-Africa Forum Summits and the Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation Summit had further crystallized the special relationship of India with those countries. Although there was a worrying decline in donor aid to least developed countries, support from India continued to expand substantially.

44. At the multilateral level, India had established the India-United Nations Development Partnership Fund in 2017 to enhance its South-South cooperation efforts, focusing on developmental projects in least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. Twenty-five Member States had partnered with the Fund since its inception. India, Brazil and South Africa also had an active partnership in the form of a trust fund with the United Nations Development Programme to assist developing countries.

45. **Mr. Ustinov** (Russian Federation) said that the Secretary-General's reports on the least developed and landlocked developing countries ([A/73/291](#), [A/73/80-E/2018/58](#) and [A/73/297](#)) showed that those categories of countries still faced significant difficulties as they worked towards sustainable development. The Istanbul Programme of Action had not been fully implemented, structural transformation in the least developed countries was slow, their share in world trade had decreased and ODA levels remained inadequate. The international community must work together to meet those major challenges. Implementation of the Istanbul

Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda required least developed countries to take firm steps at the national level to carry out structural reforms with a view to developing economic sectors that were more viable and technologically sustainable.

46. There had nevertheless been some progress, despite the continuing difficulties. Twelve countries had met the criteria for graduating from the least developed country category, and four had moved to closer to that goal, indicating more effective domestic resource mobilization, enhanced social development indicators and improved access to modern technology in those countries. The Russian Federation was continuing to assist least developed countries by expanding preferential tariffs to promote market access for their products.

47. As a major transit country, the Russian Federation attached great importance to providing assistance to landlocked developing countries and was endeavouring to strengthen their regional and subregional integration as a means of ensuring their economic and social development. To promote implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, his Government had allocated \$300,000 to the trust fund for the Programme in 2018.

48. The Russian Federation was interested in further developing the Asian Highway Network and continued to advance cooperation with China, Mongolia and South Korea, including by developing transit potential in Northeast Asia with a view to carrying out major infrastructural projects. One such project was the construction of a grain terminal in the Russian port of Zarubino, which would be beneficial to all partners and help to ensure food security throughout the Northeast Asian region.

49. **Ms. Hamdouni** (Morocco) said that the current discussion was an opportunity to reconfirm the need for the international community to make a strong, irreversible commitment to the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States and provide them with urgent support to address their structural challenges. Now was the time to honour the financial and other commitments made to least developed countries and small island developing States, and to demonstrate political will through cooperation and harmonized efforts to aid those countries in overcoming the obstacles they faced.

50. The 2018 triennial review by the Committee for Development Policy had declared a record number of least developed countries ready for graduation from that category, yet three years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda those countries remained the most vulnerable to natural disasters, climate change, financial crises and

funding challenges, facing major difficulties in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. While graduation was important for the development of those countries, they still required support during that process to ensure a smooth transition consistent with their strategies and levels of development.

51. Renewed and continued efforts were needed to implement the Istanbul Programme of Action, which stipulated that special and ongoing international support was crucial in accelerating achievement of the Goals. In addition to an increase in ODA, preferential trade conditions should be enhanced through the reduction of non-tariff barriers, particularly by relaxing rules of origin.

52. Morocco had always been sensitive to the challenges faced by least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island States. It shared the aspirations articulated by the latter in the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

53. Her Government cooperated closely with least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island States in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific in such area as education, tourism and medicine, and in the water and electricity sectors.

54. **Ms. Choden** (Bhutan) said that her delegation was currently engaging with the intergovernmental process regarding the graduation of Bhutan from the group of least developed countries. Graduation was a testament to a country's success and should be celebrated. For Bhutan, it was the culmination of over 55 years of planned development embedded in national frameworks and policies as well as successful collaboration with its development partners and the hard work and tireless dedication of its citizens, for which her Government and people were grateful.

55. Although graduation was a significant milestone on the journey towards sustainable development, it was not an end in itself. As a small landlocked developing country, Bhutan took pride in its accomplishments to date but was still cautious because daunting challenges remained. It must be ensured that graduation did not trigger a reversal of past development achievements. Successful graduation must be sustainable and irreversible.

56. With the approach of the 2020 deadline of the Istanbul Programme of Action to halve the number of least developed countries, the addition in 2018 of four

new such countries to the list that met the graduation criteria, including Bhutan, was a significant development. However, the underlying objective and common endeavour of leaving no one behind would be achieved only when the transformation sought through the Istanbul Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda occurred in the most vulnerable and disadvantaged countries.

57. Eligible countries must be enabled to approach graduation with confidence stemming from national preparedness and political commitment. Such confidence would be bolstered if graduating countries transitioned out of their category at a pace suitable to and practicable for them, and if delimited international support measures were available to ensure a smooth transition without disrupting ongoing development measures. Premature graduation would be counterproductive and cast doubt on the sustainability of the graduation.

58. **Ms. Baatarsuren** (Mongolia) said that landlocked developing countries faced special challenges, had weak productive capacities and were both highly dependent on primary commodities and highly vulnerable to external factors, all of which affected their social development. Those countries needed more support from the international community to generate increased economic growth and improve the well-being of their populations. The high-level midterm review on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action in 2019 was important for examining the progress achieved so far and sharing best practices and experiences, as well as identifying obstacles and proposing new countermeasures.

59. Mongolia had witnessed an economic resurgence with accelerated foreign trade turnover, robust expansion investment and a budget surplus for the past two years. Following implementation of the Extended Fund Facility, Mongolian economic growth had increased from around 1 per cent in 2016 to over 6 per cent in the first half of 2018, with 8 per cent predicted for 2019. To further improve market access and provide a more favourable investment environment, her Government had signed an economic partnership agreement with Japan in 2016 and had completed a joint feasibility study on a similar agreement with the Republic of Korea. It was also studying the feasibility of a free trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union.

60. In the past two years, Mongolia had concluded agreements with its neighbours, including China and the Russian Federation, aimed at enhancing regional cooperation in such areas as rail transit and sea access

with neighbours. Furthermore, it had agreed to establish a trilateral economic corridor with both countries to increase trade turnover, ensure competitiveness, facilitate cross-border transportation and develop infrastructure. The recently established regional logistics centre would help to develop that corridor and facilitate Mongolian participation in the regional economy. In addition, the travel facilitation initiative for Belt and Road countries devised by her Government would create an enabling environment for increased trade, investment, connectivity and economic cooperation.

61. The International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries would enhance the analytical capabilities of those countries and support their efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda and the Vienna Programme of Action. In that context, she urged all remaining landlocked developing countries to ratify the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of the Think Tank and called on Member States to support the draft resolution on observer status for it in the General Assembly (A/C.6/73/L.8).

62. **Mr. Amin** (Afghanistan) said that a balanced and integrated approach was fundamental to addressing the development challenges of countries in special situations and building synergies and coherence among all relevant United Nations agendas. As a least developed, landlocked and conflict-affected country, Afghanistan was faced with achieving the Sustainable Development Goals while at the forefront of countering global terrorism. Despite the security and development challenges, his Government was deeply committed to achieving the Goals, and had already incorporated them into its national peace and development framework, other priority programmes and the national budget.

63. Infrastructure development in areas including ICTs, transport and energy remained pivotal for the economic development of least developed and landlocked developing countries. Afghanistan and the surrounding region were facing a huge infrastructure gap that must be addressed using a collective and integrated approach. International assistance was essential for countries in special situations to achieve the Goals. While his Government was committed to gradually reducing its dependency on aid, continued international support was needed throughout the Transformation Decade (2015–2024) and development partners should honour their ODA commitments.

64. Regional economic cooperation and integration were crucial in achieving inclusive growth and sustainable development. Accordingly, intensified collaboration was needed to integrate countries in

special situations into regional and global value chains with a view to expanding their export markets and diversifying their export baskets. Afghanistan played an essential role in regional and interregional connectivity, which could serve as a cross-cutting enabler for the Goals and other development agendas and should be given greater attention under the current agenda item, as should the streamlining of climate change adaptation and mitigation measures. Climate change and its impacts affected least developed and landlocked developing countries disproportionately. He therefore called for the full and timely implementation of the Paris Agreement

65. **Ms. Wang Yan** (China) said that world economic growth was losing momentum, with globalization suffering setbacks, and protectionism and unilateralism on the rise. The gaps between rich and poor and between North and South remained prominent challenges. The external environment facing least developed and landlocked developing countries was even more complex and grave. Comprehensive implementation of the 2030 Agenda remained a daunting task. China hoped that all parties would work together to translate their commitments into action, implement the objectives of the Istanbul and Vienna Programmes of Action effectively, and promote the overall socioeconomic progress of countries in special situations.

66. As the largest developing country, China firmly supported the development of least developed and landlocked developing countries by assisting them through South-South cooperation. Her Government was actively implementing the measures announced by President Xi Jinping in support of those countries and was promoting the industrialization of least developed countries through steps such as relieving intergovernmental debts, establishing a South-South cooperation assistance fund, providing aid for trade, increasing investment in least developed and landlocked developing countries, and applying a zero tariff rate to 97 per cent of imports from least developed countries.

67. For many years, China had been the largest market and largest source of FDI for least developed countries, and it attached great importance to pragmatic cooperation with those countries. In accordance with the Belt and Road Initiative of broad consultation, joint contributions and shared benefits, her Government would cooperate further with such countries, scale up investment in and financing of their transportation infrastructure, increase trade facilitation measures, promote regional economic integration, and assist landlocked developing countries in enhancing their resilience against economic risks and achieving industrial modernization and structural transformation.

68. China supported trade liberalization and economic globalization and intended to open its market further to developing countries. In November 2018, China would hold its first ever international import expo in Shanghai and would welcome the participation of developing countries in that event. It had also made special arrangements for the participation of least developed countries and would waive attendance fees for African countries in that category.

69. Lastly, China supported both the comprehensive high-level midterm review on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, to be held in 2019, and the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries scheduled for 2021.

70. **Mr. Thapa** (Nepal) said that as least developed countries were the most vulnerable, their specific needs and challenges deserved special attention. A major drive by all was needed to accelerate implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action and achieve synergies with the 2030 Agenda. Although the Committee for Development Policy had recommended additional least developed countries for graduation in 2018, that goal was still far from being achieved. Renewed commitment and revitalized global effort were needed as well as an examination of what had gone wrong to date.

71. Many least developed countries were concerned about smooth and sustainable graduation as well as enhanced, predictable and continued international support. The Committee for Development Policy had deferred consideration of the graduation of Nepal to the next triennial review as a result of those concerns, which should be part of thoughtful discussions during the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. The core issue was not the mere acknowledgment of the specific challenges of those countries, but fulfilment of the means of implementation. The many development challenges faced by Nepal had cumulative effects on its development performance and made its products less competitive, resulting in an increasing trade deficit. Connectivity development, trade facilitation, technology transfer and investment promotion therefore continued to be its priority.

72. Full and effective operationalization of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries was key in the critical area of technology transfer. Countries that were both least developed and landlocked faced even more challenges owing primarily to the high cost of doing business and undertaking development activities, but also to disasters and climate change. Remoteness, landlockedness and lack of access to the

sea had made the development path of those countries extremely difficult.

73. Effective implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action in synergy with the 2030 Agenda was extremely important. The midterm review scheduled for 2019 would provide an occasion to further accelerate the implementation of that Programme of Action, with new commitments where required. He also called for effective operationalization of the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries.

74. **Ms. Nipomici** (Republic of Moldova) said that landlocked developing countries had achieved only modest progress in implementing the Vienna Programme of Action. They still faced significant related challenges, particularly in terms of infrastructure development and maintenance, international trade and structural economic transformation, and lagged behind on almost all socioeconomic and sustainable developments targets, as indicated by the continuing decline in GDP, which had reached its lowest level since 1998 in 2016.

75. In addition to national ownership, continued support from development partners was critical in mobilizing financial and non-financial resources to pursue sustainable development. Increased international cooperation and enhanced partnerships were also vital to implement the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda in landlocked developing countries. The investments required for quality, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, transportation, water and sanitation, productive capacity-building, structural economic transformation, value addition and export diversification far exceeded the capacities of those countries. The fragile progress achieved in areas relating to health, education and energy was at risk from the high vulnerability of landlocked developing countries to climate change impacts, especially floods, drought, desertification and land degradation.

76. The United Nations should play an enhanced role in raising awareness of the challenges facing landlocked developing countries and in leveraging partnerships and building capacities to assist in the development of such countries. In that connection, her delegation acknowledged the activities of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States in support of the implementation, follow-up and review of the Vienna Programme of Action. Assistance from the United Nations and development partners would be important in organizing the comprehensive high-level midterm review on the

implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action in 2019.

77. **Ms. Zahir** (Maldives) said that the latest triennial review by the Committee for Development Policy showed that 12 least developed countries met the criteria for graduation to middle-income country status. However, her delegation believed that the criteria used by that Committee in deciding to graduate countries from the least developed country category needed to be revisited, and it was concerned that three of the five countries to meet the income-only criteria had some of the highest economic vulnerability scores.

78. Small island developing States listed for graduation from the least developed country category did not meet the economic vulnerability index criterion, even after graduation. That criterion should therefore be met by every country before it was graduated from that category. The Secretary-General's report (A/73/291) was very clear that the risks of economic and financial distress facing small island developing States after graduation were primarily due to structural and geographical vulnerabilities. The economies of those countries must therefore be able to adapt to vulnerabilities before graduation. A smooth transition strategy for graduating countries that addressed their particular vulnerabilities was critically important, and additional support was also needed after graduation to maintain momentum in development gains. The United Nations system was ideally placed to assist those countries in developing and implementing measures to build economic resilience.

79. The report had highlighted not only the progress of Maldives since graduation, but also its growing vulnerability. Her country was fortunate to have forged important partnerships that had helped it to implement large-scale infrastructure projects that were promoting impressive economic growth rates in tourism and elsewhere. Access to financing had been complicated for Maldives as a small island developing State. International financial institutions needed to be more sensitive and flexible in considering requests for concessional financing from such States, especially those newly graduated, and to better align their lending policies with the 2030 Agenda. The plight of countries in special situations required the careful consideration and continuous support of the United Nations system, development partners and financial institutions, as well as tailored solutions to address their needs.

80. **Mr. Madisa** (Botswana) said that landlocked developing countries continued to face many development challenges four years after the adoption of the Vienna Programme of Action. Transport costs

remained high in comparison to coastal economies, while trade volumes continued to be low. The economies of most landlocked developing countries were not well diversified and remained dependent on single commodities, making them vulnerable to external shocks. Food security and agriculture were affected by desertification, land degradation and drought in most of those countries, which were also the most vulnerable to climate change and less able to implement mitigation and adaptation measures.

81. Geographical factors alone made the cost of setting up business in landlocked developing countries high, depriving them of crucial FDI. As a result, their economies had a narrow base and were not fully integrated into the global trading system. To address such development challenges, Botswana urged the international community to increase its support to landlocked developing countries in order to help them develop the necessary infrastructure for the movement of goods and services. It also called for increased capacity-building in addition to technical and financial assistance for the development of road, rail and telecommunication networks as well as water and energy infrastructure, which would significantly help those countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

82. His Government continued to make concerted efforts to implement projects facilitating more rapid and efficient movement of goods across its borders, including the construction of a bridge for transporting goods along the north-south corridor, and a highway project with Namibia and South Africa for the faster and cheaper transportation of goods between their countries. Despite such initiatives, Botswana needed development partner support to address the many challenges it continued to face as a middle-income landlocked developing country.

83. **Mr. Gayito** (Ethiopia) said that the least developed countries had been endeavouring to implement the Istanbul Programme of Action with the support of development partners. Despite improvements in terms of poverty reduction, economic and social indicators, and access to energy and ICTs, there were still implementation gaps to fill in order to meet the relevant targets. With two and a half years remaining, Ethiopia urged the least developed countries and their development partners to increase coordinated efforts for the integrated and accelerated implementation of the Programme of Action, which was an integral part of the 2030 Agenda. It also urged its development partners to implement the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, particularly with a view to meeting those targets specific to least developed countries.

84. For the first time in the history of the least developed country category, 12 countries had met the graduation criteria. It was imperative to ensure a smooth transition that took account of national development plans and emerging challenges.

85. The Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States required the support of all Member States in preparing for the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, which would be an opportunity to evaluate implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action and forge a new partnership aligned with the 2030 Agenda.

86. The Vienna Programme of Action provided an opportunity to address special developmental challenges of landlocked developing countries related to their geographical location, and some progress had been made. However, the dependence of such countries on a limited number of export items limited their participation in global value chains, which could only be increased with the cooperation of transit countries. Landlocked developing countries also faced huge infrastructural gaps, which, if addressed, would enable those countries to promote regional integration, reduce their trade costs and enhance their global competitiveness.

87. As both a least developed and a landlocked developing country, Ethiopia had been implementing the Istanbul and Vienna Programmes of Action by integrating them into its national development plans, as a result of which it continued to register GDP growth above the 7 per cent target. His Government had also been promoting structural transformation and investing in physical and social infrastructures to enhance productive capacity while working closely with neighbouring countries to promote regional cooperation and integration. National efforts to implement both Programmes of Action should be supported through a revitalized global partnership.

88. **Mr. Musonda** (Zambia) said that the least developed countries had been implementing the Istanbul Programme of Action since 2011, but little progress had been made in significantly reducing poverty and underdevelopment in those countries and some landlocked developing countries. The two remaining years of that Programme of Action needed to be optimized and even greater momentum gained to overcome the many barriers to development without leaving anyone behind.

89. The sharing and transfer of technology innovations and investment were essential to improve

production capacities. Particular attention should also be given to micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises and the fundamentals of meaningful and sustainable development, such as infrastructure development, the promotion of value addition, and institutional, policy and legal reforms to create enabling business environments.

90. Zambia was investing significantly in infrastructure for energy, water and sanitation, transportation and ICTs. To strengthen regional cooperation in the transport sector, the Government was utilizing the country's geographic position with eight neighbouring countries to make it the preferred transport and transit hub in the region. Zambia had partnered with transit countries and other development entities to develop transport corridors. It was also undertaking reforms that facilitated universal access to ICTs and promoted the use of such technologies in business.

91. With the populations of least developed countries expected to increase by 35 per cent by 2030, poverty was likely to remain widespread. Zambia encouraged all least developed countries to consider countermeasures while harnessing the benefit of having more people in the working bracket than in the dependent bracket. To that end, he called on the United Nations system and the international community to provide technical and financial resources.

92. **Ms. Nuran** (Indonesia) said that the world was now characterized by the increasingly interdependent nature of trade, finance and technology as well as the increasingly uneven distribution of wealth and knowledge. Least developed and landlocked developing countries faced specific constraints and challenges, including poverty, low productivity, limited economic resources and market access, and vulnerability to external shocks and adverse climate change impacts. Those countries were also challenged in their ability to participate effectively in the global economic system while deriving tangible benefits from sustainable development.

93. Over the past 47 years, only five countries had graduated from the least developed country category. The year 2018 was historic in that 12 least developed countries had met the graduation thresholds, but changes were often difficult. The commitment of graduating countries and strong support from the United Nations and the international community were required to ensure that countries underwent the graduation process smoothly and moved progressively towards sustainable development.

94. Member States must also continue assisting the remaining least developed countries in overcoming their specific challenges. In that regard, efforts should be made to facilitate their integration into the global economy, leverage ODA for other development finance, improve mechanisms to build resilient societies and human settlements, and promote the effective operationalization of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries.

95. Indonesia was concerned that landlocked developing countries exhibited declining trends in both GDP and participation in international trade. It was important to muster support to transform those States into “landlinked” countries, including by bridging gaps in transportation and infrastructure financing, and enhancing the ability of those countries to participate in global supply chains.

96. **Ms. Khaing** (Myanmar) said that least developed countries were the most vulnerable segment of the international community and deserved immediate and special attention. The Istanbul Programme of Action aimed to enable half of those countries to qualify for graduation by 2020, but that target was far from being achieved. Three years into implementation of the 2030 Agenda and with two years of the Programme of Action remaining, least developed countries still lagged behind other developing countries in almost all targets, and faced poverty and structural impediments. Their share of exports in global trade continued to decline and FDI remained limited. Growth had started to increase but remained well below the 7 per cent target. Greater effort was required from all sides. Her delegation also requested support from Member States for the holding of the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in 2021.

97. Despite multidimensional risks, external and internal pressures and the massive complexity of issues it was facing, Myanmar was committed to being a responsible member of the international community. The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals had been integrated into the national sustainable development plan of Myanmar and her Government had been endeavouring to strike the right balance between development and stability. Efforts had also been made to strengthen the economy, increase resilience to shocks and stabilize macroeconomic foundations, resulting in respectable growth and a decrease in poverty. An investment promotion plan had been launched in October 2018 to attract more investment in the future.

98. ICTs were a powerful tool for achieving sustainable development, but substantial digital divides persisted between developed and developing countries.

Myanmar therefore welcomed the establishment of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries and looked forward to its enhancement of ICTs.

99. Myanmar had met all the eligibility criteria for graduation from the least developed country category for the first time in 2018. Her delegation wished to underscore the importance of a smooth transition and continued international support to graduating and graduated countries in order to ensure the irreversibility of graduation.

100. Least developed countries, including Myanmar, were disproportionately affected by climate change and natural disasters, the effects of which would be more disastrous if the increase in global mean temperature could not be limited to 1.5 °C. That target required the full and timely implementation of the Paris Agreement. The Green Climate Fund also needed to be fully funded and operational, with enhanced access facilitated for the most vulnerable countries.

101. Myanmar had reached another milestone in the decades-long peace process. The three sessions of the Union Peace Conference held so far had adopted 51 principles that would form part of the Union Peace Accord. Although serious challenges remained, her Government was determined to continue working towards peace and stability, harmony and reconciliation, and inclusive and sustained development.

102. **Mr. Neto** (Angola) said that the latest developments regarding the graduation of least developed countries from that category showed encouraging progress on poverty eradication and sustainable development as a result of factors including the successful implementation of national and global strategies and partnerships. Graduation was now perceived as a landmark in the ongoing development process of the countries concerned. However, most graduated countries remained vulnerable, especially to the impacts of climate change, natural disasters and other shocks, which threatened their ability to sustain growth and development.

103. Angola was scheduled for graduation in 2021, and commended the recent addition of Bhutan, Kiribati, Sao Tome and Principe and Solomon Islands to the list of 12 least developed countries that had met the graduation criteria for the first time. Angola invited its development and trading partners, international organizations and other financing initiatives and mechanisms to continue assisting the graduated countries in implementing smooth transition strategies. For Angola, the principal requirements for a smooth transition had been integrated into its national long-term strategy for development, which had also allowed it to implement specific

measures through its national development plan for the period 2018–2022.

104. His Government understood that oil had been the main driver behind the country's graduation. GNI per capita had far exceeded the income-only graduation threshold in 2017 and 2018. However, it was even more encouraging that the human assets index of Angola continued to increase while its economic vulnerability index continued to decrease.

105. **Ms. Crabtree** (Turkey) said that a critical juncture in the path of least developed countries towards sustainable development was drawing nearer as 2020 approached. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals was particularly arduous for those countries, which deserved the special attention of the international community. Her delegation commended them for their efforts in developing their productive capacities and improving governance, as well as their achievements on macroeconomic performance, structural reforms, trade liberalization and privatization.

106. The increasing number of countries meeting the criteria for graduation was a sign of progress, but vulnerabilities persisted, as evidenced by requests for deferral from some countries recommended for graduation. Recent natural disasters had been most destructive to least developed countries, which were also disproportionately affected by climate change. Climate-related challenges were closely linked with livelihoods in least developed countries and with the ability of such countries to maintain economic stability. As premature graduation combined with unexpected external shocks could jeopardize the hard-earned gains of least developed countries, smooth and sustainable transition processes must be ensured and supported by development partners. Strengthened global partnerships were also crucial.

107. The goal of the Istanbul Programme of Action was for half of the least developed countries to meet the criteria for graduation by 2020, but that goal was far from being achieved. Greater progress was needed on the Sustainable Development Goal targets geared towards those countries, such as the implementation of the investment promotion regime. In addition to ODA and partnerships, Turkish support for least developed countries also focused on key accelerators for implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action and the achievement of the Goals. Thus, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme, Turkey had designed the Sustainable Development Goals impact accelerator to support entrepreneurship with least developed countries through the Technology Bank.

108. **Mr. Aljamali** (Yemen) said that headway had been made in combating poverty since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, but not all groups recognized by the United Nations had experienced progress. Least developed countries continued to be the most vulnerable to poverty in all its forms. The international community must give adequate attention to those countries to help them advance steadily along the path of sustainable development and overcome structural obstacles. The implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action should be the top priority.

109. The number of least developed countries in conflict or post-conflict situations clearly showed that there could be no development without peace and no peace without development. Joint efforts were needed to confront the difficulties faced by those countries, which would lag behind in achieving the internationally agreed development goals. His delegation appealed to all Member States to give due priority to countries in conflict or post-conflict situations.

110. The lack of stability in Yemen throughout its history had undermined its economic performance, and the economy remained fragile. The per capita share of GDP was declining, with poverty reaching 54 per cent and unemployment 41 per cent. In addition to political instability, the economy was weakened by a lack of good governance, rampant corruption, structural challenges, inadequate infrastructure, and deficits in human development and human resource development. The war sparked by the Houthis in 2014 had increased the speed of economic contraction. The State budget had collapsed, leaving the State unable to pay the salaries of civil servants.

111. The economic burden of Yemen had been increased by the rising number of displaced persons, migrants and illegal immigrants in the country as a result of political instability and natural disasters, including desertification, drought and underground water scarcity. The return of many Yemeni expatriates had seriously affected the level of remittances, further contributing to the poor state of the economy. It was important to increase ODA with a view to enhancing the ability of countries to withstand political turmoil, climate change and natural disasters, and to provide more technical assistance in order to build capacities.

112. **Ms. Cordova Soria** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that she wished to highlight the Organization's role under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which had facilitated the establishment of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island

Developing States. The Office allowed countries such as Bolivia to convey their needs to the international community and to jointly search for solutions and options with a view promoting the economic development of their peoples on an equal footing with countries that had access to the sea.

113. Countries without sovereign sea access were inevitably faced with limitations on their development. While many landlocked developing countries had made significant advances that facilitated or permitted their unrestricted access to and from the sea, others had not. The principle according to which the sea was perceived as the heritage of humanity, of and for the people, had not yet been fully understood by the international community.

114. Her country had begun its independent existence with its own Pacific coast, from which it had been cut off as a result of the occupation by and armed conflict with Chile in 1879. The bilateral 1904 Treaty of Peace and Friendship had defined the new boundaries and had granted her country the broadest and freest right of commercial transit to the Pacific Ocean, but neither that treaty nor various other promises and agreements had wholly and satisfactorily addressed the consequences of becoming landlocked.

115. For over a century, the economic and social development of her country had been negatively affected by the lack of proprietary and efficient sea access, and by the imposition of unilateral and monopolistic logistics handling of Bolivian cargo by private Chilean companies, with raised seaport tariffs and additional storage costs for Bolivian merchandise. Her Government believed in frank and productive dialogue as the path to fair conflict resolution under applicable international norms regulating peaceful coexistence between States.

116. **Ms. Aguayo** (Chile), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that Bolivia had raised an exclusively bilateral matter whose legal framework had been established by the 1904 Treaty of Peace and Friendship and the judgment of the International Court of Justice in October 2018. That issue had never been part of the United Nations agenda and had nothing to do with the current meeting, which aimed to confront shared challenges in solidarity and unity. It was entirely inappropriate for the subject of a supposed Bolivian desire for Pacific Ocean access via Chilean territory to have been raised. Bolivia had unfortunately conflated topics from the agenda of landlocked developing countries with other issues not included in the Vienna Programme of Action.

117. Bolivia had also used expressions not accepted by landlocked developing countries or the United Nations, such as referring to itself as a country temporarily deprived of access to the sea, contradicting the title adopted by landlocked developing countries themselves. Such language changed the meaning of the Vienna Programme of Action approved by landlocked developing countries and detracted from the efforts of other countries in that category, while undermining the trust of countries in transition.

118. In reality, Chile had granted Bolivia free-transit advantages that far exceeded international standards and allowed Bolivia to trade via the Pacific Ocean and have close contact with the world. Bolivia had been granted in perpetuity the broadest and freest right of commercial transit through Chilean territory and Pacific ports. Bolivia had designated Arica and Antofagasta for the passage of goods to and from its territory and also had customs authorities at those ports. Other advantages enjoyed included the right to free storage in Chilean ports, preferential tariffs, specific tax exemptions, a pipeline through Chilean territory and works for connectivity to the Bolivian network, in addition to road, port and border infrastructure.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.