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**LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES¹ DECLARATION
BUENOS AIRES 2017**

The following communication, dated 11 December 2017, is being circulated at the request of the delegations of the Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs).

We, the Ministers of the landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), having met in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on 10 December 2017, during the eleventh Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization,

Recalling the Vienna Declaration and the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024 adopted at the Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries,

Recalling the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), aimed inter alia at eradicating extreme poverty and hunger by 2030, and in particular, Goals 7, 9 and 10 (relating to affordable and clean energy; industry, innovation and infrastructure; and reduced inequalities),

Recalling and reaffirming the objectives and principles of the Marrakesh Agreement establishing the World Trade Organization,

Reaffirming the preeminence of WTO as global trade rule making body and the need to reinvigorate and strengthen its negotiating function,

Recalling the Ministerial Meeting of the Group of LLDCs at the margin of the 10th Ministerial Conference of the WTO on 16th December 2015 in Nairobi, Kenya, where the Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), reiterated the strong commitment of the Group of LLDCs to the Multilateral Trading System, especially in the framework of the negotiations of the Doha Development Agenda,

Recalling the Geneva Ministerial Declaration adopted at the Fifth Meeting of Trade Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries which aimed at Harnessing the trade potential of the LLDCs to accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

¹ Afghanistan; Armenia; Azerbaijan; Bhutan; Bolivia, Plurinational State Of; Botswana; Burkina Faso; Burundi; Central African Republic; Chad; Ethiopia; Lesotho; Kazakhstan; Kyrgyz Republic; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Malawi; Mali; Moldova, Republic Of; Mongolia; Nepal; Niger; Paraguay; Rwanda; Swaziland; Tajikistan; The Former Yugoslav Republic Of Macedonia; Uganda; Uzbekistan; Zambia; Zimbabwe; This list include 30 of 32 LLDC, 26 being WTO members and 4 are currently observers in accession process.

Have adopted the following Ministerial Declaration

1. We underscore the importance of international trade as an engine for inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction, and an important means to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, as recognized by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda,
2. We recognize the need to “promote a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization, including through the conclusion of negotiations under its Doha Development Agenda” to achieve the SDGs as stated in Goal 17.10. We will also seek to promote the concepts of fairness and inclusiveness,
3. We underscore central role of Development in the WTO and that the principle of Special and Differential (S&D) treatment represents the cornerstones of the WTO Agreements and that the reaffirmation of this principle should be an integral part of any package and of the works of this organization,
4. We underline the importance of addressing the trade-related challenges of the LLDCs that includes reducing trade costs at the border, between borders and behind borders, and addressing other supply-side constraints in order to increase the LLDCs’ trade competitiveness; improving the market access for their products; and enhancing structural transformation and industrialization in order to help diversify their products and markets,
5. We recall that our lack of access to the sea presents a set of challenges particular to our group of countries. Above all, it often results in transportation costs that are higher than average, which drives up the cost of exporting and importing goods. In addition, the lack of coastlines implies a dependence on neighboring countries for transit, which can have a significant negative impact on trade if political relations are strained or infrastructure in the transit country is weak. In that regards, we stress that LLDCs must be provided with unfettered access to the nearest port/s for their regular trade transactions through the territory of transit neighboring country/countries without any hindrances,
6. We welcome the entry into force of the Trade Facilitation Agreement. We urge members to continue to provide technical, financial and capacity building assistance to LLDCs, on a sustainable basis, for the effective implementation of the Agreement. We also call upon the constructive cooperation of transit countries for the effective and early application of disciplines that contribute to reducing transit time and costs, simplifying procedures and enhancing certainty in cross-border trade,
7. We recognize that co-operation between landlocked developing countries and transit countries to ease the flow of goods is of mutual benefit and efforts should be made by both groups as well as development partners to strengthen transit transport systems,
8. We emphasize that Agriculture is of critical importance to the LLDCs economies. The continuation of the reform process in order to promote market access; reduction of distortive domestic support measures, especially in developed countries; the total elimination of all forms of export subsidies; and the promotion of fair rules for the cotton-sector will constitute an important tool for the promotion of economic activities and food security in developing countries,
9. We reiterate our support to the Sectorial Initiative in favour of Cotton (C4) related to the ambitious reduction of the agricultural domestic support that distorts the international cotton market. We urge members to implement all the Ministerial decision on cotton related: market access, domestic support, export competition and development,
10. We underline that the development and maintenance of transit transport and information and communications technology infrastructure are crucial for landlocked developing countries in order to reduce high trading costs, improve their competitiveness and become fully integrated in the global market; Comprehensive, coherent and coordinated policies are needed at all levels in the areas of promotion of foreign direct investment; infrastructural development, and logistics towards mitigating the adverse development impact of landlockedness,

11. We reaffirm our commitment to intensify our efforts to build productive capacities, pursue structural economic transformation, industrialization and encourage export diversification. In doing so, we will lay the foundations for poverty eradication, employment generation and inclusive economic growth,

12. We also recall that there is a need for concerted measures and actions to support LLDCs' efforts to reduce commodity dependence, including through the diversification of their export base, and enhanced processing of the commodities,

13. We recognize the growing role of the services sector in modern economies, in particular, the importance of the tourism sector, finance and ICT, and that an efficient and productive services industry will contribute significantly to productivity growth and for the overall competitiveness of landlocked developing countries' economies. In that regard, we affirm our commitment to develop the service sector with the view to addressing supply side constraints, and call on international organizations to support landlocked developing countries to develop their services sectors,

14. We also urge Members to take into account the special needs and problems caused by the geographical disadvantage of being landlocked that during the accession process of LLDCs to the WTO. As such, the accession process for LLDCs should be further simplified and these countries should be provided with adequate technical and financial assistance,

15. We recall the significant contribution made by the LLDCs that acceded under Article XII of the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the WTO, which strengthen the multilateral trading system. For a balanced outcome of trade liberalization negotiations, we stress the need to consider the extensive commitments undertaken by the Article XII Members upon their accession to the WTO,

16. We welcome the entry into force of the Multilateral Agreement on the establishment of the International Think Tank for the LLDCs that brings the Think Tank into full operation. We invite the Office of the High Representative and relevant organizations of the United Nations system, Member States, including development partners, and relevant international and regional organizations to support the think tank, as it has started playing an important role in enhancing the analytical capability of LLDCs and provide home-grown research to cater for our specific needs. We urge those LLDCs, which have not done so, to ratify the agreement,

17. We commit to strengthen the works of the LLDC group in Geneva, in order to maintain regular meetings, share experiences and seek for enhanced capacity building for LLDC, in the main areas of work of the World Trade Organization: monitoring, rules making and dispute and settlement. This effort should allow the Group to enhancing our role and establishing work plan,

18. We express our gratitude to the substantive support and financial contribution of the World Trade Organization Secretariat and the Office of the High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS to the Meeting,

19. We express our sincere appreciation to the government of Argentina and its people for their warm hospitality and for hosting the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires successfully.
