



STATEMENT

BY

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**MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY OF THE KINGDOM OF
LESOTHO**

AT THE

**FIFTH MEETING OF TRADE MINISTERS OF LANDLOCKED
DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

23 JUNE, 2016, GENEVA

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Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, allow me to register my gratitude to the WTO Secretariat and UNHRLLS for organizing this important meeting.

This meeting comes at the opportune time following the year in which our leaders agreed on historic landmarks to make the world a better place for humanity to prosper while saving the planet for posterity. These milestones include the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement on climate change, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, amongst others.

For us in the Landlocked Developing countries (LLDCs) the 2030 Agenda and its means of implementation, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, in particular, should represent a beacon of hope as they recognize the need to address the special challenges and needs of the LLDCs. The 2030 Agenda will, without doubt, play a catalytic role and add great momentum towards the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024.

Mr. Chairman,

The special challenges of LLDCs have been recognized in the global arena including in the United Nations and for Lesotho as a least developed country these challenges impose upon us a dual burden in our noble quest to free our people from the shackles of poverty. The major stumbling block amongst these challenges are high transport and trade transactions costs that the LLDCs have to content with as

a result of their lack of direct territorial access to the sea, and remoteness from world markets and other geographical constraints. These costs in most instances are outrageously way above those borne by our sister coastal economies thus negatively affecting the LLDCs competitiveness at the global stage.

In this regard the theme for this Conference “**Harnessing the trade potential of the LLDCs to accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**” is very apt since trade has been identified as an engine for inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction and contributes to the promotion of sustainable development.

To harness trade potential, the LLDCs have to, first and foremost, reduce trade transaction costs and transport costs and improve international trade services through simplification and standardization of rules and regulations. More importantly the LLDCs should also ratify international conventions aimed at facilitating trade at the border, between borders and behind borders. In this regard we call upon WTO Members to accelerate the ratification of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement adopted by consensus at the Ninth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization, held in Bali, Indonesia, in December 2013. The concomitant accruals for the full implementation of this agreement cannot be overemphasized. Lesotho, on its part, ratified the agreement early this year and we are looking forward to submitting the required notifications. The provision of technical assistance by international organizations to LLDCs remains important now and in the future on implementation of these international conventions.

LLDCs should also be accorded special attention in the WTO, as well as in other relevant trade fora, with a sharp focus on their development needs. In this respect, the conclusion of the remaining Doha Development Agenda issues is very crucial

to enable the LLDCs to meaningfully benefit from the multilateral trading system. Furthermore, it remains extremely important to launch a Work Programme for LLDCs in the WTO owing to their special needs. This Work Programme should take into consideration the LLDCs priorities of Transit, Trade Facilitation, Aid for Trade, Services, and Accession.

Mr. Chairman,

Developing productive capacities is also fundamental for LLDCs to harness trade potential for the effective implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The low productive capacities and structural weaknesses limit the value addition to the LLDC exports and the diversification of their exports and markets. In this regard increasing Aid for Trade support to LLDCs, including through the Enhanced Integrated Framework for trade-related technical assistance is very essential. Aid for Trade when blended with appropriate supporting policies can increase the competitiveness of LLDCs products in the global and regional chains. We therefore call upon our partners to honour the pledges they made on the eve of the Tenth WTO Ministerial Conference in Nairobi and also appeal to other friendly members to contribute into this initiative.

Finally partnerships in all levels in particular with the transit countries are a bedrock for harnessing trade potential for LLDCs. LLDCs and transit countries have to work together to modernize transit and transport facilities and customs and other border facilities by fully utilizing the capabilities of information and communications technologies. Strengthened partnerships in the context of South-South cooperation, partnership with international and regional organisations, as well as between public and private sector actors are also key to harness trade

potential for the effective implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. This notwithstanding, South-South cooperation should not be construed as a substitute for North-South cooperation. The latter remains vital especially in the provision of Official Development Assistance which the LLDCs need to address the infrastructural deficits which they face.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion the new global development frameworks have not only provided us with the master plans within which we can embed our aspirations for the betterment of humanity but they have also raised hopes for our people for prosperity and they need nothing less from us. Therefore let us all join hands and deliver the promise without leaving no one behind.

I THANK YOU.