

## **Euro-Asia Call for Action**

### **Outcome Document of the High-Level Euro-Asia Regional Review Meeting of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024 held on 22-23 August 2023, Bangkok, Thailand**

#### **Introduction**

1. We, the Ministers and representatives from Landlocked Developing countries (LLDCs), gathered in Bangkok, Thailand on 22-23 August 2023 for the High-level Euro-Asia Regional Review Meeting in preparation of the Third United Nations Conference on LLDCs to be held in 2024, to undertake a comprehensive review of the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries (VPOA) in the Euro-Asia Region, including identification of achievements, gaps, constraints, new and emerging challenges and opportunities, sharing of best practices, experiences and innovative approaches for accelerated post-pandemic climate resilient recovery as well as appropriate policy measures and concrete recommendations at the national, regional and global levels necessary for making the successor programme of action for LLDCs a truly transformative one, especially in contributing to rapid economic growth, inclusive development and successful implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Euro-Asian LLDCs.

2. We are meeting against the backdrop of a fragile and highly uncertain global economic outlook, amid the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the adverse impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and other environmental degradation aspects, mounting risk of debt distress, cost of living crisis, and rising geopolitical tensions with widespread and disproportionate effects on the poorest and the most vulnerable.

3. We are seriously concerned that the achievement of the SDGs is in great peril. At the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda, we are alarmed that the progress on most of the SDGs is either moving much too slowly or has regressed below the 2015 baseline. Years of sustainable development gains are being reversed. Millions of people have fallen into poverty, hunger and malnutrition are becoming more prevalent, and humanitarian needs are rising. LLDCs, with their existing geographical constraints and high vulnerability to shocks are being affected severely.

4. We recall the comprehensive High-level Midterm Review on the implementation of the VPoA in New York on 5-6 December 2019 and its High-Level Political Declaration. We also recall the holding of the regional review meeting for the Euro Asian Region in Bangkok on 11-12 February, 2019.

5. We welcome the participation of all relevant stakeholders, including representatives from transit developing countries, development partners, United Nations agencies, international, regional, and sub-regional organizations, and the private sector.

6. We reaffirm the global commitments to address the special needs of the LLDCs made at major United Nations conferences and summits, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and to

mobilize additional international support measures, partnerships, and action, in addition to domestic resources, in favor of the LLDCs.

### **Assessment of progress**

7. We note with concern that the cascading and intersecting crises of health, food, energy and finance have obstructed the achievement of the priorities of the VPoA and SDGs and reversed some of the development progress for Euro-Asian LLDCs.

8. We note that LLDCs' existing transport related vulnerabilities were exacerbated further during the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to severe impacts to businesses and resulting in employment and income losses for many people in the LLDCs.

9. We note that global trade plunged in 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the increase in trade and transit restrictions related to COVID-19 led to disruptions in supply chains and increased trade costs and transportation times. Consequently, the share of exports in global trade for Euro-Asian LLDCs dropped from about 0.7% in 2019 to 0.63% in 2020. Since then, the exports of the region's LLDCs recovered in 2022, yet they remain marginal at about 0.8 per cent of global exports.

10. We further take note of the trade facilitation initiatives that were instituted to facilitate the movement of goods during the pandemic, including the Observatory on border crossing status due to COVID-19 by UNECE, and green corridors/lanes between the Central European Free Trade Agreement and European Union countries.

11. We note that the pandemic and other disasters significantly impacted the development and maintenance of infrastructure in several countries, including the region's LLDCs.

12. We note with concern that waning multilateralism and international cooperation, geopolitical tensions and concerns about global and financial fragmentation, and megatrends, including climate change, rapid digitalization (including emerging artificial intelligence (AI)), demographic shifts, particularly ageing population, pose additional challenges to socio-economic development for the LLDCs.

13. We note that most of the Euro-Asian LLDCs have made progress in ratifying important international and regional agreements and frameworks<sup>1</sup> to increase global trade participation and diversify their trade structure. Additionally, positive progress has been observed in adoption of digital transit measures such as eTIR and eCMR.

14. We recognize that all the Euro-Asian LLDCs and their transit neighbours that are WTO members have ratified the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and that these countries continue to make progress towards its implementation but more remains to be done to fully implement the Agreement.

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<sup>1</sup> Including WTO Agreement on Trade facilitation, Revised Kyoto Convention, United Nations Convention in the Law of the Sea, Customs Convention on the international Transport of Goods, International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Control of Goods, Customs Convention in Containers and Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road

15. We note that during the implementation period of the VPoA, 2 LLDCs became full members of the WTO, and four LLDCs have a WTO observer status and are at different stages of negotiation towards accessing to the WTO.

16. We acknowledge that LLDCs in the region have made progress in entering into several sub-regional and bilateral agreements, such as Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) to address some of the transport, trade, and transit challenges they face and strengthen their participation in regional and global value chains. We also note that LLDCs are part of regional initiatives such as ASEAN Free trade Area, BIMSTEC, CAREC, SAFTA and SAARC. Because of these initiatives, transit time at some of the border crossings and travel time along road corridors have been reduced significantly since 2015.

17. We remain concerned that despite the progress made, a majority of sub-regional and multilateral arrangements are, however, still not fully implemented in practice. This is due to complex non-trade issues such as limited institutional and human resources capacities.

18. We acknowledge that LLDCs adopted wide ranging trade reforms, trade promotion and trade facilitation measures to improve their participation in global trade since 2015. Despite these efforts, overall participation in global trade by Euro-Asian LLDCs has shown little improvement, even though most of them increased the nominal value of total merchandise exports and imports.

19. We recognize that, several LLDCs in the region have limited integration into regional and global value chains and lack diversification of products and export markets and rely significantly on just a few natural resources, i.e., commodity dependence, particularly on fuel. There has not been a significant improvement in export diversification since the adoption of the VPoA in 2014. In 2022, more than 60% of all export revenues in 9 LLDCs (out of 14) in the region came from primary commodities.

20. We further note that limited productive capacities and lack of human capital, technological sophistication with R&D expenditures remaining low in the region's LLDCs, ranging between 0.08 % and 0.38 % of GDP and business friendly environment constrain their ability to add value to their exports.

21. We note that many of the LLDCs in the region have continued to face very high trade costs than those faced by non-LLDCs, adversely affecting their trade competitiveness.

22. We note that many LLDCs are reliant on a few large markets such as China, European Union, Russian Federation and India.

23. We note that although the growth of Euro-Asian LLDCs was robust during the commodities boom, a subsequent significant deceleration to an average of about 2.9 percent in 2016 (equating to 1.7% in terms of per capita) exposed their enduring susceptibilities to external economic shocks. This shock was particularly noticeable in the resource rich LLDCs focused on extractive industries.

24. We recognize that despite mixed progress in the first half of the implementation of the VPoA, challenging external environment in the wake of the pandemic constrained economic growth with adverse impact on poverty reduction efforts and SDGs for the LLDCs in the region. The GDP growth rate for the LLDC group on average dropped from about 6.8% in the

previous decade (2000-2014) to an average of 3.4% between 2015 and 2023. It tumbled to -1.2% in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It increased to 4.6% in 2021 and was estimated to be 3.6% in 2022.

25. We also recognize that over the review period, Euro-Asian LLDCs' share of exports of services remained extremely marginal (at less than 0.5 per cent of global trade in services), with almost no visible change.

26. We note that a significant portion of the services sector, which accounts for over 50 percent of most LLDCs' economies, is not internationally tradable, such as wholesale and retail trade. This lack of tradability further limits productivity growth.

27. We further note that the tourism sector which is one of the main contributors to several LLDCs' services export revenue was hardest hit by COVID-19 (a decline in the region's median of tourism receipts (% of total exports) from 14 % in 2019 to 5 % in 2020) and the recovery has been slow and the sector's potential remains largely untapped.

28. We acknowledge that Euro-Asian LLDCs have put significant emphasis on infrastructure development in their national development plans, many of which have introduced and/or updated national infrastructure plans and allocated significant resources to develop their road, rail, air, waterways, ports, information and communication technology and energy networks. Several LLDCs joined important regional and subregional transport networks and corridors to complete missing links and expand transport infrastructure.

29. Additionally, we note that region's LLDCs have invested in transit tracking systems and the modernization of border systems. Several LLDCs in the region have established special economic zones and multimodal transport and logistics facilities (including dry ports) along road and rail corridors to transform them into development corridors.

30. We note with concern that despite the progress in intermodal connectivity, road and rail transport, airports and sea ports remain largely underfunded and underdeveloped. The continuing low quality of infrastructure (e.g., only 8% of the roads in the LLDCs participating in the Asian Highway Network are classified as primary or class I as compared to 35% for the entire network) and maintenance, as well as lack of harmonization of technical and regulatory standards pose significant barriers to efficient trade and transit facilitation.

31. We note that Euro-Asian LLDCs have made several efforts to strengthen their air transport systems, including construction of new airports and upgrading and expansion of existing ones. Despite some exceptions, passenger and freight volumes have shown signs of progress in several LLDCs in the region since the launch of VPoA, before experiencing steep declines due to Covid-19 pandemic. We also note that the recovery of air services to pre-pandemic levels have been slow in the region. We underscore the massive investment needs of the LLDCs to develop and strengthen their air transport infrastructure and ensure air safety.

32. We note that while most of the LLDCs in the region made satisfactory progress in ensuring access to electricity (close to 100% or universal access), some countries continued to experience difficulties in terms of providing uninterrupted and affordable supply of electricity, particularly in remote and rural areas due to outdated technology and poor maintenance. Despite considerable efforts to develop renewable energy infrastructure (mostly in solar, hydro,

wind and bioenergy), transition to affordable, reliable and sustainable modern and clean energy has been slow.

33. We note that progress in internet and mobile phone access has also been mixed. The percentage of population using internet in several LLDCs remains exceptionally low, at less than 50%, falling short of the use required to bring about any meaningful change. Significant gaps persist also in ownership of mobile phones across Asian and Pacific LLDCs. Low per capita income, lack of internet coverage particularly in rural and remote areas and high cost of accessing submarine cables hold back progress in this area.

34. We note that the LLDCs in the Euro-Asia region experienced significant improvement in e-government development since the launch of the VPoA. Emerging technologies could enhance development prospects and partially mitigate their geographical challenges of the LLDCs. However, further efforts are necessary to build human skills and capacities, as well as to develop additional targeted policies, regulations and infrastructure to expand the use of ICT for facilitating international trade and transit.

35. We note that most of the LLDCs in the region have actively sought to utilize new tools such as the UNESCAP-led Framework Agreement on the Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, and have increased adoption of ICT in customs and trade facilitation activities, including ASYCUDA, electronic national single windows, goods transport tracking systems, and electronic payment systems, along with the establishment of single-window systems helped countries adapt enabling policies for digitalization of trade and transit procedures, harmonize interoperability, support e-commerce and advance regional integration.

36. We also note that there have been also developments at the sub-regional level such as the adoption of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025, operationalization of the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal Motor Vehicles Agreement and finalization of the BIMSTEC Master Plan for Transport Connectivity. The Eurasian Economic Union that includes 3 LLDCs entered into force during implementation of the VPoA.

37. We recognize that efforts have been made to support regional integration and cooperation among the LLDCs and transit countries in the Euro-Asia region.

38. We note that lack of robust, consistent, and timely data remained a significant obstacle in monitoring the progress made in the implementation of the VPoA. This poses a challenge for the policy makers and their international development partners to timely identify the gaps and take appropriate responses.

39. We note with concern that since the COVID-19 pandemic, countries across the Euro-Asian LLDCs have experienced rising debt levels and reduced fiscal space. For LLDCs in the region, median total external debt (% of GNI) increased from 75% per cent to 82% between 2019 and 2021, continuing a trend of fast growth since 2014. Rising debt levels along with the increasing debt services payments will constrain fiscal space further in the future. Additionally, we note with alarm that growing debt burdens, limited fiscal space and increasing cost of borrowing can weigh down on investment and derail development in LLDCs.

40. The ratio of domestic revenue to GDP in 2020/2021 has remained relatively unchanged since 2014, and the tax-to-GDP ratio in almost all LLDCs remains below 20%, constraining savings mobilization efforts.

41. We note that the ODA receipts have largely remained at the same level since the adoption of the VPoA for majority of the LLDCs in the region. Specifically, ODA accounts for less than 5% in about 70% of these countries in the region. Globally, the ODA flows to LLDCs as a group increased from US\$25 billion in 2014 to US\$35 billion in 2020 as ODA flows increased during COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, ODA flows to LLDCs decreased by 15%. ODA flows continue to be concentrated to few LLDCs.

42. We recognize the importance of Aid for Trade (AfT) in improving the trade capacity of the LLDCs to benefit from global trade opportunities. We note that the AfT flows to Euro-Asian LLDCs showed fluctuations during the review period, with some LLDCs experiencing continuous improvements, while others remained stagnant or experienced declines.

43. We recognize that South-South cooperation has also been instrumental in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, where China and India have emerged as key partners in constructing and funding several infrastructure projects in some of the LLDCs in the region.

44. We note that FDI inflows to LLDCs have primarily been determined by the ample availability of natural resources such as fossil fuels, minerals and semi-precious stones that have high demand in global market. Apart from Mongolia, Euro-Asian LLDCs have not attracted significant FDI since the adoption of the VPoA. For South Asian LLDCs, FDI has consistently remained below one per cent of their GDP.

45. We note that remittances have played a key role in external resource mobilization efforts in some LLDCs in the region, with 7 countries receiving remittances equal to or more than 10 per cent of their GDP as of 2021. However, it is noteworthy that in many LLDCs with high remittance inflows, the proportion of remittances relative to their GDP has declined during the implementation period of the VPoA. We further note that weak banking and financial institutions proved insufficient to mediate savings and remittances into productive activities such as infrastructure development.

46. We note that during the review period, the LLDCs have been disproportionately affected by the climate change-- especially drought, desertification, land degradation and melting of glaciers--and their severe negative impacts, which have resulted in massive loss of life, food insecurity and famine, biodiversity loss, water scarcity, energy-related challenges, undermining the implementation of the VPOA and the achievement of its Sustainable Development Goals.

#### **Call for action:**

47. We commit to implementing the calls to action in the present outcome document, at the national, regional and global levels and to accelerate progress on agreed policies, programmes and investments, while acknowledging that sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery strategies will require scaled up capacity building and technical and financial assistance in order to effectively implement by LLDCs and transit developing countries.

48. We encourage LLDCs, transit countries and their development and trading partners to further enhance the implementation of their obligations under all relevant international, regional and sub-regional agreements on transit trade and transport facilitation, including the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), ESCAP Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, as well as other more tailored plurilateral integration (“economic partnerships”) agreements to enhance trade capacity, supply chain and trade resilience. We call on development partners, the private sector and relevant international, regional, and sub-regional organizations including ESCAP, WTO, UNCTAD, UNECE and ADB to increase their support to LLDCs and transit countries on a sustainable basis, to accelerate implementation of these agreements.

49. We encourage LLDCs to be proactive in indicating their capacity needs for Trade Facilitation Agreement measures notified under Category C to facilitate the acquisition of the necessary technical and capacity assistance. We call upon the donor countries to provide assistance and support for capacity building of the LLDCs to implement the relevant provisions of the Agreement.

50. We encourage non-WTO member Asian LLDCs to become members as soon as possible and call on international community to provide technical support and capacity-building assistance to expedite their accession efforts.

51. We call upon the members of the World Trade Organization to make a strong commitment to enhancing effective, non-discriminatory and equitable participation of the LLDCs in the multilateral trading system. We further call on enhanced market access including through reducing or eliminating non-tariff barriers to trade, particularly SPS and TBTs, in key markets for LLDCs, addressing tariff escalations, and the elimination of trade barriers that are inconsistent with WTO Agreements.

52. We emphasize the need for enhancing cross-border collaboration between the landlocked developing countries and transit countries in order to promote sustainable, inclusive, affordable, and resilient regional and global transport systems and value chains.

53. We recognize that COVID-19 has led to a surge in e-commerce and that the growth in e-commerce provides international trade opportunities including new market opportunities for LLDCs. However, LLDCs, due to their limited trade capacity and infrastructural bottlenecks could not reap the benefits offered by e-commerce. We call on the development and trading partners and relevant international organizations to provide financial and technical assistance to promote e-commerce in LLDCs including through capacity building and developing the necessary framework and improving digital infrastructure, as well as digital skills.

54. We recognize that the Fourth Industrial Revolution – associated with rapid technological change and digitalization – has a profound impact on the way we produce, transport and trade. Digitalization has transformed the way services are supplied, which is having a transformative impact upon how services trade is framed within the multilateral trading system. Digital trade in services is also among the most dynamic sectors in the global economy. This can facilitate LLDCs participation in international trade, especially by helping to overcome traditional trade barriers and to move more commerce online. However, despite the tech development, barriers to digital trade continue to exist, especially in LLDCs. International community should ensure the roll out of affordable ICT infrastructure and digital eco-systems and adapt the education

system to develop the work force needed for the digital economy, especially through STEM education at the tertiary level.

55. We encourage LLDCs to promote greater use of technology-driven and ICT-based solutions to trade facilitation, including introduction of paperless trade, automation of customs procedures and clearance systems, and implementation of single window environment. We recognize that the future of AI seems to be promising and have a great potential to help solve LLDCs' challenges in trade and transit facilitation and advance the achievement SDGs. However, without robust broadband connectivity, the development and expansion of the digital components of AI would be much more difficult. Financial and technical assistance and technology transfer is fundamentally important in this respect.

56. We recommend LLDCs and transit countries to improve and streamline customs administrations by reducing the number of documents required for exporting/importing and harmonizing them with international standards in order to reduce trade costs and improve export competitiveness.

57. We encourage LLDCs and transit countries in the region to continue to actively participate in the development of multimodal transport corridors and call on development partners to provide support for the development and maintenance of efficient and effective transport linkages, as well as smooth implementation of agreed-upon legal frameworks, transit standards and policies, safety and security measures, and transport and trade facilitation measures. UNECE, ESCAP, WTO, UNCTAD and other relevant partners are invited to provide further technical support.

58. We encourage the use of available innovative approaches such as electronic TIR procedure (e-TIR), use of electronic consignment notes (e-CMR), Unified Railway Law (URL) to comprehensively address transit, transport and trade facilitation issues, and call on the international community to support LLDCs in overcoming the constraints arising from rising transport and logistics costs.

59. We encourage stronger collaboration between the LLDCs and their neighbouring transit countries to collect data to monitor and address cross-border trade and transit challenges effectively, particularly for the corridors where the VPoA targets have not been yet achieved by using UNECE/ESCWA/ECLAC Sustainable Inland Transport Connectivity Indicators (SITCIN), the ESCAP Time/Cost Distance methodology and/or WCO Time Release Studies.

60. We encourage LLDCs and transit countries to increase cooperation in transit facilitation including simplified and harmonized visa systems and simplifying and streamlining the rules and regulations for cross-border movement of goods, including the full and effective implementation of international conventions and bilateral, sub-regional and regional agreements.

61. We encourage LLDCs to substantially increase their investments in transport infrastructure development and maintenance. Opportunities should be explored for forging greater regional and South-South cooperation in raising resources and systematic exchange of knowledge and experience for infrastructure development, promoting regional and sub-regional connectivity and structural transformation. Additionally, we advocate for the systematic application of South-South and triangular cooperation approaches to amplify the impact of opportunities arising from this exchange.



62. We call on the international community particularly the international and regional financial institutions, the UN system and other development partners to strengthen their financial and technical assistance programs for improving the institutional capacities of the LLDCs to formulate and implement bankable infrastructure development projects more effectively and efficiently. In this regard, Euro-Asian countries, regional and subregional organizations in the EATL region, private sector and international financial institutions should make the best of use of the on-going UNECE efforts regarding the establishment of the International Transport Infrastructure Observatory.

63. We call for increased investment to address problems of rail infrastructure, aging port infrastructure, inefficiencies of cargo handling services, long ship turnaround and long container dwell time, lack of space and congestions at ports and on access routes at seaport terminals. Measures should also be strengthened in integrating the road and rail network with dry ports.

64. We call for increased investments to improve air transport connectivity and airline industry in general, as a driver of other sectors including tourism. We call upon the international community including the UN system and other international and regional organizations to provide support towards the recovery of the air transport industry which is faster and offer LLDCs with direct access to international markets.

65. We encourage LLDCs to further strengthen their energy and ICT infrastructure and connectivity. While access to energy and ICT services is important, equally important is the issue of affordability particularly in rural areas. Addressing affordability issues can significantly contribute to narrowing the digital divide.

66. We encourage LLDCs to establish a conducive environment that enables them to harness the advantages of the digital economy and digital trade. We call upon the development and trading partners and ESCAP, UNECE, ITU, and other entities to increase their technical support to LLDCs to develop the necessary hard and soft ICT infrastructure as well as the necessary legal framework and policies to support ICT development including enhancement of digital skills, promotion of digital inclusion, increased adoption and utilization of ICT applications and services and to close the digital gap. Initiatives like the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway, which aims to enhance broadband internet availability and affordability in the region, should be reinforced.

67. We reaffirm our commitment to address climate change in accordance with the principle of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in light of different national circumstances, and call on development partners as well as relevant regional and international organizations to continue supporting climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts and strengthening resilience in Euro-Asian LLDCs.

68. We call upon all States and regional economic integration organizations to sign and ratify, approve or accept the Agreement<sup>2</sup> under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) and implementation of critical provisions, particularly those related to the principle of equity and of the common heritage of humankind, as well as provisions related to

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<sup>2</sup> A/77/L.82

the establishment of subsidiary bodies to guide the implementation. We call upon the international community to allocate financial resources and technical assistance to LLDCs including efficient, predictable and simplified access to the financial resources established under this Agreement and their access marine technologies<sup>3</sup>.

69. We urge developed country parties to the UNFCCC to fully deliver on the goal to deliver 100 billion United States dollars per year urgently and through to 2025 and emphasize the importance of transparency in the implementation of their pledges. We welcome the outcomes of COP-27 held in Sharm El-Sheikh, including the decision on funding arrangements for responding to loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change, including a focus on addressing loss and damage.

70. We agree on the need to consolidate positions in climate change discussions and formalize the LLDC Group under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process, in order to enhance our coordination, amplify our collective voice and facilitate collaboration with relevant stakeholders to advance the interests of LLDCs concerning climate-related issues, especially with respect to climate change vulnerability, mitigation and adaptation, and call on the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 28) to be held in the United Arab Emirates in 2023 to consider the impact of climate change on LLDCs in the deliberations and outcomes.

71. We recognize that more attention should be given to build climate- resilient infrastructure as transport, energy, and ICT infrastructure have become increasingly vulnerable to the consequences of climate crisis.

72. We encourage LLDCs to ensure disaster and climate risk analysis becomes a fundamental part of infrastructure development and maintenance policies, plans, and programs. Additionally, we urge LLDCs to implement robust monitoring systems to ensure that transport, energy, and ICT projects strictly adhere to the guidelines and requirements necessary for constructing infrastructure resilient to climate change and other disasters. In this regard, we also invite climate finance providers to encourage allocation of more resources to ex ante instruments to increase resilience, including new financing approaches that incentivize disaster risk reduction and sustainable reduction of LLDCs' vulnerabilities to climate change and natural disasters.

73. We encourage regional and international development partners, UN organizations including ESCAP and UNECE and other international organizations to support the LLDCs and transit countries with technical, financial and capacity building support to advance their regional integration efforts and to provide a forum to share experiences on fostering broader regional integration.

74. We encourage LLDCs and transit countries to prioritize production of statistics with significant improvement in the capacity of national statistical offices and call on development partners and international and regional organizations to support their efforts.

75. We encourage LLDCs and transit countries to create an enabling environment for investment and infrastructure operations into renewable energy resources, such as hydropower, wind and solar by strengthening regional and sub-regional cooperation.

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<sup>3</sup> Taken from A/CONF.232/2023/4

76. We encourage the region's LLDCs to continue formulating policies and strategies aimed diversifying their export structure, reducing their reliance on commodity exports, and adding value to their products, particularly in the manufacturing, agriculture, ICT and tourism.

77. We encourage Euro-Asian LLDCs to adopt effective tourism development strategies including undertaking additional marketing efforts, reducing costs, improving the quality of services, developing and maintaining tourism infrastructure, simplifying visa processes, ensuring quality services, safety, and security, and enhancing human resources through vocational education, training, and capacity building, and facilitating local supply sourcing and to promote linkages between the tourism sector and local suppliers.

78. We encourage Euro-Asian LLDCs to take concrete initiatives to foster productive capacities and facilitate structural transformation such as enabling policies to enhance science, research, development and innovation capacity, incubate high tech parks and design favourable policies to attract talents and human capital and FDI towards higher value-added activities, and sectors such as manufacturing. This could help prevent and mitigate the risk of further de-industrialization of the region's LLDCs' economies.

79. We take note of scientific research undertaken by the International Think Tank for LLDCs, based in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, encourage the International Think Tank to continue to undertake its role of supporting the development efforts of the LLDCs and urge those LLDCs that have not yet done so to ratify, at their earliest convenience, the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of an International Think Tank for LLDCs. We call upon relevant international and regional organizations including UN-OHRLLS, UN-ESCAP, UNCTAD, UNDP, WTO, and other relevant stakeholders, including research institutions, think tanks, to support and strengthen collaboration on research and capacity building with the International Think Tank on all the priority areas of the next programme of action and foster its coherence with the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

80. We encourage LLDCs to make efforts to increase labour productivity and industrialize agriculture, including by modernizing the sector through mechanization, access to affordable finance, promoting agribusiness and agro-processing- through backward and forward linkages among manufacturing, agriculture, and services sectors by linking small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to the supply chains and production networks. In addition to facilitating access to finance and easing ways to conduct business, it is critical to build domestic entrepreneurial capabilities.

81. We call on UNCTAD, ITC, WTO, UNIDO, UNDP and other international and regional organizations to provide support to the LLDCs, with a regional lens, in advancing structural economic transformation, developing a strong industrial base and diversification of export base and attracting investment, including through transfer of relevant technologies and support in developing their productive capacities, as well as foster formal and decent employment.

82. We urge LLDCs to incentivize the private sector, especially in sectors of comparative advantages. This involves implementing complementary trade, investment, and industrial policies and strategies, such as targeted tax incentives, or improved access to low-cost finance for SMEs. We also encourage LLDCs to increase in R&D investment to promote innovation, and investment in education and health sectors to boost the capacity of the economy to sustain progress and prosperity.

83. We encourage the LLDCs to strengthen their efforts in raising domestic savings, including through carrying out reforms in tax administration, digitalization of tax collection system, broadening the tax base and strengthening domestic capital markets. We also encourage LLDCs to explore new and innovative financing mechanisms to raise capital for development including accessing the global climate funds and mobilizing resources through issuance of green bonds and other instrument.

84. We reiterate our call on donor countries to fulfill their ODA commitments, and further urge them to systematically take into account the special needs and challenges of LLDCs that fall into the category of middle-income countries, where appropriate. We also call upon the development partners to provide enhanced financial and technical support to the LLDCs that will graduate from their LDC status in the near term and lose preferential trade schemes and other special and differential treatments.

85. We underline the urgent need for revitalizing infrastructure investment in LLDCs in an inclusive, accessible and affordable way to meet the financing gap in developing modern and sustainable infrastructure, including digital infrastructure and InfraTech investments to narrow the digital divide between LLDCs and the rest of the world. In this regard, we call for establishing a “Sustainable Infrastructure Investment Support Facility” for LLDCs leveraging the investment platforms that have been created, both in the World Bank, under the G20, Regional Development Banks and other forums, as well as leveraging the participation of the private sector.

86. We call upon International Monetary Fund and World Bank Group and other multilateral and regional development banks to continue to provide technical and financial assistance, including access to grants and concessional resources for investment in critically needed infrastructure and development projects to avoid further indebtedness. Furthermore, FDI, public-private partnerships, blended finance need to be utilized more effectively in promoting growth and structural change in the LLDCs.

87. We welcome the continued support provided to LLDCs by ESCAP and UNECE, working with other key regional partners, in the efforts to realize sustainable, inclusive development and ultimately to meet the priorities of the next programme of action. We urge them to enhance supports towards the achievement of the development agenda of Euro-Asian LLDCs, through development planning, macroeconomic policy and economic governance, and public finance.

88. We emphasize the role of South-South and triangular cooperation as channel for integrated support and urge the facilitation of UN-OHRLLS, UNOSSC, and the Regional Economic Commissions, among others, in line with their mandates.

89. We urge developing countries in the region and beyond, consistent with their capabilities and guided by the spirit of solidarity with LLDCs, to provide support for the development of the next Programme of Action for the LLDCs in mutually agreed areas of cooperation, and in line with the outcomes of the Second High-Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation as a complement to but not a substitute for North-South cooperation and to support its implementation.

90. We request the UN-OHRLLS in close cooperation and coordination with the relevant United Nations system and other international organizations, United Nations Resident

coordinators to extend necessary support to the LLDCs in the implementation of the new programme of action in coherence with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and building on the achievement and lessons learnt from the Vienna Programme of Action and other development frameworks, through raising global awareness, mobilizing international support and resources in favor of the LLDCs, building multistakeholder partnerships and reaching out to all stakeholders, including by establishing partnerships with civil society and the private sector, to enhance support for the LLDCs. In this regard, we strongly urge the Secretary-General and the Member States to strengthen the UN-OHRLLS to enable it to provide substantive support to LLDCs in their pursuit to meaningfully engage in the intergovernmental discussions and implement the programme of action for LLDCs and the 2030 Agenda.

91. We stand ready to partner with all relevant stakeholders to work towards addressing the interlinked challenges faced by LLDCs. The preparatory process of the Third UN Conference for LLDCs, other major events to be held in the course of the year, such as the SDG Summit, the High-Level Dialogue on Financing for Development, and COP28, present us with opportunities to work towards a transformative successor programme of action to the VPOA, as it is our mutual interest to do so.

92. We note the importance of mainstreaming new priorities into national development and call on UN-OHRLLS to provide support including through conducting training on mainstreaming of the new programme of action for LLDCs at the national level.

93. We stress the need for a robust follow up and review mechanism on the implementation of the new PoA that will monitor and track implementation and achievement of goals and call on UN-OHRLLS to support these efforts.

94. We take note with appreciation the ongoing preparations for LLDC3. We welcome, with warm appreciations, the decision of the Government of Rwanda to host the Third United Nations Conference on LLDCs in Kigali from 18 to 21 June 2024 at the Heads of States and Governments level. We will participate in this Conference at the highest possible level including Heads of States. We call upon all States Members of the United Nations, and members of specialized agencies, in particular landlocked and transit developing countries and donor countries, as well as of the United Nations system and international and regional organizations and other relevant stakeholders, to actively participate in the Conference, at the highest level possible.

95. We submit this outcome to the Intergovernmental Preparatory Committee Session and will be inputs to the outcome document of the Third UN Conference of the LLDCs.

### **Vote of thanks**

96. We express gratitude to the substantive and organizational support of the Office of the High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, in collaboration with ESCAP and UNECE.

97. We note with appreciation the active participation and substantive contributions of the LLDCs, transit developing countries, development partners, UN system organizations, multilateral and regional development banks, other international and regional organizations, development partners, the private sector and other stakeholders.