



# General Assembly

Seventy-fourth session

**40<sup>th</sup>** plenary meeting

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Official Records

*President:* Mr. Muhammad-Bande ..... (Nigeria)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Shava (Zimbabwe), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

## High-level plenary meeting devoted to the midterm review on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024

### Agenda item 21 (continued)

#### (b) Follow-up to the second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries Draft resolution A/74/L.7

**The Acting President:** The Assembly will continue its high-level plenary meeting devoted to the midterm review on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024. Before we begin with the list of speakers, I would like to address some important organizational matters pertaining to the conduct of the plenary meeting.

As announced in the *Journal of the United Nations*, I would like to remind all speakers that statements should be limited to three minutes when speaking in their national capacity and five minutes when speaking on behalf of a group. As delegations will recall, in its resolution 72/313, of 17 September 2018, the General Assembly called for strict adherence by all speakers to the time limits in the Assembly, in particular during high-level meetings.

Participants with longer statements, however, are encouraged to read a shorter version of their text and to submit their full-length statements to the Secretariat for posting on the PaperSmart portal. Also in accordance with resolution 72/313, the “all protocols observed” principle is recommended, whereby participants are encouraged to refrain from listing standard protocol expressions during their statements, which eats into their time.

Bearing in mind the time limit, I would like to appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at a reasonable pace so that interpretation into the official United Nations languages may be provided properly. I appeal for the cooperation of all speakers in observing the time limits for statements so that all those inscribed on the list of speakers can be heard in a timely manner.

**Mr. Chumakov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would first like to thank the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States for the preparation and substantive content of this meeting, which is important for mobilizing international cooperation and support in stepping up multilateral efforts to meet the goals and objectives of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024. We are very pleased with the results of the regional preparatory meetings in Africa, Latin America, Europe and Asia. The national reports of individual countries have also contributed significantly to today’s discussion.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).

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As a major country of transit, Russia actively contributes to achieving the goals of the Vienna Programme of Action, including through the promotion of an entire package of measures to develop transport in Eurasia. We are open to such joint work and are already implementing a number of joint projects in that regard. One of them, the North-South trade route, will pass through our territory from the countries of Europe through the Caspian region to the States of Central Asia and Iran and India. The other, the Europe-Western China route, will connect Russian ports on the Baltic Sea to ports on the Yellow Sea. Another prospective route is the Arctic-Siberia-Asia. The idea is to connect the northern sea route ports through eastern Siberia, which is the centre of Eurasia, to the ports of the Pacific and Indian Oceans by transport routes.

We consider the further modernization of the Trans-Siberian Railway, the largest rail network in the world at a total length of 9,288 kilometres, especially important. The main objective in that regard is to increase its carrying capacity to 180 million tons by 2024. We are actively developing international cooperation within the framework of intergovernmental agreements on the Asian Highway Network, the Trans-Asian Railway and the Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports. In September of last year, the Intergovernmental Agreement on International Road Transport between Russia, China and Mongolia entered into force, enabling the creation of a new economic corridor linking the three countries.

Russia's unique geographical position makes it objectively possible for us to act as a connecting link in Eurasia's transport infrastructure and participate in the establishment of global transit transport systems that meet the needs of landlocked developing countries, among others. We would like to point out that the Belt and Road Initiative of the President of China corresponds to Russia's idea of forming a major Eurasian partnership. It provides for the integration of integrations, closely linking various integration processes in Eurasia.

In conclusion, we would like to point to the valuable expertise potential of the United Nations regional economic commissions, as well as the relevant specialized regional organizations, such as the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Eurasian Economic Union, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization, in strengthening global transport connectivity.

**Ms. Masilo-Motsamai** (Lesotho): It is a great honour and privilege to address this gathering whose intention is to review the progress that we have made at the midpoint of the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024.

Lesotho aligns itself with the statements made by the observer of the State of Palestine, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and the representative of Paraguay, on behalf the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries (see A/74/PV.39).

I would also like to congratulate Bhutan and Austria for their work on the political declaration of the High-level Midterm Review on the Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, which we adopted earlier as resolution 74/15 (see A/74/PV.39). I also wish to express our great appreciation to the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States for the excellent manner in which it continues to coordinate and follow up on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action.

During the period under review, Lesotho was implementing its national strategic development plan I, a five-year medium-term plan based on lessons learned. We have now developed our national strategic development plan II, which covers the period 2018-2019 to 2022-23 and is intended to achieve our long-term national, regional and international development frameworks. Likewise, the priorities of the Vienna Programme of Action are mainstreamed in our national strategic development plan II with a view to enhancing economic competitiveness and improving trade facilitation for job creation.

On trade matters, Lesotho's exports have not changed much over the years. Our export products are mainly diamonds, textiles, wool and mohair. In 2018 we established the Lesotho Standard Institution. We recently finalized our trade policy framework, with support from the European Union-Southern African Development Community Trade Related Facility, and are working on our development export strategy for identifying sectors for growth in order to integrate domestic firms into regional and global value chains.

Lesotho has ratified the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement, notified Categories A, B and C and established a national trade facilitation

committee that is currently capacitated through the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development Empowerment Programme. Our Government has also taken advantage of regional integration to lower bandwidth prices for our citizens and has introduced an e-Government project to increase Government efficiency and the delivery of public services.

In conclusion, we are hopeful that in the remaining time the priorities of the Vienna Programme of Action will be met and duly reported at the much-anticipated United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries to be held in 2024.

**Ms. Tesfamariam (Eritrea):** My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the State of Palestine on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

At the outset, I would like to acknowledge and thank my colleagues the Permanent Representatives of Bhutan and Austria for their great work on the facilitation of the political declaration of the High-level Midterm Review on the Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, adopted in resolution 74/15.

It is a great honour for my delegation to take part in this meeting and make a modest contribution to the discussion. As a country of transit, we recognize and appreciate the importance of the crucial work that lies ahead in order for us to implement the Vienna Programme of Action, which was drafted and adopted under the common understanding that there was a need for an inventive, universal and results-oriented programme of action. Transformative, innovative and strengthened partnerships with landlocked developing countries can create a basis for and boost local, regional and international trade, essentially changing the economies of both transit and landlocked countries and realizing all-encompassing sustainable growth. The question that we should all ask ourselves now is how we can deliver on the commitment that we all agreed to and, more importantly, how much of that promise we will be able to deliver within these remaining five years.

There are 32 landlocked countries in the world, of which 17 are least developed countries, some with large populations. The physical, economic and infrastructure challenges that landlocked developing countries face are often compounded by the fact that their transit neighbours, like Eritrea, are also least developed and are dealing with similar human, infrastructural and

technical challenges. We understand what it takes to address the development challenges of landlocked developing countries and will not repeat what has already been said by my colleagues today.

The region of the Horn of Africa has gone through tremendous transformations in the past year and a half. The new developments have shaped the momentum for regional economic integration, including the implementation of the priorities set in the Vienna Programme of Action. The region is determined and committed to working together to transform itself into a new frontier for the global economy. That is the promise we have made to the 120 million people who live in the region and who have endured decades of war, turmoil and displacement.

Addressing the implementation of this will require eliminating the obstacles that are preventing the millions in landlocked developing countries from achieving their aspirations for a better and higher standard of living. It will require revamping unfair global trading systems, meeting the commitments to special development needs and promoting these countries' effective integration into the global economy and major economic regimes, whose prescriptive and dominant modus operandi continues to undermine the ability of States and regions to chart their own policies. It is vital that we acknowledge that every region is bestowed with diverse challenges and opportunities and ought to be addressed as such.

Despite the seemingly insurmountable challenges it has faced over the last 20 years, including war and the imposition of an unjust nine-year-long United Nations sanctions regime, Eritrea set its development priorities to include infrastructure development and rigorously pursued this priority by mobilizing its internal resources to connect just about every village and town in the country with roads and feeder roads, increasing access to education, health care and transportation in remote areas of the country. In addition to refurbishing and rehabilitating existing roads to neighbouring States, it has also constructed new roads to connect with the Sudan and Ethiopia.

There are major developments in infrastructure in Eritrea today, including the rehabilitation of the strategic ports and roads in three key economic regions of the country. Eritrea's two free-trade zones are also being outfitted with the necessary infrastructure to accommodate local and regional exports, establishing

the development of foreign-trade links and serving as a conduit for local products like fruit, livestock, fish and minerals. Africa, in general, and East Africa, in particular, will benefit from the development of Eritrea's strategic ports.

Eritrea is committed to the Vienna Programme of Action so that landlocked developing countries and transit countries can achieve the envisioned global development goals together.

**Mrs. Taremba** (Zimbabwe): On behalf of the delegation of Zimbabwe, I wish to thank the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session for convening this important high-level plenary meeting of the Assembly on the midterm review of the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024.

We align ourselves with the statements delivered on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries by the observer of Palestine and the representative of Paraguay, respectively (see A/74/PV.39).

It is now five years since the adoption of the Vienna Programme of Action and four years since the historic adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals. The convening of this high-level meeting is both timely and relevant, as it allows us to take stock of how far we have progressed in and the gaps remaining with regard to the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. The political declaration that we have adopted today gives us impetus to the implementation of the Programme in the five years that remain before 2024 (resolution 74/15).

We note the progress that has been made in several key areas outlined in the Programme of Action — the harmonization of transport and transit policies and procedures with transit countries, the development of transport infrastructure and the expansion of trade. There has also been an increase in bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation, especially with regard to trade-facilitation infrastructure. Nevertheless, the global economic scenario continues to be extremely challenging, especially for landlocked developing countries. While these countries have the primary responsibility for their own development, they cannot meet their development objectives on their own, even with their best efforts. It is therefore important to

address the means of implementation with respect to the needs of landlocked developing countries, as they require sustained and unwavering cooperation in terms of financial and technical support.

As we begin the journey of the second period of five years of the implementation the Vienna Programme of Action, we must ensure that it is transformative and produces tangible benefits and improved livelihoods for all. In this regard, it will be essential for the international community to pay greater attention to addressing the needs of countries facing unique development challenges.

Like many other landlocked developing countries, Zimbabwe is working tirelessly to fulfil the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achieve its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We have made substantive progress towards the implementation of the SDGs through our well-planned and deliberate programmes geared towards the overarching goal of eradicating poverty in all its forms. In October 2018, the Government of Zimbabwe launched its development plan, the Transitional Stabilization Programme, which outlines the socioeconomic, corporate and government reforms that are key in facilitating the realization of the country's vision. Accordingly, Zimbabwe continues to attach high importance to the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, which is a crucial component of the 2030 Agenda. This approach is buttressed by our mantra "Zimbabwe is open for business", in which, under the new leadership of President Emmerson Mnangagwa, we have shifted attention to a focus on policies aimed at aiding the country's economic growth.

In Zimbabwe, our experience has shown that bilateral and regional cooperation plays a crucial role in addressing the impact of landlockedness. Connectivity with the subregion and the African region is the key. In this context, Zimbabwe is implementing a national policy on transforming itself from being landlocked into being "landlinked". Zimbabwe has identified transport and connectivity networks as crucial elements in its national development plans.

Given that Zimbabwe is at the very heart of the North-South transport corridor, it has a natural geographical advantage by virtue of being centrally situated. That makes us the gateway to and from the North. We border three countries with coastlines — Mozambique, South Africa and Namibia. We are actively engaged



in the relevant multilateral processes aimed at further developing transit corridors.

At a broader regional level, Zimbabwe has played an active part in the process of ensuring long-term sustainability and growth beyond reliance on the export of primary commodities. As the Chairperson of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in 2015, Zimbabwe spearheaded the adoption of the SADC industrialization strategy, which seeks to engender major economic and technological transformation at national and regional levels.

The country's efforts are taking place against the backdrop of very challenging conditions, however, owing to the sanctions imposed on the country by some States Members of the United Nations. The sanctions have denied our country access to development finance and credit facilities of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The unjustified and oppressive illegal sanctions continue to cause untold suffering to the ordinary people of our country.

The sanctions' direct and indirect debilitating impacts have equally been felt by our neighbours. On 18 August 2019, the SADC Heads of State and Government summit meeting in Dar-es-Salaam took a bold and historic decision when it declared 25 October as the day on which the entire SADC region would collectively voice its disapproval and condemnation of the illegal sanctions imposed on our country. The SADC decision was also welcomed by the Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement at their summit in Baku.

Our challenges have also been exacerbated by the El Niño-induced drought of 2015 and 2016 and again in 2018 and 2019.

In conclusion, Zimbabwe stands ready to exchange relevant experience and best practices with other landlocked developing countries and to further strengthen cooperation aimed at addressing the existing sustainable development challenges we face as such countries.

**Mr. Ibragimov (Uzbekistan):** First of all, let me commend the President for convening this high-level meeting, devoted to the midterm review of the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 in order to address remaining challenges and

identify opportunities for achieving targets set forth in the Vienna Programme of Action.

Since the adoption of the Vienna Programme of Action, Uzbekistan has been taking coherent steps towards its implementation in six major areas. Today, I would like to share with the Assembly information on Uzbekistan's efforts in promoting one of the key priorities of the Programme, namely, regional cooperation in Central Asia, which contributes to the attainment not only of the targets identified in the Vienna Programme of Action, but also of the Sustainable Development Goals overall.

The current situation in our region differs from its situation not long ago. Thanks to their joint efforts, the Central Asian countries were able, within a short period of time, to create a fundamentally new political environment, raise the level of political trust and strengthen traditionally friendly and good-neighbourly relations among themselves, which has enabled the region to significantly expand multifaceted cooperation. In particular, agreements with neighbouring countries allowed Uzbekistan to open dozens of checkpoints on the borders, liberalize the visa regime and streamline transit procedures. Over the past few years, Uzbekistan's trade turnover with the States of Central Asia has increased twofold and the number of joint ventures has increased by a factor of four.

Upon the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan, His Excellency Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, consultative meetings of the Heads of State of the Central Asian countries were first convened. The first such meeting took place in March 2018 in Nur-Sultan, and the second was held just last week in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan. During his address at the second consultative meeting, President Mirziyoyev identified opportunities for deepening regional cooperation in a number of perspective areas that are fully aligned with the Vienna Programme of Action.

First, he proposed expanding cooperation in the trade, economic investment, transport, communication and energy sectors. In particular, Uzbekistan proposed the convening of a Central Asian investment forum and a first meeting of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the five countries of the region, as well as the creation of a regional council on transport communications.

Secondly, he highlighted the need to hold regular meetings on various levels to discuss issues pertaining to advancing regional collaboration.

Thirdly, he stressed the importance of jointly addressing ecological and water issues in Central Asia. In order to attract innovative technologies, promote the principles of a green economy and prevent desertification, Uzbekistan proposed taking advantage of opportunities available in the country through the Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea Region, which was created last year. From Uzbekistan's perspective, bringing these initiatives to fruition would have a positive impact on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action.

When we speak about Central Asia, we cannot help but mention Afghanistan — a country that we consider to be historically part of the single cultural-civilizational space of the region. A stable Afghanistan is a prerequisite for the sustainable development of Central Asia as a whole. Therefore, Uzbekistan today provides comprehensive assistance for the economic recovery of Afghanistan and its involvement in such regional projects as the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Pipeline, the Central Asia South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project, the construction of a railroad corridor from Mazar-e-Sharif to Herat and a highway from Mazar-e-Sharif to Peshawar through Kabul, as well as the practical implementation of various initiatives vital for Afghanistan in the areas of transport, energy, trade and education.

Another important area where facilitation is necessary is trade relations. Accordingly, Uzbekistan has established an international logistical centre at the border with Afghanistan, the Termez Cargo Centre, which is set to assist increasing export-import and transit cargo flow.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that in Central Asia today, we are firmly convinced that by deepening economic and trade ties, streamlining transport-transit networks and advancing infrastructure development, we can achieve more substantial results that will ensure the prosperity, well-being and future of our population of 70 million. Uzbekistan therefore remains strongly committed to continuing its close cooperation with neighbouring States and other transit-corridor countries to successfully implement the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked

Developing Countries, in particular, and the Sustainable Development Goals, as a whole.

**Mr. Sukhee** (Mongolia): My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the observer of Palestine and the representative of Paraguay, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, respectively (see A/74/PV.39).

At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session for convening this important high-level midterm review. Today's global review provides us with an opportunity to chart a way forward for the full and effective implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked developing countries for the Decade 2014-2024.

Landlocked developing countries continue to face considerable challenges inherently linked to their geographical handicap and remain largely marginalized in global trade. With an emphasis on connectivity in policy, trade, finance, infrastructure and people-to-people links, regional endeavours have played a significant role for the development of landlocked developing countries. Meanwhile, we need to undertake in-depth analyses to identify the constraints and challenges these countries face and to decide on concrete actions we should take to overcome them.

I am pleased to note that, 13 years ago, my country proposed the establishment of an international think tank for landlocked developing countries. Today, the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries, a centre of excellence, is the leading intergovernmental organization dedicated to landlocked developing countries.

Mongolia attaches the highest importance to addressing the diverse needs and challenges faced by landlocked developing countries, as outlined in the Vienna Programme of Action, including structural rigidities, a small share in global trade, remoteness, insufficient infrastructure development and limited resilience to the impact of internal and external shocks. I would like to take this opportunity to briefly mention some of my country's activities designed to further the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action.

A national working group was established in Mongolia this year, with the enrolment of all relevant stakeholders, to review and coordinate the national implementation of the Programme. In the past few

years, Mongolia has achieved substantial results by developing its domestic soft and hard infrastructures. Specifically, we have successfully connected all of our country's provinces through energy transmission lines, internet communication networks and around 6,000 kilometres of paved roads.

With regard to infrastructure development, the President of Mongolia has called for the establishment of a multilateral institution for electricity-grid interconnections in North-East Asia, which will provide a number of economic, social and environmental benefits to this subregion.

In addition, my country has concluded several agreements with neighbouring countries, including an agreement on access to and from the sea and transit transport by Mongolia through China's territory, the Intergovernmental Agreement between the Governments of Mongolia and the Russian Federation on terms for Rail Freight Transit Transportation, and the Intergovernmental Agreement on International Road Transport along the Asian Highway Network, connecting Mongolia, the Russian Federation and China.

The Mongolian Government is also implementing the Mongolia-Russia-China economic corridor programme that aligns our own road development programme with the Belt and Road Initiative. In this regard, we are planning to implement 32 major projects to increase trade turnover, develop infrastructure, ensure competitiveness in goods supply and facilitate cross-border transportation. Under this programme, we have also introduced several initiatives, including a trade-facilitation initiative for Brazil, the Russian Federation, India and China.

My country welcomes the active work of the Geneva-based Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, including its recent initiative to improve the chairmanship mechanism and its communiqué on the holding of this midterm review. It is also vitally important to promote cooperation between landlocked developing countries and transit countries as well as among landlocked developing countries.

In that regard, my Government believes that it is necessary to establish an informal group of landlocked developing countries with the further aim of establishing a formal group of landlocked countries in the World Trade Organization (WTO) to promote active collaboration among landlocked developing countries so as to identify the common challenges they face in

the implementation of the World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade Facilitation, which is an important milestone for the multilateral trading system.

The next Ministerial Conference of the WTO will, for the first time, be hosted in a landlocked developing country. We should therefore use this momentum and work towards tangible outcomes for the benefits of landlocked developing countries, including the possible establishment of a landlocked countries group in the WTO with a specific programme of work. Mongolia is ready to collaborate with interested landlocked countries to establish such a group in Geneva.

Over the past five years we have learned that ensuring inclusiveness and developing innovative methods of financing are imperative in order to advance the overarching goals of the Vienna Programme of Action. It is also imperative, for the remaining five years, to accelerate the full and effective implementation of the Programme in order to fulfil the commitments made and strengthen the global partnership.

I wish to seize this opportunity to invite Member States and development partners to support the activities of the international think tank, and I call on all landlocked developing countries that have not yet ratified the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of an International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries to do so at their earliest convenience.

**Mr. Skoknic Tapia (Chile)** (*spoke in Spanish*): Chile attaches great importance to the midterm review of the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action as a forum for addressing issues of common interest to transit countries and landlocked developing countries, as well as the international community as a whole.

In that context, we believe that the spirit of this meeting is to grapple with common challenges from a solidarity-based and united perspective. We are grateful for the efforts of Paraguay, Austria and Bhutan and the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States in the preparation of this special meeting and of the Political Declaration of the High-level Midterm Review on the Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, adopted this morning as resolution 74/15.

Chile, in its capacity as a transit country, grants, on an ongoing basis, extremely broad and free trade transit rights across its territory, throughout Pacific ports and in the customs arena to its closest landlocked neighbour, Bolivia, under the Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1904, which demarcated the borders between both countries. Moreover, it provides free warehousing in Chilean ports as well as preferential tariffs, certain tax exemptions and an oil pipeline on Chilean territory for the inflow and outflow of fuel. It also carries out connectivity projects to assist Bolivia that include a focus on road, port and border infrastructure, which has also made a considerable contribution to achieving one of the most relevant pillars of the Vienna Programme of Action.

We would stress that the rights granted by this free transit regime must be exercised in accordance with international law and the domestic legal system of the transit country, without undermining fundamental aspects such as public safety, environmental integrity and compliance with the minimum requirements for international transport, in keeping with the aims of the International Land Transport Agreement.

Chile has met several of the objectives of the Vienna Programme of Action. For example, we have a free warehouse in Antofagasta for Paraguay, the other landlocked developing country in our region. We also offer additional economic benefits with respect to Bolivian imports to our country, enshrined in supplementary economic agreement No. 22, signed between Chile and Bolivia in 1993.

We also reiterate our interest in cooperating in the creation of a bi-oceanic corridor joining the centre-west region of Brazil and ports in northern Chile, crossing Paraguay and Argentina. This would foster Paraguay's outward-looking prospects towards the Asia-Pacific region and the landlocked provinces of Argentina and Brazil.

Moreover, Chile has been a party to the World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade Facilitation since October 2017, and in April of this year it created the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' national committee for trade facilitation, which aims to review and recommend related policies and projects.

Finally, Chile is committed to addressing the tremendous challenges ahead for landlocked developing countries and the Vienna Programme of Action, as reflected in our ongoing participation in meetings

convened to that end. We will continue to work towards developing closer and more effective partnerships that benefit our peoples, bridge gaps and allow us to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development's Sustainable Development Goals.

**Mr. Hilale (Morocco)** (*spoke in French*): The Kingdom of Morocco welcomes the convening of the high-level midterm review of the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, to which we attach particular importance.

The high-level meeting is an opportunity not only to assess the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action but also to recall, and draw the attention of the international community to, the urgent need for an ongoing, irreversible commitment to landlocked developing countries. It is also an opportunity to underscore the urgency of providing all the necessary support in order to enable those countries to overcome the various challenges that they face. We commend the efforts and the personal commitment to landlocked developing countries of the Secretary-General and the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

The Kingdom of Morocco has put strengthening its relationship and its partnerships with countries in special situations, including landlocked developing countries, especially in its African region, at the heart of its foreign policy. Morocco is fully invested, under the high-level leadership of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, in strengthening cooperation and exchanges with those countries through dynamic, solidarity-based and proactive South-South cooperation. The visits undertaken by His Majesty King Mohammed VI to several African countries, including landlocked countries such as Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mali, the Niger, Rwanda, South Sudan and Zambia, to name but a few, have given fresh momentum to cooperation and partnership with those countries.

Morocco's interest in landlocked developing countries and the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action was also demonstrated by the holding of the midterm review meeting of the Vienna Programme of Action for the African region in Marrakech, in March, in close collaboration with the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing



Countries and Small Island Developing States and the Economic Commission for Africa. The meeting provided an opportunity to assess the progress made by the African region over the past five years, identify the challenges faced and define measures to accelerate the implementation of the commitments made under the Vienna Programme of Action.

Landlocked countries, particularly in Africa, are making great efforts in terms of development, democratic governance and institutional modernization. However, the constraints resulting from their isolation continue to have an impact on their economic and social prospects. Morocco therefore reiterates its call to the international community to rely more than ever on North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation as tools for the successful implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action towards the holistic development of landlocked developing countries.

In addition, greater solidarity with landlocked countries is essential and urgent, I would even say imperative. The time has therefore come to transform the political will and the recommendations contained in the political declaration adopted today (resolution 74/15) into partnerships and concrete actions and initiatives. We would also like to stress that, as part of the repositioning of the United Nations development system, the new resident coordinators in landlocked countries should play a key role in accelerating the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action.

In conclusion, landlocked countries can have a bright future commensurate with their aspirations and potential. However, they cannot achieve that alone. That is the truth that must mobilize us all to give new impetus to cooperation for landlocked developing countries and to the implementation of the commitments of the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Kingdom of Morocco remains fully prepared to work with all development partners to fully support landlocked countries, including through South-South and triangular cooperation, in implementing the Vienna Programme of Action.

**Mr. De La Mora Salcedo** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico thanks the President for convening this midterm comprehensive review meeting of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024.

It is not a minor issue; we are talking about countries where more than 500 million people live,

but which today have minimal participation in the international trade system and are seriously affected by climate change. Being a developing country and not having direct access to the sea should not be an obstacle to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and its targets. That is why Mexico welcomes the fact that the Vienna Programme of Action as an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In connection with this midterm review, Mexico recognizes that landlocked developing countries face particular challenges that warrant special attention from the United Nations. My country is not part of this group of friendly countries, but it is no stranger to some of their challenges. We know first-hand the enormous cost of customs delays. We recognize that the renewal of border infrastructure and connectivity is synonymous with job creation and the reduction of inequalities. As a trading country, we still face challenges in terms of economic and commercial diversification.

Just as we are not oblivious to the challenges of landlocked developing countries, we are convinced that we cannot ignore multilateral solutions. We are currently witnessing a slowdown in global economic growth. In this context, it is necessary to rethink schemes to reduce the cost of trade, speed up trade and strengthen economic competitiveness.

Mexico agrees with the report of the Secretary-General (A/74/113) on the enormous potential of digital technologies to accelerate inclusive growth. At the same time, we recognize that the digital divide, particularly between urban and rural areas, is very pronounced in landlocked developing countries. We call for official development assistance and private investment to take advantage of the opportunities arising from technology. Remittances represent the largest source of international income for landlocked developing countries today, over and above foreign direct investment and official development assistance. Technology can reduce the cost of remittances and streamline their delivery. It is a vehicle for empowering sustainable development directly in communities. It is precisely there, at the local level, that we must ensure that no one is left behind.

This midterm review is the appropriate time to recognize the progress made by landlocked developing countries in fulfilling the 2030 Agenda. We see encouraging results on many indicators. The main challenge seems to be the speed of implementation.

Important advances have been made in terms of gender equality, reduction of infant mortality, access to water and sanitation and connectivity. In other words, many of those countries seem to be moving in the right direction. For the rest, we should support them to the best of our ability, whether through technical, scientific, South-South, triangular or other forms of cooperation.

The road map set out in the Vienna Programme of Action already is already showing very encouraging results, but efforts need to be redoubled. For example, Mexico welcomes the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area. As evidence of improved competitiveness, an African airline now operates a direct cargo flight between Addis Ababa and Mexico City. We are working enthusiastically to strengthen commercial ties with this great continent, as more exchanges of this kind help implement the Vienna Programme of Action.

In order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, it is essential that the Vienna Programme of Action be fully implemented. The isolation of world markets is not compatible with the vision of sustainable development promoted by the United Nations, nor are unilateral and coercive economic measures or the irresponsible exploitation of natural resources. Mexico sees landlocked developing countries as friends eager to participate actively in a global economy.

At this midterm review, Mexico's message is timely. We affirm our support for the Vienna Programme of Action, join efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda and support all the peoples and the Governments of landlocked developing countries in their laudable efforts to ensure well-being. They all have a reliable and supportive partner in Mexico.

**Ms. Wallace** (United States of America): It is an honour to be here today to review the progress made since the adoption of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024. On behalf of the United States, we are pleased to join consensus on the political declaration adopted earlier (resolution 74/15), and I extend our appreciation to the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, and the President of the General Assembly, for their leadership in coordinating this important midterm review.

The United States understands the challenges that landlocked developing countries face, including issues in the areas of transit policy, international trade and regional integration. Despite these challenges, we have seen progress by many countries. For example, sweeping reforms like the African Continental Free Trade Area, which entered into force this year, promised to open markets, lower barriers to trade and investment and lay the groundwork for greater competitiveness, trade diversification and economic growth for the 16 landlocked developing countries in Africa. We congratulate the African Union, its member States and those partners that have been working toward this achievement.

The United States understands that aid alone cannot resolve the challenges that the landlocked developing countries face. That is why agreements like the African Continental Free Trade Agreement are key. In every developing country in which we work, we must identify where public interventions are most appropriate and where there are opportunities for the private sector to lead. Development assistance is no substitute for economic growth led by private enterprise. Sustainable development requires that both the public and private sectors work together to identify and address development challenges, including in the poorest and most vulnerable countries in the world.

Additionally, lending and private investment is becoming increasingly accessible to developing countries. However, these inflows can come with such risks as a lack of transparency and unsustainable borrowing, to which countries with weak institutions, high levels of corruption and macroeconomic challenges are particularly vulnerable. That is why increased debt transparency and fiscal discipline, along with strong governance, are essential for landlocked developing countries.

Despite positive signs, we understand progress has been slow, uneven and insufficient for many. We applaud the efforts of this high-level midterm review to shed light on the challenges the landlocked developing countries face and to focus our efforts where the need is greatest.

We now take this opportunity to make important points of clarification on some of the language contained in the political declaration. With regard to references to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the World Trade

Organization, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the New Urban Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, we refer members to our global explanation of position delivered at the Second Committee on 21 November.

**Mr. García Moritán** (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to welcome the convening of this high-level midterm review meeting of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024. The Vienna Programme of Action is of great importance to our country, given that Argentina is a transit country for two neighbouring friendly countries, namely, Bolivia and Paraguay. Historically, Argentina has always adopted a collaborative and supportive attitude towards its two landlocked developing neighbours by undertaking a variety of measures and policies seeking to promote sustainable development in our region.

With regard to inland water transport, Argentina has developed an important joint project with Bolivia and Paraguay in the form of the Paraguay-Paraná waterway, which is aimed at advancing regional physical integration through operational improvements, seeking to improve the conditions of the 3,400 kilometres of navigable routes on these rivers. Argentina plays a fundamental role in this regard as it exercises exclusive jurisdiction over the 1,240 kilometres of the waterway that cross its territory. In this context, we have signed a series of international agreements, in particular an agreement on transportation via the Paraguay-Paraná waterway, which led to the establishment of a genuine normative system that regulates navigation along the waterway composed of additional protocols and regulations. Likewise, the agreements signed in 1969 and 1979 granted two areas in Rosario, in the province of Santa Fe in Argentina, to Bolivia and Paraguay so that they could operate duty-free port terminals.

Argentina and Paraguay recently established an official forum — the Bilateral Bureau for Navigation and River Affairs — to treat issues relating to navigation and waterways, and we have also taken the first steps to introduce a similar mechanism with Bolivia, which will enable us to find concrete solutions for these countries to minimize the negative impact of being landlocked. Additionally, Argentina has taken a series of measures that will benefit Bolivia and Paraguay by granting them access to overseas markets in more competitive conditions, namely, by expanding exemptions for vessels of more than 50 metres in length, reducing the

fees for ships transferring cargo and transporting it to or from distances greater than 300 kilometres by 90 per cent in the port of Buenos Aires and 99.2 per cent in other ports, and reimbursing 100 per cent of tariffs on ships, barges and tugs that operate between the port of Buenos Aires and Bolivia or Paraguay.

Within the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), various measures have been implemented in order to facilitate trade. The most recent of such measures was in 2018, when one of the MERCOSUR technical committees was granted an extension of its powers in order to enable it to develop a draft intra-MERCOSUR agreement on this matter. Once it enters into force, it will allow us to streamline and simplify procedures related to imports, exports and the transit of goods through the development and implementation of measures aimed at facilitating the free cross-border movement of goods, thereby promoting legitimate and safe trade.

In conclusion, my country wishes to reiterate its active support for the development of landlocked countries and full commitment to the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action.

**Mr. Amde** (Ethiopia): At the outset, I wish to thank the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session for convening this comprehensive high-level midterm review on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024. I also wish to thank the facilitators for their stewardship and leadership during the intergovernmental process resulting in the adoption of the political declaration (resolution 74/15).

My delegation aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries by the observer of the State of Palestine and the representative of Paraguay, respectively (see A/74/PV.39).

Since the adoption of the Vienna Programme of Action, my country has integrated and continued its implementation in line with our national development plans and priorities. While, as a landlocked country, we recognize that landlockedness presents a tremendous constraint on development, we have adopted policy measures that improve our manufacturing base and enhance our connectedness and competitiveness. In this respect, achieving inclusive and sustainable industrialization and building resilient infrastructure are among the priorities of the Ethiopian Government.

Based on our comparative advantage, we have given special attention to labour-intensive and light-manufacturing sectors, particularly agroprocessing, leather and textiles. We have also established industrial parks that simplify access to land and eliminate challenges to trade logistics and customs services. These policy actions are contributing to enhancing our global competitiveness and participation in the global value chain.

In addition, the Ethiopian Government has been making massive public investment in building infrastructure, with the objectives of enhancing our productive capacity and promoting regional integration.

Encouraging progress has been registered in expanding road, railway and air transport services. We have also been working with neighbouring transit countries to establish and maintain effective transit systems on the basis of our common interests. Furthermore, we recently took bold and historic decisions that would, among other things, diversify our sea outlets and further promote regional integration, in addition to the decision to join the African Continental Free Trade Area, as well as the preparations made to join the World Trade Organization in the near future.

In order to maintain our achievements, the Government is formulating a 10-year perspective plan, lasting until 2030, focusing on structural economic transformation and ensuring inclusive and sustainable development. The Sustainable Development Goals and other global programmes, such as the Vienna Programme of Action, will be fully and effectively mainstreamed in the plan.

The Government is also taking bold measures to improve the “doing business” rank of the country. A high-level team chaired by the Prime Minister is working on the issue, while a new logistics strategy, which is part of the Government’s effort to promote the external trade sector and reduce transaction costs by engaging the private sector, has already been issued and implemented.

As a result of the various measures taken, we have indeed registered reasonable progress, but we fully recognize that a lot remains to be done to realize inclusive and sustainable development in Ethiopia. We therefore reiterate our call on the international community to strengthen durable, transparent, accountable and effective partnerships between landlocked developing countries and transit countries.

We also call on development partners to support landlocked developing countries in their endeavours to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Finally, I wish to take this opportunity to reaffirm the commitment and readiness of my Government to fully implement the Vienna Programme of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals in close collaboration with our development partners.

**Mrs. Moldoisaeva** (Kyrgyzstan): Kyrgyzstan considers the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 to be an element of the global development agenda and is working actively on its implementation. We also believe that the proper and timely implementation of the Programme will contribute to the successful achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In order to implement the Programme, an interministerial working plan of action has been approved and is currently being implemented in the country. Moreover, the Vienna Programme priorities are reflected in various sector-wide documents, including our national development strategy. The economic and foreign policies conducted by my Government are consistent with the goals and priorities of the Vienna Programme of Action.

In order to extend the export capacities and competitiveness of national producers in external markets, we have developed an export development programme. This programme’s implementation is expected to double exports by 2023. Kyrgyzstan has also concluded agreements with 20 countries for the establishment of bilateral and regional mechanisms to resolve international transit problems.

Regional cooperation in Central Asia has gained positive momentum and reached significant new heights. Taking into account our historic ties and neighbourly relations, the countries of Central Asia remain leading partners for Kyrgyzstan. Our countries continue to make joint efforts to overcome border issues, liberalize trade rules, harmonize national legal systems, promote regional security, promote transit via inter-State highways and railroads, and coordinate approaches to energy-sector development and energy carriers’ transportation. In order to develop transregional energy trade and transit, efforts are under way through the CASA-1000 international project for energy export from Central to Southern Asia.



In 2015, the Kyrgyz Republic became a member of the Eurasian Economic Union. Covering almost half of Eurasia, the Union has already become an example of effective economic cooperation. Our country has been accorded the Generalized Scheme of Preferences Plus status and has access to duty-free export of more than 6,000 types of goods to countries of the European Union. In 2017, the Kyrgyz Republic joined the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of an International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries. We share the Think Tank's goals and are ready to work with it actively.

In addition to lacking access to the sea, Kyrgyzstan is also a mountainous country. These circumstances cause various social, economic and ecological problems. In order to draw the attention of the world community to the problems of sustainable development, improving people's wealth and preserving the environment in landlocked mountainous countries, Kyrgyzstan raised several relevant initiatives. Today the problems of mountainous countries have become part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Despite the progress, our countries still face many challenges. In this regard, Kyrgyzstan initiated the establishment of the Group of Friends of Mountainous Countries. We are sure that the establishment of the Group will facilitate active cooperation, with a specific focus on the issues facing mountainous countries.

In our view, it is very important to further simplify trade and transit procedures and optimize border-crossing procedures and the movement of commodities and services between countries. In this context, I would like to mention that it is essential that the Vienna Programme of Action and additional global programmes be considered and implemented together in order to provide landlocked developing countries with optimal support, in accordance with resolution 73/243.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Ambassadors of Austria and of Bhutan for their work on the Political Declaration (resolution 74/15) and to call on all Member States to continue to work together closely and promote common interests in the framework of the Vienna Programme of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals.

**Mrs. Rugwabiza** (Rwanda): This high-level midterm review of the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 comes at an

important time. Five years into the implementation of the Programme of Action, there are just 10 years left of the decade of action and to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The assessment of progress, challenges and opportunities for landlocked developing countries such as my own will be vital in informing Member States' development priorities during this decade of action for the SDGs. In this context, I would like to reflect on few points of interest to Rwanda.

The first point is that being landlocked does not equate to being doomed to perpetual poverty. In the words of my President, His Excellency Mr. Paul Kagame, "geography should not be seen as an excuse for underdevelopment". For Rwanda, at least, we choose to invest in existing opportunities rather than complain about our geographical circumstances and disposition. The results have been quite encouraging. In terms of social and economic development, we tripled our gross domestic product between 2000 and 2018. Over the past 15 years, our economy has been one of the fastest growing in Africa and the world, despite our geographical constraints.

While growing the economy, we have also significantly reduced poverty and managed to diversify our economy and trade and business partners. All this has been enabled by a combination of policies and strategies, very focused political leadership, inclusive governance and a combination of innovative policies all centred around connectivity — connectivity among people, businesses and cities; connectivity in terms of infrastructure; connectivity at the subregional and continental levels; and connectivity of roads, yes, but also digital and air-transport connectivity. All of this has enabled us to reduce the constraints of being a landlocked country.

My second point has to do with regional integration. Regional integration has been identified as one of the core measures for unlocking Africa's potential for economic growth and development. For Africa, spatial distribution and diverse endowments in our region have made it prudent to develop multi-country infrastructure to facilitate the cross-border movement of people, goods and services, as well as the movement of capital. This has been championed at the highest political level by African Heads of State. Several recent developments exemplify this, such as the African Continental Free Trade Agreement, which will become operational in a few months, having surpassed the number of ratifications required for its entry into force.

Another example is the Single African Air Transport Market, which more than 18 countries have now joined and ratified.

The effective implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action will require us to tackle the persistent challenges we continue to face despite the significant progress I have mentioned. One such challenge has to do with the uncertainties that exist at the geopolitical level and in terms of trade. A number of our major global trading partners are unilaterally changing the trade conditions they provide to developing countries, including landlocked developing countries, which makes it quite difficult in terms of investment and predictability. A second challenge has to do with financial constraints in implementing necessary large infrastructure projects. Such projects are all capital intensive, as we all know.

In all of this, it is clear that Rwanda will continue to invest in digital connectivity. We need to continue to make the necessary investments in new technologies, which indeed have the potential to completely change the landscape and realities of our countries' landlockedness.

The role of the United Nations and of innovative partnerships will remain critical in ensuring that the Vienna Programme of Action is successfully implemented. We look forward to a fruitful engagement with all members of the Assembly today and tomorrow, and I take the opportunity to warmly thank our colleagues, the Permanent Representatives of Austria and Bhutan. We are very grateful for their efforts, which have enabled us to adopt the Political Declaration (resolution 74/15).

**Mr. Amayo (Kenya):** At the outset, I wish to thank you, Sir, for convening this important meeting on the comprehensive high-level midterm review of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of the State of Palestine on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

It has been exactly five years since the adoption of the Vienna Programme in December 2014. Kenya welcomes the progress made so far and recognizes the need for accelerated action in order to make significant progress on the six mutually reinforcing priority areas of the Programme. The adoption of the Vienna Programme, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the

Addis Ababa Action Agenda further recognized and reaffirmed that landlocked developing countries face specific challenges and deserve special attention, while stressing the importance of trade as a key means of implementing the Programme. Nonetheless, landlocked developing countries continue to encounter multiple barriers that prevent them from fully harnessing their trade potential.

The lack of direct territorial access to the sea has required landlocked developing countries to depend on transiting through other countries. This, coupled with cumbersome border-crossing procedures and inadequate transit infrastructure, has resulted in some landlocked developing countries facing disproportionately high transport and trade transaction costs, which are almost double those for coastal countries. Furthermore, it has the inherent risk of eroding their competitiveness while affecting economic growth and sustainable development.

As we proceed with the implementation of the Vienna Programme for the next five years, there is a need for strengthened cooperation between landlocked developing countries and transit countries in order to execute innovative solutions that reduce the high costs of transport and trade.

The sustainable development of landlocked developing countries is particularly important for our region, as 16 of the 32 landlocked developing countries are African nations and 11 of those 16 are among the least developed countries. In May 2019, the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement entered into force and is expected to have a transformative impact on Africa's economic and social development. The historic Continental Free Trade Area is expected to ease the free movement of people, goods and services across the continent, thereby transforming the 1.2 billion African population into a seamless investment and growth platform. The objective is to promote shared prosperity, benefiting even the smallest African economies and delivering for local populations. This regional initiative will play an important role during the next implementation phase of the Vienna Programme.

Beyond alignment with regional priorities and initiatives, sustainable financing remains critical to our efforts to successfully implement the Vienna Programme. Achieving this will require all sources of finance to be tapped into and that all partners, including Member States, international organizations and the

private sector, work together in supporting landlocked developing countries. Capacity-building and technical assistance are also essential for the implementation of the Programme.

In conclusion, Kenya remains committed to our common objective to eradicate poverty in all its dimensions, which includes the successful implementation of the Vienna Programme itself. Addressing the specific needs of landlocked developing countries is key to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and our collective attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals so that we succeed together.

**Mr. Rai (Nepal):** At the outset, I would like to express my deep appreciation to you, Sir, for convening this high-level plenary review meeting. I would also like to commend the work done by the Permanent Representatives of Austria and of Bhutan as co-facilitators of the Political Declaration (resolution 74/15). I appreciate the leadership of Paraguay as chair of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries.

I align my statement with those delivered this morning on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries by the observer of the State of Palestine and the representative of Paraguay, respectively (see A/74/PV.39).

It was five years ago that we agreed in Vienna a set of priorities and a corresponding Programme of Action to be undertaken by the landlocked developing countries, transit countries and their development partners. Not only was the Vienna Programme of Action critical for the development of landlocked developing countries, but also reflected the solid commitment of the international community, including transit countries and development partners, to supporting the development endeavours of landlocked developing countries. We have made devoted efforts to realizing commitments under the Vienna Programme of Action. Despite some progress having been made, we have fallen short of our commitments. Now is the time to accelerate our actions.

The overarching challenge of eradicating poverty looms large. The average economic growth of many landlocked developing countries is not encouraging. The infrastructure gap is huge. Commodity dependence has rendered landlocked developing countries exposed to erratic fluctuations in international markets. Most landlocked developing countries incur large trade deficits.

The share of landlocked developing countries in global trade remains insignificant. In terms of the growth of export volume, landlocked developing countries have performed even worse than the least developed countries average since 2014. Moreover, the opportunities brought by the technological revolution have not materialized for landlocked developing countries. Due to their remoteness from intercontinental cables and lack of information and communications technology infrastructure, there has not been enough progress on e-commerce. Landlocked developing countries also grapple with the adverse impacts of climate change and disasters.

Amid this scenario, apprehension looms large. With the slow implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, landlocked developing countries may lag significantly behind in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals as well. This situation will, unfortunately, undermine the very ambition of leaving no one behind.

Nepal believes that the best support to landlocked developing countries would be to ensure the full, timely and effective implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. To that end, national efforts need to be complemented by adequate international support measures in all pillars, including official development assistance, investment, trade and technology transfer.

Landlocked developing countries require greater foreign direct investment for infrastructure development. The cooperation of transit countries, the support of development partners and proactive partnership with the private sector could critically enhance the productive capacity of landlocked developing countries. Landlocked developing countries that are also least developed countries face even more challenges. They are the neediest and deserve commensurate support measures to enable their participation in the global market on an equal footing.

While all six priority areas of the Vienna Programme of Action are crucial for Nepal, our focus is on bridging the huge infrastructure gap that further augments the cost of geographical remoteness. We also realize the need for structural transformation and have therefore adopted development plans with a medium- and long-term transformative vision. The Government of Nepal has put all its efforts towards accelerating economic development, guided by the overarching national aspiration reflected in the words “prosperous

Nepal, happy Nepali". We aspire to be a nation that is economically prosperous, environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive.

Our focus is on developing physical infrastructure within the country and enhancing cross-border connectivity and transit arrangements with our neighbours, which are also emerging as global economic powerhouses. We have signed important agreements with our neighbours on multimodal connectivity. Important projects are likewise under way on railways, roads, highway tunnels, international airports and inland waterways.

Nepal also considers regional organizations such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation to be important platforms for multidimensional regional connectivity and increased intraregional trade. Through these steps, Nepal is aiming to achieve meaningful participation in global and regional value chains and to fully transform itself from a landlocked to a land-linked country.

The need for constant support for the cause of landlocked developing countries has never been greater. While we remain committed to mobilizing domestic resources as far as possible, a narrow resource base and economic bottlenecks compel us to seek meaningful global partnerships to mobilize required resources for development financing.

I conclude by highlighting that landlocked developing countries should not and must not be locked in the vicious cycle of underdevelopment. To that end, we need to move forward with stronger partnership. Nepal is committed to building a meaningful partnership at all levels.

**Mr. Rodrigo** (Sri Lanka): At the outset, my delegation associates itself with the statement made by the State of Palestine on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Sri Lanka appreciates the initiative of the President of the General Assembly to convene this meeting, which comes at a very crucial and opportune time. Over 400 million people in 32 landlocked countries face a set of unique challenges arising out of their geographical location. Their lack of access to the sea and to international markets has negatively impacted their development and trade, as well as social progress and the environment.

The Vienna Programme of Action, adopted five years ago, is a comprehensive and ambitious plan to address these challenges. While the Secretary-General's report (A/74/113) indicates that progress has been made in areas such as health, education and the empowerment of women and girls, much remains to be done to achieve the targets set out in the Programme. The report illustrates that the growth rate of real per capita gross domestic product in these countries has decreased, while inflation has increased. The participation of landlocked developing countries in global trade remains minimal, with their share of global merchandise exports falling to just 0.98 per cent in 2018. It is a cause for concern that over one-third of the population in landlocked developing countries lives in poverty.

New and emerging challenges have also exacerbated the negative conditions for landlocked developing countries. Climate change continues to pose a threat to the development initiatives of these countries, particularly affecting agriculture, while contributing to land degradation and desertification.

As we move closer to the deadline for achieving the targets set forth in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it is crucial that we collectively enhance our efforts not to leave anyone behind. It is therefore critical that we seize this opportunity to not only identify the gaps and challenges in the Programme's implementation, but also decide on the way forward.

Sri Lanka believes that building resilient infrastructure, particularly for transit, transport, energy, information and communication technologies, will be crucial to integrating landlocked developing countries into the global economy and increasing their competitiveness. Strengthening their capacity to meet challenges arising out of climate change and boosting their agriculture sectors will also enhance their development initiatives.

Partnerships also play an important role in the development of landlocked developing countries, from transit countries and development partners to civil society and youth. Our collective commitment to the Vienna Programme of Action is illustrated in today's adoption of the political declaration (resolution 74/15). Sri Lanka congratulates the Permanent Representatives of Austria and Bhutan for their successful facilitation of the declaration.



In conclusion, let me reiterate Sri Lanka's commitment to the effective implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and reaffirm its support for collective initiatives to ensure the progress of landlocked developing countries.

**Mr. Prasad (Fiji):** I thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this midterm review. I congratulate the Permanent Representatives of Bhutan and Austria for securing consensus on the political declaration (resolution 74/15), which we support.

Fiji aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of Palestine on behalf of the Group of 77 and China (see A/74/PV.39).

The Vienna Programme of Action offers a framework to address the unique challenges faced by landlocked developing countries. We are now at the midpoint of the decade to review progress. There has been much progress. The midterm review must be used to take bold steps towards addressing the special development needs and challenges that hold landlocked developing countries back from realizing their full potential. Landlocked developing countries need collective commitment, strengthened cooperation and a supportive United Nations development system to achieve the overarching goals of the Vienna Program of Action.

As we know, landlocked developing countries spend nearly two times more of their export earnings on transport and insurance services than developing countries do on average. A hundred million of the world's poorest live in landlocked developing countries. Seventeen of the least developed countries belong to this group of countries. The economic growth of these countries has declined in the past five years. Their share of world trade has been reduced by more than half from 2 per cent to less than 1 per cent over five years. Barriers to trade are increasing, not decreasing. All these trends have to be reversed.

Much like the small island developing States (SIDS), landlocked developing countries are highly exposed to the climate crisis. The economic, social and environmental impacts of the climate crisis, the slow onset of disasters and extreme and intense weather catastrophes constrain livelihoods in these countries. Desertification and cyclones harm livelihoods and food security alike. Fiji therefore supports the call to build economies and societies that can respond to

the adverse impacts of climate change, including environmental degradation.

The scale of climate finance needs to be substantially increased to give landlocked developing countries the opportunity to accelerate their adaptation. Much like SIDS, high trade costs are a severe obstacle to enhancing trade integration and development. These transportation challenges can be reduced through smart policy, technology and finance. It is in such difficult areas where the United Nations, as a system and as a whole, becomes most relevant. The United Nations can help to bring the necessary pieces together.

It is surely our collective hope that, through long-term and enduring partnerships, landlocked developing countries will overcome the aforementioned fundamental constraints. Landlocked developing countries and least developed countries can pave the way for corridors for innovative trade and high-speed information. They can also herald the establishment of new corridors for renewable energy and technology and overall they can create vectors for high sustainability and greater opportunity.

At the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, it is fitting to expect that the United Nations system as a whole is able to respond effectively to the challenges posed to the landlocked developing countries, especially the 100 million people who live in absolute poverty. In welcoming the political declaration, I ask us to reflect on whether the United Nations development system reforms go far enough in supporting these countries. I ask whether the financing for development agenda is innovative and responsive enough to assist landlocked developing countries in particular to fully realize the Vienna Programme of Action. I once again thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this midterm review.

**Mr. Woodroffe (United Kingdom):** I would like to begin by aligning the United Kingdom with the statement delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union this morning (see A/74/PV.39).

Countries in special situations — be they least-developed, landlocked, small-island, or fragile and conflict-affected countries — face specific challenges to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is therefore crucial that we collectively respond to both these complex country situations and these particular challenges. I would like to focus on three areas in which the United Kingdom is providing

support for the landlocked developing countries to help them do so.

As recognized by SDG 17, trade is a key component of sustainable development. The United Kingdom is committed to supporting the access of landlocked developing countries to global markets, including supporting countries to implement the World Trade Organization's Trade Facilitation Agreement, which offers to help landlocked developing countries that rely on transit through third countries to have access to ports. Furthermore, our comprehensive aid-for-trade programmes help break down barriers to trade through supporting critical trade infrastructure and tackling burdensome regulations and high transport costs and delays at customs and help build trade skills so that partner countries are better able to take advantage of trading opportunities.

The United Kingdom also believes that it is critical that, to enable inclusive and sustained economic growth, landlocked developing countries are able to provide sustainable, clean, modern and accessible energy. In Ethiopia, Malawi, Rwanda, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe, the United Kingdom's Africa Clean Energy Programme aims to increase energy access for low-income households by promoting a market-based approach for private-sector delivery of off-grid energy services. Another United Kingdom project — the Low Carbon Energy Access Programme — has improved energy access for more than 4 million people to date through the sale of over 1 million low-carbon technologies in 17 projects across 14 countries, including in six landlocked developing countries, namely, Ethiopia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malawi, Nepal, Rwanda and Uganda.

A sustainable approach to energy will also complement our shared objective to tackle climate change. As we all know, we are not on track to meet our collective commitments under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Working in partnership with Italy, the United Kingdom presidency of the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26) next year will be a critical moment to accelerate action, including, first, urging the highest possible mitigation ambition, through new or updated nationally determined contributions in advance of COP26 and commitments from countries, regions and businesses that set a course for net-zero emissions; and, secondly, strong and sustainable partnerships to boost climate

finance, private-sector investment and diversified foreign direct investment, including into landlocked developing countries, to build resilience and support their clean-growth journeys.

The landlocked developing countries can count on the United Kingdom's full and unwavering support to implement the Vienna Programme of Action. We will continue to support the development of innovative, efficient transport systems, infrastructure and clean and sustainable energy sources to facilitate trade and strengthen partnerships in order to support the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its inclusive people-centred and human-rights based approach to development.

**Mr. Odida (Uganda):** My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the representative of Paraguay and the observer of Palestine on behalf of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries and the Group of 77 and China, respectively (see A/74/PV.39).

I wish to extend my delegation's appreciation to the President of the General Assembly, to the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and to the facilitators of the political declaration adopted today (resolution 74/15) for coordinating this important high-level midterm review on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. Uganda reiterates its continued support for the full implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, which is in line with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and Uganda's development agenda enshrined in our Vision 2040 and its associated national development plans.

Over the past five years, Uganda has made progress in the implementation of the Vienna Programme in a number of areas. First, it has implemented policies that facilitate the free movement of people and other factors of production within the East African Community (EAC) area. In this regard, Uganda commenced issuance of the EAC passport in January 2018.

Secondly, a regional electronic cargo-tracking system that serves Uganda, Kenya and Rwanda was launched in February 2017. The system is designed to enable a seamless flow of transit cargo, with all the revenue-collection authorities in the three countries having a single view of the cargo being transported along the northern corridor. This has resulted in reduced transit time for regional and national

transactions, improved truck-turnaround time, fewer transit diversions and enhanced trade facilitation.

Thirdly, with regard to transport infrastructure, Uganda has stepped up its efforts to improve the quality of its transport network. The total paved-road network has expanded to cover over 4,000 kilometres. Major roads have also been developed to link Uganda to major border posts with the neighbouring countries of Kenya, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and South Sudan. In addition, we are working in collaboration with our EAC partner States on a standard-gauge railway project and network that will operate as a modern, fast, reliable, efficient and high-capacity seamless single system. In preparation for the production of oil, the construction of key oil roads and the Hoima international airport are being fast-tracked as part of efforts to meet the crucial infrastructure requirements for the oil and gas industry.

At the regional level, Uganda was among the first countries to sign and ratify the African Continental Free Trade Area agreement, which is aimed at creating a single continental market for goods and services and expanding intra-African trade by better harmonizing and coordinating trade liberalization and facilitation regimes and instruments across regional economic communities and across Africa in general. It is also designed to enhance competitiveness at the industry and enterprise levels by exploiting opportunities for scale production, continental market access and better reallocation of resources.

Uganda's economic transformation agenda is based on our national development plan, which is the second in a series of six running up to 2040 and is currently under implementation. Under that plan, three growth opportunities and two fundamental areas have been identified as having the potential to push the country to middle-income status. The growth opportunities include agriculture, tourism, minerals, oil and gas development, while the fundamental requirements are in infrastructure and human capital development. We believe that investment in the foregoing opportunities and fundamental sectors would maximize sectoral linkages and increase efficiency in resource use.

In terms of enabling policies, Uganda also launched the Coffee 2020 Road Map, which is aimed at increasing coffee production to 20 million 60-kilogramme bags per annum. Statistics indicate that export earnings from coffee per year can increase significantly. Furthermore,

the sector has the ability to attract significant financing and investment and improve the livelihoods of the over 1.2 million households that participate in the coffee value chain.

Uganda is continuing to strengthen its domestic revenue mobilization efforts. In the decade since financial year 2007-2008, tax revenue has been growing at an average of 17 per cent, while our tax-to-gross-domestic-product ratio has been growing at a significant average compared to previous annual targets. Our Government has directed its efforts towards widening the tax base and enhancing compliance. A domestic revenue-mobilization strategy has been developed to inform reforms in the tax system, both in the medium and long term.

In conclusion, Uganda expresses its appreciation once again to the facilitators, Austria and Bhutan, for leading the intergovernmental negotiations that resulted in a concise political declaration outlining specific actions to fully implement the Vienna Programme of Action. We call upon relevant stakeholders to provide the necessary support to the landlocked developing countries to enable them to accelerate their national efforts to implement the Vienna Programme of Action's priority-area strategies.

The Vienna Programme of Action has been instrumental in guiding Uganda's development agenda as a landlocked developing country. The implementation time frames of the Vienna Programme and Uganda's national development plans are synchronized. The focus of our second national development plan is to strengthen the country's competitiveness for sustainable wealth creation, employment and inclusive growth opportunities, thereby embodying the principles of the Vienna Programme of Action.

**Mr. Mabhongo** (South Africa): South Africa aligns itself with the statements delivered by the observer of Palestine and the representative of Paraguay on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, respectively (see A/74/PV.39).

We wish to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this important midterm review, which is a critically important and timely opportunity for the landlocked and transit developing countries and their development partners to assess progress made, identify obstacles, constraints, emerging challenges and opportunities and find ways to further accelerate

their implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action over the remaining five years.

Notwithstanding the positive implementation efforts, progress has fallen short of achieving the desired objectives of the Programme of Action. The report of the Secretary-General (A/74/113) indicates that more needs to be done if the landlocked developing countries are to achieve their objectives. Over the past five years, achievement in implementation of the priorities has been mixed. While there has been progress in areas such as the ratification of the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement by landlocked developing countries and transit countries, the deepening of regional integration and cooperation, improvements in road- and rail-corridor performance and growth in dry ports, there has been limited progress in other areas.

One third of the population in landlocked developing countries still live in poverty, and these countries continue to account for less than 1 per cent of global trade. There has been limited progress in the area of structural and economic transformation, as demonstrated by the relatively low value-added contribution of the manufacturing sectors in landlocked developing countries. Quality education, including skills-training, aimed at young people would be a key area to address in order to overcome some of those challenges.

Official development assistance, as well as foreign direct investment, continues to be concentrated in only a few LLDCs. We must therefore address the issue of how to implement the Vienna Programme of Action with much more urgency. In Africa in particular, which has the world's largest number of LLDCs, those challenges are exacerbated by poor infrastructure, cumbersome border-crossing procedures and structural deficiencies, as well as limited access to the global markets that are key to economic growth. With that in mind, the African Union has taken steps to counter some of those persistent setbacks. Concerted efforts will be made to speed up the operationalization of the Continental Free Trade Agreement in support of intra-African trade. Strengthened regional and continental integration will obviate the dependence on external trade of the continent's predominantly commodity-driven countries. The more that Africa integrates through regional and continental trade and development communities, the more landlocked countries' isolation will be broken down. Open borders

will foster the free movement of people and goods, as well as improving interconnectivity.

Infrastructure development is crucial to landlocked developing countries, and especially the development and maintenance of transit and transport infrastructure, information and communications technology and energy infrastructure. To that end, we are encouraging investment in the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa with a view to enhancing those efforts. South Africa, as a country of transit, plays an important role in facilitating regional integration, including through the Southern African Development Community protocol on trade. We also support the development of corridors in our region that can help to enhance links for trade and commerce. It is encouraging that in the political declaration adopted today (resolution 74/15) we have made a commitment to working together to address the special needs of the LLDCs, and South Africa believes that we must continue to call for renewed and strengthened partnerships between landlocked and transit developing countries and their development partners. It is our shared responsibility to ensure we do not leave the LLDCs and their peoples behind.

In conclusion, we commend the co-facilitators, the Permanent Representatives of Austria and Bhutan, for their tireless efforts in driving this agenda and ensuring the successful outcome of the political declaration.

**Mr. Traore** (Mali) (*spoke in French*): The delegation of Mali fully aligns itself with the statements by the observer of Palestine, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and the representative of Paraguay, on behalf of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, and I would also like to share some thoughts in my national capacity.

As we all know, since 2012 Mali has been going through a multifaceted crisis that is hampering the Government's development efforts. Despite those adverse effects, with the support of its bilateral and multilateral partners my country has shown resilience and continued to implement its priority development policies and programmes, as defined by our strategic framework for economic recovery and sustainable development, which integrates our sectoral policies and regional and local strategies. Based on our potential and local capacities for contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, the strategic framework is specifically aimed at promoting inclusive and sustainable development in order to reduce



poverty and inequality in a united and peaceful Mali. It takes into account the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries, particularly in its strategic axis of inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

As an agrarian-sylvan-pastoral country, Mali is suffering enormously from the effects of climate change, characterized by growing desertification and its impact on our fauna and flora, the drying up of our rivers and streams, higher temperatures and floods. The midterm review is an appropriate opportunity to review the progress made and the prospects for 2024, including identifying the obstacles and constraints that we have to eliminate and defining the actions needed to accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Programme. In that regard, my delegation would like to welcome the holding of the regional review meetings and the assistance provided to our countries by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development for the implementation of the World Trade Organization's Trade Facilitation Agreement. The geographic handicap of distance from the sea, which is exacerbated by constraints related to trade logistics and customs procedures, has been partially mitigated by the Automated System for Customs Data established by the customs administrations of 99 countries around the world, including 23 landlocked developing countries, of which Mali is one.

For all those reasons, I would like to reaffirm Mali's commitment to the integral and effective implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, which, as if we need reminding, is aimed at meeting the development needs and particular challenges of landlocked countries — which are linked to the fact of being landlocked and far from the sea and world markets — through specific actions through its six priorities for action. The delegation of Mali stands ready to contribute to reassessing the achievement of the specific objectives of the Vienna Programme of Action and identifying innovative solutions for the remaining challenges, in the light of the achievements of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. With the adoption of the ambitious political declaration proposed to us (resolution 74/15), we are undoubtedly making historic progress in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. I wish our efforts every success.

**Mr. Vieira** (Brazil): The delegation of Brazil aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of

the State of Palestine on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and we would like to add the following remarks in our national capacity.

Brazil reaffirms its recognition of the special needs and challenges of landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), which are reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. Brazil participated actively in the discussions that led to the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries and remains engaged in ensuring its full, timely and effective implementation. In that regard, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the excellent work that the Paraguay is doing as in chairing the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries.

The intrinsic geographic isolation of landlocked developing countries results in significant practical challenges, such as increased vulnerability to external shocks, greater difficulties in integrating into global trade and attracting private investment, higher transportation costs and inadequate infrastructure, among other things. Addressing those challenges is crucial to enabling LLDCs to overcome structural macroeconomic constraints and achieve their full economic and social potential.

Over the years, Brazil has made contributions to the development of landlocked developing countries through South-South cooperation. These initiatives have flourished in such areas as agriculture, education, health, capacity-building, the strengthening of local markets and technical cooperation, involving countries in need in Latin America, Africa and Asia. The Brazilian Government continues to consider South-South cooperation to be an important priority aimed at fostering sustainable development through human and institutional capacity-building and promoting structural changes to the socioeconomic reality of our partners.

We expect that the comprehensive high-level midterm review on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries will renew our collective political commitment to achieving progress in the Programme's six mutually reinforcing priority areas and to identifying remaining obstacles and constraints. We also expect it to accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals through renewed means of implementation and the sharing of good practices and lessons learned.

Allow me to conclude my remarks by recalling that the Vienna Programme of Action is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which we are all committed to achieving.

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the observer of the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries.

**Mr. Erdenetsogt** (International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries): At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly, Under-Secretary-General Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu, and the facilitators, Austria and Bhutan, for convening and coordinating this important high-level midterm review on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries. We are pleased to participate as a full-fledged intergovernmental organization working on behalf of landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and as an observer to the United Nations General Assembly. It is therefore my profound honour and pleasure to address today's meeting.

The International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries participated as an organization for the first time in 2014, at the second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries, when the Vienna Programme of Action was approved. At the Conference, we made a contribution through our research efforts. We also actively contributed to the successful implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action during the first five years of its implementation through further research, seminars, workshops and conferences. We have participated in expert-group meetings and the meeting of the Inter-Agency Consultative Group on the Follow-up and Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform the Assembly about the recent developments at the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries. The year 2018 was a historic year for the International Think Tank as we successfully transformed from an organization under an interim management scheme to a fully operational, full-fledged intergovernmental organization for landlocked developing countries. As of today, 14 landlocked developing countries have acceded or ratified the multilateral agreement on the establishment of the International Think Tank. The current member States of the International Think Tank are Afghanistan,

Armenia, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Nepal, Paraguay, Tajikistan, the Niger and Azerbaijan. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Government of Azerbaijan on its recent accession to the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of an International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries and on the commitments it has made to the International Think Tank.

After the entry into force of the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of the International Think Tank, on 6 October 2017, the Board of Governors was successfully established as the highest authority of the organization. The Board of Governors consists of representatives from all member States that are party to the Multilateral Agreement.

On June 2018 the intergovernmental inaugural meeting of the International Think Tank was successfully held in cooperation with the Government of Mongolia and the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. The meeting was not only a symbolic event for the inauguration of the International Think Tank, but also a platform for thematic multilateral discussions on such issues of relevance to landlocked developing countries as foreign direct investment and the economic diversification of LLDCs, information and communications technology connectivity, and infrastructure development, transit transport corridors and trade facilitation in connection with the challenges LLDCs face and the opportunities available to them. This year the International Think Tank finalized its comprehensive study on the economic diversification of landlocked developing countries, which included the case studies of four countries, namely, Bhutan, Mongolia, Paraguay and Nepal. The study has already contributed to the Priority 5 on structural economic transformation of the Vienna Programme of Action.

We work very closely with such organizations of the United Nations system as the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, under the able leadership of the Under-Secretary-General, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the World Intellectual Property

Organization to tackle challenges in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action.

Our collaboration with organizations of the United Nations system covers a wide range of issues. A comprehensive list of the activities that have been held for landlocked developing countries has been submitted to the Secretariat. To highlight just a few, in 2018, in collaboration with UNCTAD, we held a subregional workshop on fostering structural transformation and export diversification in selected Asian landlocked developing countries. In 2019, in cooperation with the World Intellectual Property Organization, we held an interregional meeting on partnership for innovation and technological capacity-building for landlocked developing countries and landlocked least developed countries. The International Think Tank has also contributed to and moderated sessions organized by the United Nations throughout landlocked developing countries. We just came from Ulaanbaatar, in our host country, Mongolia, after concluding a subregional workshop with ESCAP on the deployment of information and communications technologies in transport-infrastructure projects in Asia.

In conclusion, I would like to re-emphasize our full commitment to the cause of landlocked developing countries. We look forward to the recommendations and guidance of the General Assembly towards a coherent approach in the implementation of the agenda of the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries, especially with regard to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Vienna Programme of Action. We stand ready to support the Assembly in all endeavours.

Accordingly, pursuant to sub-paragraph (j) of article 64 of the Vienna Programme of Action, I would like to call on landlocked developing countries that have not yet ratified the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of an International Think Tank to do so at their earliest convenience and ask development partners and friends of LLDCs to support and effectively utilize the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries to share experience, know-how and research, as well as to address the challenges in both the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals.

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the observer of the International Renewable Energy Agency.

**Mr. Abdel-Latif** (International Renewable Energy Agency): As was rightly highlighted as a priority area in the Vienna Programme of Action, access to energy is one of the key challenges landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) face in their pursuit of sustainable development. A number of delegations also mentioned this point in their statements today.

The report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action (A/74/113) notes that, while the average proportion of the population with access to electricity in LLDCs has increased from 49.5 per cent in 2014 to 56.3 per cent in 2017, LLDCs still lag behind the world average of 88.8 per cent. Renewable energy can help LLDCs to decisively tackle this energy-access gap. Since 2014, the business case underpinning renewable energy has continued to strengthen and renewables now represent the lowest cost source for new power generation in most parts of the world.

The Political Declaration of the High-level Midterm Review on the Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 adopted today (resolution 74/15) recognizes the opportunity at hand and calls for the accelerated deployment of renewables in LLDCs. However, it also points to a number of barriers, such as the slow pace at which power projects are completed and the lack of sufficient investments.

The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) is fully committed to supporting the efforts of LLDCs in overcoming these barriers and in harnessing the benefits of renewables, which are key for the implementation of the global sustainable development and climate objectives. IRENA is already achieving these ends through a range of tools, such as renewables readiness assessments and renewable-energy road maps, which identify conditions and technology pathways for countries, regions and the world to scale up renewables. Renewables readiness assessments have been conducted successfully in nine LLDCs. Furthermore, policy advice and capacity-building are carried out through a number of regional action plans in regions where we find many LLDCs, such as Central Asia and Central Africa. It is also worth noting that four projects in LLDCs received concessional loans from the joint Project Facility of IRENA and the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development, which supports renewable energy projects in developing countries.

IRENA is now moving further towards strengthening support to countries on the ground, including LLDCs, so as to mobilize investments and scale up projects through new partnerships and initiatives. In this context, I would like to mention in particular the climate-investment platform announced at the Climate Action Summit, which initially brings together IRENA, the United Nations Development Programme and Sustainable Energy for All in coordination with the Green Climate Fund, as well as many other partners, in order to support countries in enhancing their nationally determined contributions and facilitating access to de-risk financial resources. It should begin operations in January 2020.

Finally, IRENA is also moving towards strengthening its cooperation with the United Nations in support of LLDCs. In September, the Agency's Director General, Mr. Francesco La Camera, and the United Nations High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu, signed a memorandum of understanding to step up cooperation on the implementation of the energy component of the Vienna Programme of Action. We look forward to further continuing our work with LLDCs to accelerate their transition to a sustainable energy future.

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the observer of the African Development Bank.

**Ms. Mabuza** (African Development Bank): Allow me to share with the General Assembly what the African Development Bank is doing in support of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024.

Since its establishment in 1963, as part of its core mandate, the African Development Bank has supported regional integration on the continent. Integrating Africa is one of the Bank's strategic priorities and, in the next seven years, our focus will be on infrastructure connectivity, trade and investment and financial integration.

Working together with our partners, the African Union Commission and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the Bank has adopted a corridor approach to connecting African cities. Transport corridors stimulate trade and economic development among communities by addressing the needs of the most vulnerable groups within countries, especially

landlocked developing countries, including countries in fragile situations. The Bank provides financial support for the implementation of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) and other corridors that are not covered under it. PIDA is a continent-wide programme to develop a vision, policies, strategies and a programme for the development of priority regional and continental infrastructure in transport and energy, among other sectors.

From 2004 to 2018, the Bank spent more than \$8 billion on corridor development, covering 12,700 kilometres of road. The Bank has also established 26 one-stop border posts to enhance the free flow of goods and services. The corridors have benefited more than 230 million people in Africa. The Trans-Africa Highway initiative is aimed at connecting African cities and basically comprises nine of these corridors: the Cairo-Dakar, Algiers-Lagos, Tripoli-Windhoek-Cape Town, Cairo-Gaborone-Cape Town, Dakar-N'Djamena, N'Djamena-Djibouti, Dakar-Lagos, Lagos-Mombasa and Beira-Lobito corridors. For the year 2013, support for regional transport projects amounted to \$860 million, which represented 79 per cent of all Integrate Africa approvals. The Bank also established the African Infrastructure Investment Fund, a multinational, multisectoral financial entity that invests in core and core-plus infrastructure opportunities.

Let me highlight some of the key transformational transport projects that the Bank has funded. I will start with the Kazungula bridge project, which the Bank financed in the amount of \$260 million. The bridge replaces the ferry and border facilities between Zambia and Botswana. The project includes trade-facilitation instruments and improvements to border-related procedures and policies, in addition to the 932-metre road and rail bridge over the Zambezi river and 10 kilometres of approach and access roads. The bridge is key to linking such landlocked countries as Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe and the hinterlands of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the ports of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania and Durban in South Africa.

I also wish to mention the Senegambia bridge, which the Bank has just finished constructing. The 1.9-kilometre-long bridge was built under the flagship trans-West Africa corridor project and links the two halves of the Gambia, as well as allowing people from the north of Senegal to reach the southern Senegalese province of Casamance with ease. Previously, truck drivers would spend days and sometimes weeks waiting



to cross on the ferry, meaning that perishable goods would spoil. The population of the project's influence zone is about 925,000, of which 92 per cent are women. The bridge offers a decrease of about 95 per cent in transit time, which will facilitate subregional trade and open rural areas while increasing the level in quality of service in the Nouakchott-Dakar-Lagos corridors.

Other key corridors include the 804-kilometre-long Mtwara corridor, which connects southern Tanzania with Zambia and the 1,900-kilometre-long corridor connecting Zambia to the port of Nacala through Malawi and Mozambique. We also have the North-South corridor section, which is 460 kilometres long, along the banks of Lakes Tanganyika and Kivu, connecting the Tanzanian border to northern Rwanda.

I would now refer to what the Bank is specifically doing in support of the Vienna Programme of Action. Under the Vienna Programme's Priority 1, on fundamental transit-policy issues, the bank is financing 26 one-stop border posts. We are also supporting intermodal connectivity and the online reporting and monitoring mechanism, which was first introduced by the three tripartite regional economic communities, namely, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The mechanism has now been adopted by the African Continental Free Trade Area.

Under Priority 2, on infrastructure development, we support the PIDA and the Presidential Infrastructure Champion Initiative. PIDA includes 51 programmes with 433 actionable projects, mainly in the field of transport. Between 2014 and 2016, the Bank built and rehabilitated more than 1,500 kilometres of road.

With respect to Vienna Programme's Priority 5, involving structural economic transformation, one of the strategic objectives of the African Development Bank — one of its so-called High Fives — is to industrialize Africa. This objective aims at transforming African economies from predominantly trading in commodities to predominantly manufacturing final products. The Bank is supporting a number of countries in value-chain development. It also funded the countries of the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite Free Trade Area to develop industrial cooperation. In addition, in partnership with the Trade and Development Bank,

we are supporting the development of the African fashion industry. We are also working on developing economic activities along the corridors, for example, staple-food processing zones, because we realized that it is a waste to invest in infrastructure, if there is no economic activity developed around it.

With the advent of the African Continental Free Trade Area, the African Development Bank is focusing on integrating the African market through connectivity. The Assembly will recall that transport corridors historically focused largely on connecting resource-rich African countries to ports. There was never a deliberate policy in favour of connecting the African market. In line with the objective of alleviating poverty in Africa, the objective is to reduce trade costs in landlocked countries, which are currently high and negatively affect the competitiveness of African industries and firms. The reality is that high costs are ultimately passed on to the consumers, exacerbating the poverty problem.

Some of the challenges that we are facing as we help with the implementation with the Vienna Programme of Action include the huge demand for infrastructure financing, which, owing to limited funding, has been barely met. As is well known, Africa has poorly developed capital and financial markets. A number of the LLDCs are in a state of transition with a high level of fragility affecting the implementation of regional infrastructure projects. Furthermore, there are non-tariff barriers, such as border procedures, customs documentation, road blocks, pre-shipment inspections, safeguards policy statements and technical barriers to trade, all of which are a major challenge in connecting landlocked countries, and which only add to the high cost of transportation. The other problem is the poor maintenance of existing infrastructure.

In conclusion, the Bank is committed to mobilizing resources to finance infrastructure development in Africa. Co-financing major projects with other multilateral development partners has in fact worked. The Africa Investment Forum, which the Bank has convened over the past two years, brings together promoters and financiers, which has so far garnered quite a positive response.

*The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.*