



# General Assembly

Seventy-fourth session

**39<sup>th</sup>** plenary meeting  
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New York

Official Records

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

*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.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

#### Groups of countries in special situations

#### (b) Follow-up to the second United Nations

#### Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries

#### Draft resolution (A/74/L.7)

**The President:** This meeting is held in accordance with resolutions 72/232, of 20 December 2017, and 73/243, of 20 December 2018.

Before proceeding, I would like to inform members that action on the draft political declaration, contained in document A/74/L.7, will be taken following the statement by the Secretary-General.

#### Statement by the President

**The President:** I welcome all delegations to the midterm review of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024. Adopted in 2014, the Programme is aimed at contributing to the eradication of poverty in landlocked developing countries. I recognize the efforts of all Member States to come to an agreement on the political declaration to be adopted shortly (A/74/L.7). This political declaration is a testament to the strength

of multilateralism today, which is the only vehicle that can effectively address cross-cutting and cross-border issues. In this case, we have addressed issues related to landlocked developing states, transit countries, developing and developed States.

The political declaration provides us with a road map to align the objectives of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The emphasis placed on SDG 1 on poverty eradication is a prerequisite for sustainable development. Indeed, I have designated poverty eradication as a key priority for the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly.

Landlocked developing countries are at risk of being left behind. Their economic growth has declined in the last five years, and one third of their population lives in extreme poverty. Furthermore, many landlocked developing countries are below the range of high human development in the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index. The average ranking of landlocked developing countries lags behind the world average by 20 per cent, and of the 10 lowest-ranked countries, seven are landlocked. Many of these nations continue to struggle in the shadows of historical injustices. This should not continue.

Landlocked developing countries are highly vulnerable to the effects of the climate emergency and are experiencing desertification, land degradation, drought, loss of biodiversity and receding glaciers. No Member State is free from the effects of climate

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change, but for those that are the most vulnerable, the effects are compounded. Just nine months ago, the landlocked States of Malawi and Zimbabwe were hit by Cyclone Idai, despite being many miles from the sea. Undernourishment in landlocked developing countries reached an alarming rate of 23.2 per cent in 2016, and food insecurity affects 51.6 per cent of their population — a problem that is compounded by the effects of climate change. Furthermore, communities in landlocked developing countries are being left behind in a rapidly developing world. Forty per cent of their population does not have access to electricity. We need to invest in infrastructure to ensure that everyone, everywhere has the opportunity to fulfil their potential in a digital world. We cannot allow the digital divide to deepen.

We must change this grim picture. We must work to make landlocked developing countries land-linked developing countries. Today's process is important for the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. The ranking of landlocked developing countries in the Human Development Index improved by 1.5 per cent between 2014 and 2018. Health, education and gender equality indicators show progress, for example in the rise of the enrolment of girls in primary school, from 34.2 per cent in 2010 to 43.4 per cent in 2016. We have also seen progress in areas such as infrastructure and connectivity. Air-carrier departures in landlocked developing countries have increased by 8.4 per cent since the adoption of the Programme of Action, some trade corridors have achieved the Programme targets, and participation in regional trade agreements has increased in all regions since 2014.

Effective implementation of the Political Declaration will require partnerships with all States, as well as with the private sector, civil society, youth and academia. The Political Declaration includes commitments to targets and to taking accelerated action to remove all legal, social, economic and other barriers to achieving gender equality. Indeed, the declaration aims at the full enjoyment of human rights by every human being, as called for in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

I am greatly encouraged by the commitments undertaken by Member States, including the agreements reached at the Financing for Development Forum, the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, held in Buenos Aires, and the Political Declaration adopted at the SDG Summit.

Moreover, regional dialogues greatly contributed to this midterm review.

As we move forward, we need to ensure that all efforts are made to support the sustainable development of landlocked developing countries, including combating illicit financial flows, which are detrimental to domestic mobilization and the sustainability of public finances. Examples of this include e-government programmes and grass-roots anticorruption movements in many countries that have been successful in employing digital technologies to tackle illicit financial flows. We need to strengthen trade financing for micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises and trade-facilitation programmes.

Landlocked developing States need to continue to seek private-sector investment and work to improve economic governance and business regulations. We must also provide technical support to facilitate bankable infrastructure and transport-development projects. The work done by multiple United Nations agencies, other international organizations, development partners and civil society already shows the importance of partnerships for achieving the Vienna Programme of Action. We will only achieve a better world for all by working together.

Our world today is marked by significant changes as we approach the decade of action and delivery on the SDGs starting in 2020. We must ensure that a substantial foundation is laid so that all Member States can prosper. To ensure sustainable development for generations to come, we must work together now. Our actions must be guided by the spirit of cooperation and solidarity. We must implement the Vienna Programme of Action in a full, effective and timely manner as an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to ensure that no one is left behind, which is our commitment. I look forward to today's discussions and to action by Member States to implement the commitments set forth in the Political Declaration.

I now give the floor to Secretary-General António Guterres.

**The Secretary-General:** I thank all present for joining this important meeting.

We are all keenly aware of the geographical disadvantages faced by the world's 32 landlocked developing countries. Many are in remote locations. By definition, they do not have access to the sea,

and other forms of connectivity — roads, railways, the information superhighway — are also lacking or underdeveloped. All of this combines to increase costs, decrease opportunities and impede the integration of these countries into the global and regional economies, which has a negative impact on poverty alleviation and sustainable development.

However, with partnerships, these challenges can be overcome. Cooperation among transit countries and development partners is crucial. We need the right policy mix, increased investment, reliable transit infrastructure, efficient customs operations and improved access and use of technology. We need cooperation from the international community to stem the massive amounts of resources that continue to flow out of landlocked developing countries in the form of illicit financial flows, and we need to assist the landlocked developing countries that are in debt distress or at high risk of it.

We have the tools to eliminate distance and inefficiencies. We also have the framework. Five years ago, we adopted the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, a comprehensive and ambitious plan to achieve inclusive and sustainable economic growth, reduce poverty and ensure the integration of landlocked developing countries into the global economy. Our shared hope is for a win-win solution for landlocked developing countries, transit countries and development partners. They all — and indeed we all — stand to benefit from ensuring a sustainable development path.

We have made headway in some key areas. Real gross domestic product per capita has increased in many landlocked developing countries. Encouraging progress has been recorded on some indicators related to health, education, energy, gender equality and information and communication technology. The Vienna Programme of Action is now better integrated into national development strategies and into the work of the United Nations development system itself. Work is under way on transport connectivity to develop transit and economic corridors. The African Continental Free Trade Agreement and the Trade Facilitation Agreement of the World Trade Organization provide opportunities for landlocked countries to link up to external markets and global value chains. Landlocked developing countries have also benefited from modest increases in official development assistance to them since 2014, and from increased aid for trade and South-South

cooperation. This is progress to build on at a time when landlocked developing countries continue to face major challenges, and there is much more work to be done.

Trade integration remains low. It accounts for less than 1 per cent of global exports. More than 80 per cent of their exports are primary commodities and natural resources. Infrastructure remains inadequate. Foreign direct investment, which is often a critical driver for building competitiveness, has continued to decline. And like all countries, landlocked developing countries face the increasingly severe impacts of the global climate crisis.

Such challenges are even more severe and growth is even more constrained for the 17 landlocked countries that are also the least developed countries. They are heavily dependent on official development assistance, making it crucial for such aid to be increased and predictable and for Governments to be more effective in steering such aid to national priorities.

The midterm review is our chance to assess and renew our work and forge greater coherence and synergy among the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and other relevant international frameworks. Development partners need to work together to mobilize both domestic and external resources and direct them to growth-inducing, high priority areas.

Innovative financing for infrastructure has to be scaled up. We should also support landlocked developing countries in building up these countries' private sectors and enhancing the business environment. Enhancing technical assistance and support for capacity-building are crucial. And since any policy and decision must rely on data, the strengthening of national statistics systems is also a must.

The declaration the General Assembly will adopt today (A/74/L.7) calls on us to help turn landlocked developing countries into land-linked places of prosperity and opportunity. Let us join forces to help the world's 32 landlocked developing countries achieve sustainable transformations and a better standard of living for the more than 500 million people who call these countries home. The United Nations system, reformed and repositioned, remains strongly committed to supporting the Assembly's efforts.

**The President:** The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/74/L.7, entitled “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”. In order to ensure the smooth conduct of proceedings, any delegation wishing to make explanations of position is kindly encouraged to do so in their statements to be delivered in the debate.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/74/L.7?

*Draft resolution A/74/L.7 was adopted (resolution 74/15).*

**The President:** I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Mr. Jan Kickert, Permanent Representative of Austria, and Ms. Doma Tshering, Permanent Representative of Bhutan, who, as facilitators of the informal consultations, demonstrated great ability and patience in their conduct of the discussions and complex negotiations on the draft resolution. I also thank Member States on their valuable contributions to reaching an agreement thereon.

Before we begin with the list of speakers, I would like to address important organizational matters pertaining to the conduct of the plenary meetings. As announced in *The Journal*, I would like to remind all distinguished 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 resolution 72/313 of 17 September 2018, the General Assembly called for strict adherence by each speaker to time limits in the Assembly, in particular during high-level meetings. Participants with longer statements 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. Bearing in mind the time limit, I would like to appeal to speakers to deliver their statement 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 could be heard in a timely manner.

I now give the floor to the observer of Palestine.

**Mr. Mansour (Palestine):** I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

At the outset, the Group would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this important midterm review. This is a crucial time for landlocked developing countries, as they undertake a comprehensive look at the progress achieved so far towards attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the objectives of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, and, most importantly, mapping the way forward towards accelerating implementation.

During the last five years, since the adoption of the Vienna Programme of Action in 2014, it has become clear that efforts have been made towards the Programme of Action’s implementation. While these efforts are being made, progress has fallen short of achieving the desired objectives and targets. The 32 landlocked developing countries continue to face special challenges due to geographical remoteness, lack of direct access to the sea, and isolation from world markets. These challenges are exacerbated by inadequate infrastructure, cumbersome border-crossing procedures, structural deficiencies and limited capacities to deal with external shocks.

The report of the Secretary-General (A/74/383), which reviewed the progress achieved on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action over the last five years, indicates that a great deal remains to be done for the landlocked developing countries to achieve the objectives of the Vienna Programme of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals. Currently, one third of the population of the landlocked developing countries is still living in poverty.

The Group underlines that infrastructure development plays a key role in reducing the cost of development for landlocked developing countries. It also emphasizes that the development and maintenance of transit-transport infrastructure, information and communications technology and energy infrastructure are crucial for landlocked developing countries to reduce high trading costs, improve their competitiveness and become fully integrated into the global market.

Despite the importance of trade for achieving sustainable development, the participation of the landlocked developing countries in global trade remains



quite marginal. The Group remains concerned with the fact that landlocked developing countries account for less than 1 per cent of global exports. Their share has decreased from 1.19 per cent in 2014 to 0.98 per cent in 2018. Many landlocked developing countries are experiencing persistent trade deficits.

In addition to these challenges, the impact of climate change and variability continue to undermine the efforts of landlocked developing countries to achieve sustainable development. Many of these countries are in dry land regions, where the impacts of climate change, desertification and land degradation are more evident.

We all agree that these challenges are not insurmountable. It is clear that we need to redouble our efforts if the fundamental principle of leaving no one behind, so central to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, is to be fulfilled. The Vienna Programme of Action is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda, and its full implementation is fundamental for landlocked developing countries to attain the SDGs.

It is encouraging that we have made a commitment in the Political Declaration adopted minutes ago (resolution 74/15) to coming together in durable and effective partnerships between landlocked developing countries and transit countries and development partners, as well as with a range of stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, academia and youth. We should live up to this commitment. The Group of 77 and China would like to express its deep appreciation to the Permanent Representatives of Austria and Bhutan and their teams for their successful roles as facilitators of the Political Declaration.

We reaffirm our commitment to the effective implementation of the Vienna Declaration and the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 and encourage landlocked developing countries, transit countries, their development partners, the United Nations system and all other actors to implement the actions that have been agreed upon in the Programme in its six priority areas, namely, fundamental transit-policy issues, infrastructure development and maintenance, international trade and trade facilitation, regional integration and cooperation, structural economic transformation, and means of implementation in a coordinated, coherent and expeditious manner. The Programme and the call for action to accelerate the

implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, as contained in the Political Declaration, outlines the actions to be undertaken by all stakeholders. Let us work together and do what is needed to achieve the desired socioeconomic transformation of landlocked developing countries. These goals are achievable, and strong partnerships remain fundamental.

**The President:** I give the floor to the Minister of Commerce, Industry and Trade of Eswatini.

**Mr. Khumalo** (Eswatini): With a population of about 1.2 million people, a geographical landmass of over 17,000 square metres and surrounded by South Africa and Mozambique, the Kingdom of Eswatini has placed structural economic transformation at the core of its national economic agenda. In this regard, international trade and trade facilitation, infrastructure development and maintenance, regional integration and cooperation, transit issues and resource mobilization have been prioritized by the Government for the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, paving the way for sustainable economic growth. Over and above the inherent limitations associated with being landlocked, the Kingdom of Eswatini's strategic road map 2019-2022 identifies challenges facing the country, including a widening fiscal deficit, declining growth rates and our low ranking in ease-of-doing-business. To address these challenges, five key growth sectors are given special attention for reform, namely, education and information and communications technologies, mining and energy, agriculture, manufacturing and agroprocessing, and tourism.

Eswatini is implementing the Trade Facilitation Agreement of the World Trade Organization, and our memberships in various regional economic communities put us in an advantageous position to address transit bottlenecks that impede the movement of our goods and services across borders. The move towards the liberalization of trade in services in Southern African Development Community, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the Tripartite Free Trade Area and the African Continental Free Trade Area will therefore be fundamental for enhancing interconnectivity, the lack of which remains an obstacle to the meaningful trade integration to which my country aspires.

The seven common priority sectors that will be liberalized in these regional economic blocs, namely, communications, finance, business, transport, tourism,

energy and construction, give us hope for a strengthened and resilient emergent regional cooperation on the African continent. Our industrial and trade policies are aimed at promoting value addition and beneficiation of local primary products into high-value processed products, thereby developing complete value chains in key sectors of the domestic economy. The main objective is product diversification and to increase the contribution of exports to gross domestic product by 5 per cent. A major milestone in that area is the current development and designation of two special economic zones around our fairly new airport and a science and technology park.

We recall that Eswatini currently ranks first in Africa for cross-border trade, which is the result of a number of trade-facilitation reforms that the country has undertaken, including the adoption of an Eswatini national trade-facilitation road map, which serves as a guide for implementing our international and regional trade-facilitation commitments.

The ambition of this road map is to facilitate a modern, safe and secure trade-supply chain so as to reduce trade costs and time by 30 per cent by 2022. To deliver on this ambition, the Kingdom has identified a total of seven strategic initiatives, namely, institutional trade-facilitation arrangements, a trade-information portal, trade-facilitation performance-measurement systems, compliance and risk management, customs-to-customs cooperation, a national single window — including coordinated border management and business-process analysis — and regional integration.

In conclusion, the implementation of our obligations under the Vienna Programme of Action is critical for economic growth and improved standards of living. Technical and financial assistance, including capacity-building support and the capitalization of our financial-development institutions remain necessary and key for the effective implementation of these programmes.

**Mr. Jooma** (Malawi): Five years ago, the United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries met and adopted the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, whose objective was that of addressing challenges faced by landlocked developing countries. We are meeting again today — at the midpoint of the decade intended to be the time frame

for implementing this noble Programme of Action. We have clearly shown progress, but we must also be quick to admit that we have fallen short of expectations. In some countries, economic growth has declined, foreign direct investment flows have dwindled, and shares of global exports have also fallen. We have overcome obstacles and faced emerging challenges, but, without doubt, we have also seized emerging opportunities.

As we share experiences at this review meeting, we must spend considerable time identifying ways of accelerating the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action in its remaining five years. To this end, I wish to express my profound gratitude to the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States for supporting the convening of this meeting. Malawi highly values the Vienna Programme of Action. Its sole access to the sea is through Tanzania, Mozambique and South Africa, resulting in high transportation costs, which, when coupled with low energy production, the high cost of information and communication technologies and the impact of climate change, erode the competitive edge of our exports and make our imports very expensive.

That is why the Government of Malawi quickly mainstreamed both the Vienna Programme of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals in its national strategy, as well as sectoral strategies, such as the national transport master plan, which falls under my Ministry. However, I want to underline the point that the challenge of implementing these strategies remains the unavailability of adequate resources. We are currently rolling out a number of infrastructure projects in transport, energy and information and communication technologies and creating an environment for private-sector development.

Opportunities are also available at the regional level to realize the ambitions espoused in the Vienna Programme of Action. The Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa, championed by the African Union, and the Tripartite Transport and Transit Facilitation Programme, supported by the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the East African Community and the Southern African Development Community, are both continental initiatives to improve transit corridors and harmonize, streamline and standardize rules and regulations with a view to promoting the seamless movement of

freight and people and ultimately reducing the cost of transportation and transiting.

As I near the conclusion of my statement, I want to recall the fact that challenges facing landlocked countries have a direct bearing on the aspiration of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to leave no one behind. That is why, as we remind ourselves of the roles given to us in the Vienna Programme of Action, we should use this review meeting to also reflect on the gaps we face and zero in on how to fill them. If we all agree that landlocked development countries have special and unique development needs, it should also be easy to agree that such countries require special resources to address their challenges.

**Mr. Holte** (Norway): I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of the Nordic countries, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden, and my own country, Norway.

Landlocked developing countries are among the most vulnerable countries in the world. One third of their population still lives in extreme poverty. The mortality rate of children under the age of 5 stands at 6 per cent. Landlocked developing countries are also highly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change, which manifests as drought, desertification and the loss of biodiversity.

Landlocked developing countries face a unique combination of obstacles relating to geographical location, transport, infrastructure, border crossings, dependency on commodities and low productivity. However, these obstacles are not insurmountable, and the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 is a recipe for overcoming them. Indeed, good progress has already been made. The export sector as a whole has become more diversified. The average proportion of the population in landlocked developing countries with access to electricity has increased from 49 to 56 per cent. Some trade corridors in Africa, including the Trans-Kalahari Corridor, have achieved the objectives set out in the Vienna Programme of Action in relation to improving transit conditions.

The Nordic countries recognize the challenges that come with being landlocked and are partners in overcoming these obstacles. We have some of the highest levels of official development assistance in the world, reaching the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of gross nation income, in the case of Denmark,

and 1 per cent of gross nation income for Norway and Sweden. Our official development assistance is directed to the most vulnerable States. For example, my own country has, as a consistent policy, increased the percentage of our aid to the least developed countries, from 48 per cent in 2016 to 53 per cent in 2018, and is set to continue to increase it. A significant proportion of this aid goes to landlocked States.

We call on other countries to increase their financing to landlocked developing States in such areas as climate-risk mitigation and disaster-risk reduction and response, where more financing is needed. On both these issues, landlocked developing countries are hit hard by the effects of crises they have little or no role in creating. While we work together as a global community to reduce the threats of climate change, we must also show solidarity with those hit the hardest by its impacts and support them in building resilience.

The Nordic countries welcome the progress made in attracting private investments and developing public-private partnerships in many landlocked developing States. Important steps have also been taken to generate additional national funds for development efforts. But we still have some way to go and need to further step up efforts to combat illicit financial flows.

Trade facilitation programmes can play an important role in assisting landlocked developing States increase their level of trade and are of great importance to the Nordic countries. My own country, Norway, is the biggest single donor to the World Bank's Trade Facilitation Support Programme, and we truly believe that, in the long term, trade will provide significant economic opportunities for landlocked developing countries.

In closing, landlocked developing States face numerous challenges, but none that cannot be overcome with the right policies and partnerships. We, the Nordic countries, will remain consistent partners of the landlocked developing countries.

**Mr. Ashikbayev** (Kazakhstan): Allow me to express our appreciation to Paraguay as Chair of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries and to High Representative 'Utoikamanu and her team for their committed efforts aimed at preparing this review, and to Austria and Bhutan for facilitating the Political Declaration (resolution 74/15).

Kazakhstan has always been at the forefront of helping landlocked developing countries transcend their geographical disadvantages. We therefore convened the first United Nations conference on landlocked developing countries in Almaty, in 2003, and subsequently hosted the landlocked developing countries ministerial meeting on trade and transport in Astana last year to launch the preparatory process for this review.

Let me share our brief assessment of the achievements and challenges in priority areas of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024. With respect to fundamental transit-policy issues, there have been a large number of new accessions and ratifications of international agreements related to transit transport, including the Trade Facilitation Agreement of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR (*Transports Internationaux Routiers*) Carnets of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. Kazakhstan has become a full member of the WTO, ratified the Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports and actively negotiated regional-transit and transport-facilitation arrangements under the auspices of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Eurasian Economic Union.

We have also made progress on connectivity and transport-infrastructure development. Enhancing transport infrastructure has a multiplier effect for our growing economies. Kazakhstan aims to further improve our transit and transportation potential and develop the Eurasian multimodal transport hub. To this end, we are implementing a national programme, known as Nurly Zhol, to strengthen Eurasian integration and ensure our country's key role in China's One Belt, One Road initiative. As part of this programme, we have built more than 2,500 kilometres of railroad, reconstructed 12,000 kilometres of highways, opened the Western Europe-Western China automobile transit corridor, built the Khorgos Gateway dry port on the border with China and modernized the Caspian Sea ports of Aktau and Kuryk. Today Kazakhstan's 11 international transit corridors — five of which are railway and six of which are automobile — enable the transportation of goods from Europe to Asia much faster than by sea and much cheaper than by air transportation. In addition, our 11 airports recently adopted an open-skies regime.

Landlocked developing countries have achieved significant progress in enhancing digital and energy connectivity, which is another key priority. New technologies and increased access to information and communications technologies, including through public-private partnerships, is also of strategic importance to Kazakhstan. My country is implementing a national programme, known as Digital Kazakhstan, to improve our quality of life through the progressive development of the digital ecosystem.

International trade and trade facilitation play a crucial role in improving the global competitiveness of landlocked developing countries. The introduction of information and communications technologies solutions for e-commerce has opened up new horizons for these countries. Working together with United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Kazakhstan has been elaborating an automated customs-administration programme, known as ASTANA-1, and a single-window mechanism for foreign trade operations.

Kazakhstan's efforts were praised by the World Bank in its *Doing Business 2020* study, in which our country was ranked twenty-fifth globally. Structural economic transformation, another one of our priority areas, is crucial to reducing the vulnerabilities facing the landlocked developing countries in terms of job creation, building local productive capacity and reducing poverty and inequality. Kazakhstan promotes structural economic transformation through sustainable industries, modernized business procedures and increased support to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). In the recent period, more than 1,200 new industrial enterprises have been established, and 24 new manufacturing sectors have emerged with breakthrough technologies.

Despite all the efforts that have been made, our countries still experience difficulties in diversifying export structures and enhancing trade capacities. We realize that, in order to succeed in the remaining years of the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, the landlocked developing countries need to concentrate on several issues, such as developing and upgrading international transport and transit corridors, fully and effectively implementing agreements that have already been signed, improving and harmonizing our customs regulations, streamlining border-crossing procedures by introducing paperless trade and a single-window environment, integrating our SMEs into regional and global markets, reducing our dependence



on raw materials, increasing the efficiency of grid and transmission systems and the level of renewable-energy consumption, making information and communications technologies more affordable and advancing such new technological drivers as the 5G network, the Internet of things, cloud computing, artificial intelligence and big data, and learning from each other's experiences and collecting and analysing disaggregated data to monitor the progress.

A number of those measures were endorsed at the recent consultative meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia, held in Tashkent. At that meeting, the leaders of five Central Asian States, all of which are landlocked, advocated strengthening coordination and deepening regional cooperation aimed at expanding their transport and transit capabilities, ensuring stable access to seaports and world markets, developing infrastructure and forming modern international logistics. The International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries will be instrumental in all these efforts.

Indeed, to implement the foregoing priorities and overcome capacity constraints, we need the mobilization of reliable long-term funds through South-South, North-South and triangular-cooperation mechanisms. We need to take advantage of new infrastructure development funds and initiatives, such as the new Silk Road Fund and infrastructure initiatives led by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

In addition to official development assistance, aid for trade, remittances and private-sector investments are also important sources for the mobilization of funds. In this regard, I would like to underline Kazakhstan's pilot proposal to establish a United Nations regional centre for the Sustainable Development Goals with a mandate to assist the landlocked developing countries of Central Asia and Afghanistan in such areas as investment, support to small and medium-sized enterprises and the development of our transit and export potential.

As the global Chair of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries for 2020-2021, Kazakhstan envisages building close cooperation with the United Nations system and other relevant organizations, financial institutions, development partners, transit countries and the private sector to forge coherence in achieving the goals of the Vienna Programme of Action. All of these actions are integral to the 2030

Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and other global processes.

As a firm supporter of the multilateral trading system, Kazakhstan is privileged to host the twelfth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization in our capital city, Nur-Sultan, in June 2020. In addition, we are planning to host a special landlocked developing countries ministerial meeting at the margins of the Conference. We urge all States Members and other stakeholders to use these meetings to deliberate on the critical issues that landlocked developing countries are facing.

We also intend to initiate preparations for the Almaty+20 review, which will coincide with the 10-year review of the Vienna Programme of Action. Kazakhstan will coordinate the collective action of landlocked developing countries, in close cooperation with the least developed countries and small island developing States, to combine each of their unique synergies to form a solid negotiating bloc in all relevant forums, so that our voices will be heard loud and clear. A determined drive and resolute efforts will see a greater momentum towards our aspirations for the Vienna Programme of Action and the decade of action on the Sustainable Development Goals declared in September. Only then will our peoples have the peace, security, economic stability and prosperity that they deserve.

**Mr. Siphandone** (Lao People's Democratic Republic): At the outset, I would like to express my appreciation to the President for his leadership and for convening this meeting on the follow-up to the second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries.

The Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic attaches great importance to the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. We have incorporated and implemented measures with regard to its priority areas through our national development plan and strategy, especially in the areas of infrastructure, trade-facilitation and transit-transport systems. As reflected in our midterm report, we have made considerable progress to date, which has contributed to accelerating our socioeconomic development, improving the well-being of our peoples and enhancing the regional connectivity of the country and the integration of its economy into the regional and global systems.

In terms of infrastructure development, the Lao Government has adopted and introduced a policy aimed at transforming the Lao People's Democratic Republic from a landlocked to a land-linked country. This idea rests on the belief that the country can become an inland transit route for countries in the region to use as a trade and communications hub. To this end, the Lao Government has heavily invested in the improvement and development of its transport infrastructure and services, particularly in its efforts to build an efficient and reliable transport system for transit routes and cross-border transport. Examples of that are the development of economic corridors, the construction of bridges connecting Thailand and Myanmar and the introduction of six main railway projects under our railway strategy plan for the period from 2016 to 2030, including Lao-China railway cooperation through the Belt and Road Initiative.

In terms of international trade and trade facilitation, our policy is largely shaped by bilateral, regional and international trade agreements, including via the framework of the free trade zone of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the World Trade Organization. Domestically, in 2018 we established a national committee on trade facilitation with a mandate to monitor, supervise and facilitate trade and business operations in the country. Most recently, the Lao Government deposited its instrument of ratification of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports last month.

Despite the progress we have made, the Lao People's Democratic Republic continues to encounter many challenges in its implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action in terms of financial constraints, inadequate logistics and facilities such as dry ports and distribution centres, cumbersome customs regulations, low levels of production capacity and technology and insufficient human resources, as well as limited export diversification and related competitiveness.

In conclusion, I want to reaffirm our efforts to accelerate our achievement of the overarching goals of the Vienna Programme of Action by continuing to invest in areas in need and enhancing partnerships with countries of transit, development partners and the private sector to effectively implement the Programme of Action in the next five years.

**Ms. Saidmurodzoda** (Tajikistan) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to take this opportunity to

commend the efforts of Under-Secretary-General and High Representative Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu and the Chair and other members of the Bureau of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries for their active leadership and involvement in the preparation and excellent organization of the midterm review of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024.

It is important to point out that landlocked developing countries face specific problems that put them at a disadvantage in terms of the time and financial costs of transporting goods, since shipping them via land is far more expensive than by sea. Like other countries in Central Asia, Tajikistan lacks access to ports. In that regard, freedom of transit, together with the infrastructure and logistical support for shipping, is important to their prospects for development. In order to access seaports, Tajikistan is obliged to use the territories of other countries for shipping. In order to standardize and harmonize its procedures and rules, Tajikistan has ratified nine international conventions and agreements. In 2014, Tajikistan also became a full-fledged member of the World Trade Organization, whose rules provide for freedom of transit. In order to facilitate export, import and transit operations, this year we launched a pilot project for a single-window portal and a trade portal.

The concept of expanding our institutional capacity to develop trade and transport linkages is also reflected in our 2030 national development strategy. One of our development goals is about breaking out of our communications dead end to become a transit State, and we should point out that we have made efforts to develop transport infrastructure. The Government has attracted investments of more than \$2 billion, as a result of which more than 2,200 kilometres of roads and 240 bridges have been built or rehabilitated, six of which are of regional importance and share a border with Afghanistan. Eleven other investment projects totalling more than \$670 million are also being implemented.

With regard to the future development of transport infrastructure under State programmes, we are looking to attract major foreign investment. The implementation of State investment projects in the area of transportation has helped to increase the volume of trade traffic and reduce the travel time from one region to another from 10 hours to four or five. One of the main goals of the Vienna Programme of Action is to help countries like Tajikistan overcome the difficulties related to their

isolation and dependence on raw materials in order to enhance their participation in global trade.

In the years since Tajikistan gained independence, we have seen a number of significant achievements. Our gross domestic product annual growth is more than 7 per cent. With the adoption of a State programme for promoting exports over imports for the period from 2016 to 2020, the volume of our exports has increased, and the implementation of the Central Asia South Asia CASA-1000 electricity transmission and trade project has also helped increase regional trade. For the purposes of integration and cooperation, Tajikistan has signed and become a full party to multilateral framework agreements that include the agreement under the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Export Control Organization and the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Programme, all of which have simplified the procedures for our drivers transporting international goods and passengers in the region. Following the adoption of the Vienna Programme of Action, Tajikistan has made the task of economic transformation central to its national development plans, which is reflected in our 2030 national development strategy, and this year we also declared industrialization our fourth priority area for economic development.

Much has already been done to implement the Vienna Programme of Action, but there remain various unresolved issues, which others in this Hall have already discussed, and which also concern the Republic of Tajikistan. We believe there should be a special focus on the development and expansion of effective shipping systems and the development of transport, including logistics, strengthened competitiveness, expanded trade, regional cooperation, and the encouragement of economic growth and sustainable development. To that end, it will be essential to develop and implement regional projects with the help of donors that can help to ensure free, effective and economical access to the sea, reduce transport and trading operating costs, develop transport and transit corridors linking landlocked developing countries in order to reduce the time spent in transit corridors and at borders, devise mixed transportation that ensures effective transfers from one type of transport to another, and improve logistics by establishing regional transport and logistics hubs.

In conclusion, we would like to point out that Tajikistan has an open-door policy and that we are ready to cooperate.

**Mr. Sougoumi (Chad)** (*spoke in French*): Today, five years after the adoption of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, we are meeting at United Nations Headquarters to conduct its midterm review, draw lessons from past experience and identify opportunities to step up its implementation in the next few years. The Vienna Programme of Action is an important 10-year framework for global development designed to surmount the structural obstacles faced by landlocked developing countries by implementing measures in six priority areas. It duly addresses the conditions, needs and priorities of our countries and is fully aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

There is no need to underscore the fact that the lack of direct sea access causes landlocked developing countries to bear exorbitant transport costs, which adversely affect their trade activities and undermine their competitiveness and development efforts. As one of the least developed landlocked countries, Chad suffers greatly from the structural constraints of being an enclave. This isolation from outside is compounded by internal communication difficulties that make access to certain regions unreliable. The Government of Chad has undertaken considerable efforts, particular in the area of internal infrastructure. Chad also participates in various bilateral, subregional and regional initiatives aimed at intensifying road and rail interconnectedness in Africa. Examples include a project to extend the Cameroonian and Sudanese rail networks to Chad, various infrastructure projects led by the Group of Five for the Sahel and the Trans-Sahara Route project.

In the area of trade facilitation, since 2014 we have been involved in various measures aimed at modernizing our fiscal and customs administration systems, including the World Bank-financed project to migrate the automated customs system from SYDONIA++ to SYDONIA World and the investment policy review undertaken by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development at the Chadian Government's request, with a view to achieving Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 10 and 17. Furthermore, with the technical assistance of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Chad is in the process of finalizing its industrialization and diversification master plan. The objective of this master plan is to industrialize our economy to enable us to free ourselves from dependence on oil, on the one hand, and to diversify our production

structure in order to better tackle the vulnerabilities endured by an economy dominated by monoproduction and very weak product contribution, so as to transition progressively and irreversibly towards a diversified and manufactured product-driven economy, on the other hand.

Within the framework of the regional economic programme of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), during the extraordinary summit held in Yaoundé on 22 November, the Heads of State set out a number of joint priorities, including the connectivity of Chadian border cities to the Cameroonian electricity grid and a fibre-optic project designed to reduce telecommunication and internet costs. In the area of subregional and regional cooperation, we have seen progress with the rendering effective of the free movement of people in the CEMAC zone and the entry into force of the African Continental Free Trade Area — a source of great hope for Chad, which was among the first countries to sign and ratify the relevant treaty.

However, despite these advances, there is still a great deal to be done to address the multiple challenges. Chad is still encountering significant difficulties in implementing the Vienna Programme of Action. The persistence of conflict in our immediate neighbourhood and the insecurity spawned by the Boko Haram terrorist attacks continue to have negative repercussions on the Chadian economy as a whole. All of our imports and exports to and from Nigeria — one of Chad's primary financial partners — Libya and the Central African Republic have been suspended, causing a vast loss of revenue. Moreover, the interruption of improvements to transport infrastructure in recent years, the remoteness of our primary markets, ineffective logistics systems, together with the application of various customs and duties on the principal transit corridor, are all persistent obstacles that broadly hinder external trade flows and development activities.

In view of the challenges I have just mentioned, the international community's sustained commitment to landlocked developing countries — particularly those which, like Chad, are encountering economic and security challenges — is more vital than ever. Indeed, my country, which is fully engaged in the fight against terrorism that is ravaging the Sahel and the Lake Chad basin, dedicates almost 30 per cent of its budgetary revenue to shouldering the costs of security efforts. These costs, coupled with budgetary difficulties caused

by a steady fall in oil prices since 2015, have had an adverse impact on my country's economic and financial situation, significantly reducing the State's ability to fully implement development programmes, such as the 2017-2021 national development programme, the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda.

Notwithstanding all of the aforementioned difficulties, the Government of Chad remains more committed than ever to countering poverty and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. To this end, Chad counts on the support of all its bilateral and multilateral, public and private partners to support it in implementing its 2017-2021 national development programme — a five-year plan entitled “Vision 2030: the Chad we want” — which is aimed at consolidating the foundations of good governance and the rule of law and creating the conditions for sustainable development by, *inter alia*, developing a diversified and competitive economy.

I would like to conclude by making a call to all our bilateral and multilateral, public and private partners, to step up their support for landlocked developing countries so as to ensure achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, of which the Vienna Programme of Action is an integral part.

**Mr. Arriola Ramírez** (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries.

I would like to begin by thanking the President of the General Assembly for convening this extensive High-level Mid-term Review on the Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for being with us today and for his commitment to the agenda for the landlocked developing countries. I also extend my gratitude to Under-Secretary-General Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu, High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, for her dedication to and support for the cause of the landlocked developing countries and for the efforts that both she and her team invested in preparations for the midterm review.

During intergovernmental negotiations on the ambitious Political Declaration that we have just adopted (resolution 74/15), the landlocked developing countries, together with the transit countries and



partners for development, reviewed and evaluated our progress, obstacles, needs and above all the road map towards achieving full compliance with the priority areas of the Vienna Programme of Action. In this regard, I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to the facilitators of the Political Declaration — Her Excellency Ms. Doma Tshering, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Bhutan, and His Excellency Mr. Jan Kickert, Permanent Representative of Austria — for their leadership during negotiations and their active participation in the preparations for this midterm review.

During the first five years of the Vienna Programme of Action, the landlocked developing countries' annual gross domestic product growth rate per capita decreased, and the human development index remained below the world average. Some progress has been made in indicators related to health, education, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and in access to drinking water. Likewise, there has been an increase in access to information and communication technologies. Regional integration has been strengthened, and there has been significant progress in terms of the ratification of the World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade Facilitation and other relevant instruments at the regional and global levels in the area of transport and transit.

However, it is also clear that despite our collective efforts, the progress made is not sufficient to meet the goals of the Vienna Programme of Action. The participation of landlocked developing countries in global trade has decreased. We have not made sufficient progress in diversifying our economies, and our vulnerability to the negative effects of climate change has not decreased. Our countries remain disproportionately affected by desertification, soil erosion, droughts and the retreat of glaciers. Sadly, a third of our population still lives in extreme poverty.

In this context, it is important to stress that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes the specific needs of landlocked developing countries and underscores the need for support for the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action as an integral part of the Agenda.

In conclusion, I should like to stress that this is the time for all of us to unite our efforts through transparent, lasting and effective partnerships so that our geographic situation is not a reason for isolation

but, rather, for interconnection with the world. The time is ripe for the international community to translate into action the principle of not leaving anyone behind. This is clearly the time for us to implement the call to action and accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

**Mr. Gonzato** (European Union): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States.

I would like to start by thanking Austria and the Kingdom of Bhutan for their efforts as co-facilitators of the negotiations 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. We also commend the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States for its support throughout the preparatory process.

While we review the progress achieved halfway through the Vienna Programme of Action, we must also assess the challenges ahead. Let us remind ourselves that the international community has to continue to support the landlocked developing countries on their path towards sustainability and resilience.

Indeed, the European Consensus on Development reconfirms the commitment of the European Union to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement, taking into account the diverse challenges faced by the developing countries, including the landlocked developing countries (LLDCs).

Landlocked developing countries face specific vulnerabilities: vulnerability to the effects of climate change, lack of access to the sea and remoteness and isolation from world markets, while high transit costs and risks impose serious constraints on their development, often preventing them from reaping the full benefit of the trade and investment opportunities created by globalization.

*Mr. Amde (Ethiopia), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

The EU and its member States provide more than half of global official development assistance

and remain by far the largest donor in the world. But addressing these specific challenges requires action at all relevant levels.

It has become clear that past financing patterns will not be sufficient to meet the 2030 Agenda; it is crucial to mobilize all available financing flows. For that to happen, it is key that LLDCs develop a strategic vision of how they plan to finance their sustainable development objectives. That is why we are working with the United Nations to help interested countries develop integrated national financing frameworks.

Integrated national financing frameworks bring together the various elements of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda at the country level and at the same time facilitate nationally owned and Government-led implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They lay out a financing strategy, helping Governments to prioritize actions, manage risks and make the most of diverse financing sources.

Trade infrastructure is crucial for the growth performance of LLDCs. Existing gaps in infrastructure networks and sector inefficiencies hinder economic growth. Transport investment is needed to enhance interconnectivity.

The EU remains focused on making better use of all means of implementation, including capacity-building and mobilizing more domestic resources and private investment. It is in that context that we launched the External Investment Plan for Africa and the European Neighbourhood. The Plan aims to generate up to €44 billion of new investment — in sectors with the greatest potential to drive decent jobs and growth — from sustainable cities and agriculture to energy, transport and digital infrastructure.

The EU also works on sustainable finance to help investors identify and seize environmentally sustainable investment opportunities, thereby connecting global finance with local financing needs. We support countries in addressing the hurdles that prevent them from accessing international global markets and attracting investments, including by building pipelines of bankable projects. The Plan supports the improvement of the investment climate and facilitates public-private dialogue.

The EU is committed to promoting the LLDCs' integration into the multilateral trading system. Support for trade facilitation is an essential component

of the EU's development cooperation, and we support this process through our Aid for Trade Strategy. Regional integration enlarges market size, reduces the cost of inputs, enhances competitiveness for the member countries and helps attract new foreign direct investment. Trade with regional partners will ensure an increase in investors' and consumers' access to goods and services and ensure that economies of scale can be achieved.

The EU supports regional cooperation efforts and welcomes the creation of networks of regional renewable energy, as energy dependency is a major source of economic vulnerability and a key concern for many LLDCs. The promotion of access to sustainable, renewable energy and energy efficiency remains crucial.

Finally, the EU is a firm believer in the fact that economic development must be combined with protection of the environment. Circular economies help to close the loop of product lifecycles through greater recycling and reuse, thereby increasing product value. At the same time, they can contribute to climate-neutral production and resource efficiency, and foster innovation, economic growth and job creation. Sustainable supply chains can ensure that LLDCs are fully integrated in the global sustainability transition to meet the SDGs and deliver on the Paris Agreement.

In closing, the EU and its member States would like to reiterate our unwavering commitment to work with our LLDC partners. We will continue our engagement and concrete support for the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action.

**Mr. Singye** (Bhutan): I join other delegations in thanking the President of the General Assembly for convening today's important meeting and endorse the statements delivered on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries.

The Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 constitutes an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and its timely and effective implementation will greatly contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Bhutan welcomes the midterm review and adoption of the Political Declaration (resolution 74/15). My country had the honour of co-facilitating the intergovernmental negotiations of the Political Declaration with Austria, with whom we were privileged to work. We thank all

delegations for their constructive engagement and the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States for its support.

Assessments on the performance of landlocked developing countries have been mixed. It is clear that more needs to be done and at a faster pace if these countries are to achieve the objectives of the Vienna Programme of Action in the five years that remain. The midterm review should provide the momentum required to fully implement the Vienna Programme of Action by all stakeholders. As the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development has mentioned, a new generation of policies and additional actions are needed to achieve the goals of the Programme by 2024.

Structural economic transformation and productive capacity-building, including through skills development, are key national priorities for Bhutan. We seek to expand investments in tourism, organic agriculture and cottage and small industries and establish an entrepreneurship ecosystem to provide a platform for innovation to generate jobs. In line with our national objective of self-reliance, domestic resource mobilization is accorded high priority. As a result of prudent fiscal management, the Royal Government of Bhutan is currently able to finance up to 64 per cent of its development expenditure through domestic revenue. Bhutan is also implementing the Bhutan for Life programme, an innovative green financing mechanism to augment its resource requirements for conservation of the environment.

Bhutan will continue to undertake key initiatives in the current national development plan cycle to address challenges. As science, technology and innovation play a catalytic role in advancing our national efforts, we request development partners to help us build capacity in these areas, as well as in e-commerce readiness and local capability-building. We will continue our efforts to strengthen regional and international partnerships through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation.

In conclusion, we join fellow landlocked developing countries in calling for the reaffirmation of global commitments and strengthening of global partnerships to address the special needs of our countries in accelerating the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. We need to see renewed

commitment and strengthened international solidarity and partnership to strengthen the resilience and response of landlocked developing countries, which are among the most vulnerable to impacts from climate change.

We hope that today's deliberations will promote greater solidarity and provide impetus to deliver on the hopes and aspirations of over half a billion people in our 32 countries.

**Mr. Kickert** (Austria): We fully align ourselves with the statement made by the observer of the European Union.

This is an important time for landlocked developing countries as we undertake a comprehensive review of the progress achieved in implementing the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 and look at what remains to be done. The latest report of the Secretary-General (A/74/113) shows one thing clearly — we are not on track. As the Vienna Programme of Action is integral to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, accelerating its implementation is fundamental for the landlocked developing countries to be able to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

As a landlocked country itself, Austria understands well the challenges that landlocked developing countries have to confront. It is for this reason that we hosted the second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries in Vienna in 2014, that we co-chair the Group of Friends in New York and that we accepted to take on the facilitation role, together with Bhutan, for the consultations on the outcome document (resolution 74/15). We are grateful that the high-level Political Declaration was consensually agreed by all Member States.

While physical distance and remoteness cannot be erased, many of the challenges related to landlockedness can be successfully overcome. The support of development partners is crucial as a complement to the efforts of landlocked developing countries in this regard. Austrian official development assistance to landlocked developing countries in 2017 amounted to €42.7 million. Half of Austria's priority countries fall within the landlocked developing countries category. Most recently Austria has allocated additional humanitarian funds totalling €1.4 million to Ethiopia and Burkina Faso, where situations of conflict exacerbated by the impact of climate change create dire needs. There is no doubt that we need more resolve in

accelerating the transition towards a climate-neutral, circular and resilient economy and in strengthening our commitments under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

For Austria, regional cooperation and integration is key to addressing the challenges of landlockedness. We are an industrial country with a small domestic market and depend on our export economy. For every €10 we earn, €6 comes from exports. For us, the positive impact of joining the European Union cannot be stressed enough, as some 70 per cent of Austria's foreign trade is intraregional with other European Union member States.

The private sector has a critical role to play in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. The landlocked developing countries should therefore look at what is needed to attract increased and more diversified foreign direct investment. It is our experience that, to fully leverage the impact of the private sector, a stable, predictable and enabling investment environment is needed. To this end, the rule of law, good governance, respect for human rights, gender equality, and accountable and transparent institutions are essential factors for success.

In conclusion, as we continue on our path towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, focused cooperation with the 32 landlocked developing countries is more important than ever to turn their landlockedness into "landlinkedness". The Assembly can continue to count on Austria in this regard.

**Mr. Yabou (Gambia):** At the outset, allow me to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action on Landlocked Least Developed Countries 2014-2024 (A/74/113). I also thank Bhutan and Austria for co-facilitating the negotiation process for the Political Declaration we have just adopted (resolution 74/15). As the report of the Secretary-General observed, progress on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action has been somewhat mixed, hence the need for more action by all stakeholders.

Landlocked developing countries are countries in a special situation, especially in terms of the challenges they continue to face in meeting their transit and transport needs. Africa alone has 16 members in the landlocked developing countries category, and the Gambia, as a coastal country, stands in solidarity with them, as we collectively confront the unique challenges

that they face. With the entry into force of the African Continental Free Trade Area and the launch of the Single African Air Transport Market, which are major developments, a huge opportunity now exists with the potential to facilitate trade and transit between coastal and landlocked countries in Africa. These initiatives should be seized upon as opportunities to advance the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. The capacity of African landlocked developing countries to harness the benefits of these agreements would undoubtedly benefit from the support of the United Nations system and all stakeholders.

The report of the Secretary-General also highlighted a number of challenges that landlocked developing countries continue to encounter in their quest to implement the Vienna Programme of Action. While the volume of overseas development assistance has increased from \$24 billion in 2014 to \$28 billion in 2017, the report observes that the increase was concentrated in only a few landlocked developing countries. Official development assistance plays a significant transformative role in the development agenda of developing countries in general, but more so in countries in special situations, such as landlocked developing countries. The Gambia therefore calls on the international community to increase its share of official development assistance for the benefit of a greater number of landlocked developing countries.

The capacity of landlocked developing countries to harness the benefits of trade facilitation needs to be enhanced. In addition, their capacity to generate relevant statistical data for the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action should also be enhanced through technical assistance from the United Nations system, the international community and regional partners. Greater regional cooperation, through trade facilitation and investments in the joint development of such infrastructure as roads, communication networks, sustainable regional energy grids and other regional initiatives between landlocked developing countries and transit countries can optimize the benefits of trade and commerce for all stakeholders.

In that regard, our Government recently opened the Senegambia bridge, which has drastically reduced the transit time for people and goods between Senegal and the Gambia and the region at large. We are also simplifying our border-crossing operations and improving facilities at our port as a gateway for our neighbours, including those that are landlocked. At



this juncture, we are also studying plans for having dry ports in the interior of the country, with a view to further facilitating the smooth flow of goods and services within the region.

The Gambia stands ready to support regional connectivity initiatives through an integrated approach to simplified border-crossings management and our regional transport corridors. We call on the international community to partner with us and our neighbours with a view to facilitating our regional integration goals, which will in turn translate into benefits for our landlocked countries.

Climate change is one of the major challenges for landlocked developing countries, especially the absence of resilience-building capacities in most of them. The international community must redouble its efforts in providing necessary support for resilience-building in landlocked developing countries, as well as increase its assistance in disaster-risk reduction, including disaster preparedness, early warning and early action.

In conclusion, we call on the United Nations system, the international community and regional organizations to do more to enhance the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. Transit and landlocked developing countries must also engage in partnerships in their mutual desire to advance the goals of the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

**Mrs. Raz** (Afghanistan): Allow me to extend my thanks to the organizers of this comprehensive high-level mid-term review. I also wish to thank the High Representative and her team for their continued efforts and follow-up for the effective implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024. Afghanistan accords great importance to the Vienna Programme of Action, as it provides a critical and comprehensive framework to address the unique challenges that landlocked and developing countries like Afghanistan face.

Regional connectivity and economic integration are essential to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Focusing on such priority areas as trade expansion, infrastructure development and increased economic growth provides the foundation for poverty reduction and sustainable development. As a landlocked developing country that endures continued security concerns, Afghanistan is faced with a number

of challenges to the priority areas identified in the Vienna Programme. The lack of access to regional and international markets is a great challenge for the export of Afghan goods. We understand the vulnerability of solely depending on one country for the import and export of our goods. Living in the complex world of today and faced with the rise of geopolitics in the region, the unpredictable closure of those trade routes exposed one of our major weaknesses. Our traders were subject to a highly unpredictable political environment, not knowing whether their goods, which, given that Afghanistan is an agrarian economy, are usually seasonal fruits and vegetables, could be exported at the right time.

In order to address the challenge, the first priority in our recent economic development agenda was to diversify our trade and connect Afghanistan to markets outside of the region. To do so, not only did we start reaching out to our central Asian neighbouring countries, but we have also looked beyond our region, to markets in Europe and in the countries of the Gulf region. We invested in turning Afghanistan from a landlocked country into a land-connected country. We invested in establishing various trade and transit routes, both to link Afghanistan to the markets beyond the region and to build a transit route that serve the South and Central Asian economies as well. The Lapis Lazuli Transit, Trade and Transport Route agreement, signed between Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Georgia, helps our traders to reach the European market. Similarly, the Chabahar port agreement between Afghanistan, India and Iran provides us with another trading and transit route. We also took an innovative approach in opening air corridors. Afghanistan was recently able to open such corridors with India, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan and Indonesia, which was an important step in increasing our export volume and balancing our trade deficit.

Afghanistan has been strongly determined and convinced that we are capable of transforming our geographical location from a source of vulnerability into a source of stability for greater connectivity and economic integration. We should start looking into the potential that landlocked countries provide. Our unique geographical location can serve as the bridge between regional markets. For instance, to the north of Afghanistan, there is an energy-rich market while, to our south, there is a great demand for energy.

Afghanistan plays a crucial role in connecting those markets for greater development and growth in the region. The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline and the Central Asia South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project are among many projects that help with the supply of gas and energy from Central Asia through Afghanistan to markets in India and Pakistan.

Therefore, despite many difficult odds, Afghanistan has been able to make strides in incorporating the Vienna Programme into the work of our economic development agenda. We have been able to make progress over the past three years, including in the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan, which works with our neighbours to solidify Afghanistan as a regional hub for transit, trade and connectivity. We must acknowledge that regional connectivity is not an issue for discussion for purely economic reasons, but that the discussion of the issue is also driven by various regional political agendas. However, what is important is that we have a greater understanding of its benefits and start to focus on regional economic connectivity, considering it not as a zero-sum game but rather a shared gain for all those who participate.

There is a benefit to living in the twenty-first century: the boom in technology and virtual connection. This virtual connection has helped our nation to be linked faster than our adjustments to the reality. Similarly, the means available today make everything much easier and faster. We are starting to realize that growth and development are no longer beneficial to just a single country, but rather to all. We are in a unique position to think broadly for all of us and embrace the benefits of regional connectivity in our shared market gains.

The report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action (A/74/113), issued in June, showed promising results in some sectors and also areas that require improvement, specifically in relation to trade. We hope that the midterm review and the Secretary-General's report lead to a clear understanding of the challenges still being faced by the landlocked developing countries and presents workable solutions to those challenges. Working collaboratively is the best way to fulfil and implement the Vienna Programme of Action, and we look forward to an inclusive dialogue with and participation from all Member States.

We remain optimistic that the goals and targets laid out in the Vienna Programme of Action will be realized in the next five years. However, in order to achieve this end, the full cooperation of the international community is crucial, especially for those heavy infrastructure projects that help transport linkages. Donors must fulfil their commitments to the landlocked developing countries, especially those in conflict and post-conflict situations. With this support, countries like Afghanistan will continue to work towards sustainable development and lasting peace.

**Mr. Flynn** (Ireland): We fully align ourselves with the statement made earlier by the observer of the European Union.

Let me begin my remarks by thanking and acknowledging the excellent work carried out by the Permanent Representatives of Austria and the Kingdom of Bhutan as facilitators of the Political Declaration adopted earlier today (resolution 74/15).

As we take stock of the progress on the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, we must recognize and salute the commitment of landlocked developing countries to tackling the challenge of structural economic transformation and to promoting diversification, industrialization, sustained and inclusive economic growth and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as their efforts aimed at achieving those ends. However, we must also recognize that the structural challenges facing landlocked developing countries cannot be tackled alone. We cannot allow the benefits of globalization and international finance to pass by our landlocked developing country partners. Of additional increasing concern is that these countries remain highly vulnerable to the adverse and often devastating impact of climate change. Addressing the challenges faced by landlocked developing countries and transit countries requires action by all of us, the international community, working together in global partnership.

Ireland is proud of our development partnerships with landlocked developing countries. In our recently updated international development policy, we have committed to strengthening, deepening and expanding Ireland's existing partnerships with these countries and others. Development cooperation is only one part of deepening our relations with our development partners. At the core of this partnership is a commitment to

helping to promote inclusive economic growth and trade and support initiatives that seek to foster trade and investment.

The vulnerability of many landlocked developing countries to climate change is of growing concern and requires the urgent attention of the multilateral system. With increasing desertification in the Sahel and receding glaciers and land degradation in Central Asia — to name but a few of the challenges — it is clear that landlocked developing countries are among the frontline countries threatened by climate change.

Just last week, as part of our updated development policy, we launched in Dublin a new strategy for cooperation with our African development partners. Ireland's Strategy for Africa to 2025 will see our country strengthen political partnerships with African countries and institutions. It will put in place frameworks to boost trade and investment. Half of Ireland's development partners in Africa are landlocked developing countries, and they will continue to be the focus of Ireland's assistance, albeit with a renewed vigour and approach that focuses on trade and investment.

Openness and a focus on international trade form a cornerstone of Ireland's economic strategy. Ireland is a country that has benefited greatly from international trade. Trade can be an engine for economic growth, and Ireland will step up our support for the rules-based multilateral system, with the World Trade Organization (WTO) at its core, to ensure that landlocked developing countries can participate in and benefit fully from fully free and open trade, including via the WTO's Aid for Trade initiative.

The formation of the African Continental Free Trade Area is a very welcome development. Regional integration has been central to the success of Ireland as a small, open, trading and competitive economy, and it is our hope that this Free Trade Area can provide the same prosperity to Africa as European integration has brought to Europe.

Let me conclude on a note of optimism. While the challenges are great, it is our strong view that there is political will to respond to those challenges and take concrete actions to inject a renewed momentum into the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action.

**Mr. Edrees** (Egypt): At the outset, I would like to thank the President for convening this important and timely meeting to review the needs and challenges

of landlocked developing countries. The Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 represents a significant landmark in the recognition of the special needs and problems of landlocked countries. The implementation of the Vienna Programme aims to bring about real and tangible impacts and include the more than 500 million people in the landlocked developing States, which is almost 7 per cent of the world's population, occupying around 12 per cent of total world land mass.

While globalization is ever expanding and generating significant benefits, they have yet to be shared equitably. Landlocked developing countries have yet to reap the full benefits offered by globalization. In this context, I would like to highlight the following points aimed at enhancing the ability of the landlocked developing countries to become effective partners in international development activities.

First, there is an urgent need to foster productive capacities and structural economic transformation. This target can be achieved by focusing on economic diversification, information and communications technology, energy and human capital development. Secondly, we must move away from a project-based problem-solving approach and towards programme-based interventions. Thirdly, cooperation beyond trade must be strengthened, including on development projects in infrastructure, transport and industry, with a view to intensifying industrialization in the landlocked developing countries through linkages with regional value and global value chains and enhanced intraregional trade and special economic zones. Fourthly, there is also a need to attract private investment, including foreign direct investment. Fifthly, we further encourage strengthening South-South cooperation with the involvement of partners, as well as cooperation among subregional and regional organizations. Sixthly, official development assistance remains key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and should be aligned with the national priorities and development strategies of the recipient countries.

Egypt has always been eager to strengthen its relations with all developing countries based on mutual respect and mutual interest. In this spirit, in November, Egypt organized the fourth edition of the Investment for Africa Forum, in Cairo. The Forum has provided a unique pan-African platform that brings together African Heads of State and Governments in

an inclusive interaction with prominent regional and international investors and international financial institutions. The Forum this year confirmed Egypt's commitment to the Agenda 2063 of the African Union, which aims to leverage our capacities and expertise to realize tangible development results, with the ultimate objectives of meeting the aspirations of the peoples of Africa and putting Africa on the global investment map. In this context, 13 deals worth some \$3 billion were signed at the conference. The Forum made seven recommendations, including to call on international financial institutions and investment funds to finance infrastructure projects in Africa.

The entry into force of the African Continental Free Trade Area will create new opportunities for African countries with its focus on youth employment, developing regional value chains and supporting the creation of regional infrastructure, of which peace and security focal points make up the greatest number. In this regard, Egypt will host the Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development this month.

Egypt also established the Egyptian Agency of Partnership for Development as an institution for promoting South-South cooperation with a view to drawing upon the country's comparative strengths and technical expertise for the benefit of the South, in particular in Africa, especially the least developed countries and the landlocked developing countries. Meanwhile, several Egyptian companies took a leading role in directing investments to the infrastructure sector, particularly telecommunications and construction in landlocked developing countries.

Finally, Egypt welcomes the Political Declaration adopted at this high-level midterm review (resolution 74/15) and remains committed to continuing to strengthen and preserve the interests of the developing world, including least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and African countries, in the light of the mounting challenges that developing countries face, which call for unity and solidarity.

**Mr. Wu Haitao** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the State of Palestine on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 points out a clear direction for the international community to

follow in support of the efforts of landlocked developing countries to address their unique challenges. After five years of implementation, the Vienna Programme of Action has seen some achievements, but its progress has not been balanced. The international community should continue to promote the full implementation of the Vienna Programme and support landlocked developing countries in their efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

First, international development and cooperation should be deepened to create a favourable development environment for landlocked developing countries. North-South cooperation should be adhered to as the main channel. Developed countries should actively honour their official development assistance commitments, while developing countries in general should actively conduct South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation. The United Nations should continue to support the efforts of the landlocked developing countries themselves to realize sustainable development.

Secondly, we must jointly build an open world economy. There is a need to firmly defend multilateralism, oppose unilateralism and protectionism, maintain the multilateral trade system, implement the Trade Facilitation Agreement and help landlocked developing countries better integrate into the world trade system.

Thirdly, actions must be taken to implement the Vienna Programme of Action and build a global partnership of interconnectivity. The international community must prioritize action and strengthen connectivity and cooperation between landlocked developing countries and transit countries, help landlocked developing countries address their geographical constraints and promote these countries' better integration into regional and global supply chains, so as to facilitate their all-around economic and social advancement.

As the largest developing country, China has always supported the development of landlocked developing countries. Under the Belt and Road Initiative, China is actively engaging in practical cooperation with them. China will continue to support the connectivity of landlocked developing countries in infrastructure, trade, digital industry, energy and other areas. It will also to create space for cooperation that features openness, mutual benefit, win-win opportunities and



equality to jointly realize sustainable development and build a community with a shared future for humankind.

**Mrs. Zappia (Italy):** Italy aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union.

I would like to congratulate representatives of Austria and Bhutan for their effective facilitation of the negotiations on the Political Declaration that we adopted earlier (resolution 74/15). We are also grateful to the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States for its valuable support in the preparatory process.

Today's comprehensive high-level midterm review of the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 provides an important opportunity to reaffirm the support of the international community for the landlocked developing countries — a group of States Members of the United Nations that face a spectrum of similar constraints and challenges of a geographic, commercial and environmental nature — in their efforts towards achieving sustainable development. As indicated in the relevant report of the Secretary-General (A/74/113), it is encouraging that in the first half of the decade 2014-2019 significant progress has been registered in most of the landlocked developing countries, especially in terms of socioeconomic development. However, these advancements are still insufficient, and there is an evident need to increase the efforts in the main areas of the Vienna Programme of Action, namely, access to the seas, trade, infrastructure, regional cooperation, structural economic transformation and international support, in order for the landlocked developing countries to accelerate towards the full realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). From a strategic perspective, priority should be given to four lines of action.

First, regional integration must be advanced. Neighbouring transit countries are key to landlocked developing countries' exports and constitute potential end-markets for their products. Regional integration processes may improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of transport infrastructures, trade facilities and market mechanisms, thereby stimulating domestic investments in landlocked developing countries and attracting foreign direct investments.

Secondly, the access of landlocked developing countries to electricity and renewable energy sources must be improved. Access to energy is a prerequisite for any meaningful sustainable development strategy, and renewable energy is increasingly indispensable. Italy has consolidated experience in strengthening the capabilities of the landlocked developing countries in the field of energy access from renewable sources, particularly in Africa, with active involvement of the most relevant actors of the Italian private sector. As an example, I would mention the project carried out by Italy in Zambia, within the framework of the World Bank Group's Scaling Solar programme and with the active engagement of the Italian energy company Enel. Similar initiatives are in place in other landlocked developing countries in Africa, such as Ethiopia, in the framework of national programmes aimed at energy diversification and the construction of solar plants.

Thirdly, a greater role of the private sector must be promoted. The growth of a development-oriented domestic private sector and the attraction of international investors are largely dependent on the establishment in the landlocked developing countries of a favourable normative framework, which includes protecting and reinforcing property rights, strengthening the rule of law and democratic multilevel participation, and granting equitable access to economic opportunities to all vulnerable categories, in particular women and youth. It is also important to support the capacity of the landlocked developing countries in managing complex investment-related negotiations. In this respect, I would like to recall that Italy has been the initial sponsor of the Investment Support Programme for the Least Developed Countries, promoted by the Office of the High Representative and the International Development Law Organization, to provide legal and professional assistance for investment-related negotiations and dispute settlement, which is relevant in that context, as 17 of the 32 landlocked developing countries are also classified as least developed countries.

Fourthly, we must invest in human capital. Investing in education and training is a fundamental element of any long-term strategy for sustainable development. Increased levels of education would facilitate the required increase in labour productivity and create new possibilities for the people of landlocked developing countries, especially those in the most vulnerable categories, to tap into the opportunities afforded by an increasingly globalized economy. Italy devotes

special attention to cooperation programmes in this field, especially in Africa, where half of the landlocked developing countries are located.

Let me conclude by reaffirming Italy's long-term commitment to partnering with the landlocked developing countries, both bilaterally and through the European Union, towards the successful implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the full achievement of the SDGs.

**Mr. Blanchard** (Canada): I would first like to commend the Permanent Representatives of Austria and of Bhutan, the two facilitators of the informal consultations, for their excellent work. I also thank the Permanent Representative of Paraguay for his leadership as Chair of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries.

There is great cause for celebration today. I am inspired by what I have heard this morning. As we have heard this morning, while much remains to be done and there are challenges, there is also ample work being done. It is great that we are all in this Hall to share our views, our approaches and best practices and discuss how we do things together and partner with each other.

Canada values our relationships with our landlocked developing country partners. We are committed to strengthening cooperation with them in their efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in line with their national development strategies and priorities. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides an unprecedented opportunity for us to work together towards our common goals of peace, prosperity and sustainable development.

Global development progress has indeed been uneven to date, especially for countries in special situations, including some of the landlocked developing countries. In the face of severe structural impediments to sustainable development and remoteness from world markets, landlocked developing countries are sometimes at risk of being left behind. The adverse effects of climate change, particularly land degradation and drought, threaten to compound these challenges. At the same time, as we have heard this morning, there are opportunities for landlocked developing countries to harness new technologies and the digital economy in support of sustainable development. Recognizing that different States face different challenges and that there is no such thing as a one-size-fits-all approach, Canada seeks to respond to the needs, opportunities

and priorities of our partners while taking into account their specific contexts.

*(spoke in French)*

For instance, Canada is working with Ethiopia to increase agricultural productivity, improve nutrition and promote employment and livelihood opportunities, particularly for women. Canada also supports the Productive Safety Net Programme in Ethiopia to help the country meet the needs of the most food-insecure households and improve their livelihoods. In Afghanistan, Canada's development assistance focuses on health, education, the rights of women and girls as well as on increasing economic opportunities for women. Canada also provides support to help strengthen the resilience of populations affected by crises. We support policies and programmes within Mali to improve access to reproductive, maternal and child health-care services and primary education. Canada's assistance also contributes to peace and security and economic growth through the support it provides to agricultural production and the economic empowerment of women in rural areas.

*(spoke in English)*

Canada is also working with partners to mobilize additional financing for sustainable development, in recognition that we must harness public, private, domestic and international sources of funding — all sources of funding — in order to achieve the global goals. We are expanding our development finance toolkit and establishing new innovative partnerships that catalyse private capital for the SDGs. The High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development that was held in this Hall in September demonstrated that there is interest in increasing the share of new forms of development finance available to least developed countries and landlocked developing countries.

Canada recognizes the infrastructure needs of landlocked developing countries in terms of driving growth and supports global efforts aimed at increasing private-sector investments in infrastructure through the Group of Seven, the Group of 20, the United Nations and multilateral development banks. Our support for the Closing the Investment Gap Initiative, developed at the United Nations through the Group of Friends of Financing for Development and the World Bank Group's Global Infrastructure Hub, helps develop critical infrastructure projects around the world, including in landlocked developing countries.

Landlocked developing countries are important economic partners for Canada, and we recognize that their greater integration into world trade and global value chains is vital to increasing their competitiveness and ensuring their economic development. We applaud the efforts made by landlocked developing countries, with the support of their development partners and transit countries, to implement the Trade Facilitation Agreement and adopt measures to simplify trade regulations, documents and procedures. In order to promote economic growth in the world's poorest countries, Canada has extended duty-free treatment to imports from least developed countries since 1983 through its Least Developed Country Tariff. Many landlocked developing countries benefit from these measures.

Promoting economic security is one of Canada's five priorities for the Security Council. If elected for the 2021-2022 term, Canada would continue to work to align public and private capital with the SDGs and develop new and innovative ways to increase investment in developing countries, including landlocked developing countries. Canada is listening carefully to the interests and concerns expressed by the landlocked developing countries, and we look forward to continued collaboration with them. Together we can accelerate the pace of implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda in order to advance sustainable development and leave no one behind.

**Mr. Kafwaya (Zambia):** It is my honour and privilege to be speaking on the occasion of the comprehensive high-level midterm review on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024.

Zambia remains very committed to the ideals and of the Vienna Programme of Action and its implementation. Our country is implementing it, together with other national and global initiatives, such as Zambia's seventh national development plan and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. One example of our commitment to the Programme of Action was our hosting in 2015 of the high-level meeting on the follow-up to the second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries, at which His Excellency Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia, officiated.

In Zambia, we have made progress in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of

Action at the country level. This progress has been supported by the overwhelming will of the Zambian people, development partners and regional economic communities. We remain indebted to those who have supported this progress.

I would now like to share some of the progress that we have made at the national level. In terms of fundamental transit and policy issues, the Zambian Government has launched a new transport policy with a view to transforming the country into a regional transport and logistics hub, which is to be achieved through the development of transport corridors in the Southern Africa subregion. In this vein, Zambia has been working with its neighbouring countries and other stakeholders on the domestication of agreed legal frameworks, transit rules and policies.

In terms of infrastructure development and rehabilitation, Zambia has observed the importance of developing infrastructure. The country has therefore made significant investments in both the development and rehabilitation of infrastructure in renewable energy, water and sanitation systems, information and communication technologies and transport so as to facilitate meaningful development. With regard to structural transformation, the Government has planned to diversify the country's economy beyond mining to embrace agriculture, tourism and manufacturing and to move towards value addition in mining and the processing of precious and semi-precious stones. Furthermore, we have developed our first-ever industrial policy, which is aimed at improving our productive capacity and promoting the production and consumption of local goods.

Zambia therefore welcomes 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 just adopted (resolution 74/15) and looks forward to continued and expanded support from our development partners and developing transit countries, as well as regional and international organizations and other stakeholders.

**Mr. Khan (Pakistan):** Allow me first to congratulate the President of the General Assembly on the holding of this high-level meeting, which will provide us with an opportunity to take stock of the progress to integrate landlocked countries into global economies.

I align myself with the statement delivered by the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

In view of their specific geographical remoteness, landlocked developing countries face specific challenges. These challenges are exacerbated by the inadequacy of their infrastructure, connectivity and corridor facilities to overcome structural deficiencies, as well as other limitations on their capacity to join world trade. It is worrisome to note that progress in priority areas of the Vienna Programme of Action remains mixed and that one third of the populations of landlocked developing countries continues to live in poverty, as these countries still account for less than 1 per cent of the global merchandise trade. In order to overcome these shortcomings, there is a need to make progress on structural and economic transformation in the global financial and connectivity architecture.

As a transit country, Pakistan has made significant steps and concerted efforts towards providing assistance to landlocked developing countries. Our Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement, which was signed in 2010 with the aim of providing the necessary development means to landlocked Afghanistan, has contributed a great deal in this regard. The volume of trade from this corridor in 2018 alone was \$5.5 billion. The opening of the Torkham crossing for commercial traffic on a 24/7 basis has added another tangible dimension to the close cooperation that exists between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

One of the reasons we joined the China's Belt and Road Initiative is our understanding that it fully complements and contributes to the goals and objectives set out in the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is underpinned by connectivity and cooperation in reshaping trade, investment and infrastructure development in Asia, Africa and Europe. The scale and scope of the Initiative is enormous, and it stands out as the most significant initiative of our times for promoting transnational connectivity, enhancing trade and investment and facilitating cooperation to fully utilize the economic potential of participating countries.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is a central part of the Belt and Road Initiative network and is an all-inclusive economic corridor for the region. It is the fastest-growing and most effective of all the projects in the Belt and Road Initiative. The China-

Pakistan Economic Corridor is expected to bring huge economic and development benefits to both countries, and other countries in the region. By promoting regional connectivity, enhancing trade and investment and stimulating global growth, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is expected to help improve the lives of an estimated 3 billion people in China, South Asia, Central Asia and beyond.

Our energy-connectivity project, the Central Asia South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project, will further our efforts aimed at connectivity with the landlocked countries of Central Asia. Our participation in the South Asian Free Trade Area, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Economic Cooperation Organization is proof of Pakistan's commitment to the development of landlocked countries in our region in line with the Vienna Programme of Action.

In conclusion, I would reiterate that Pakistan stands ready to support landlocked developing countries, as we understand that the Vienna Programme of Action is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda. Its full implementation is fundamental if we are to leave no one behind and reach those who are furthest behind first.

**Mr. Koba** (Indonesia): Indonesia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

It is an honour for Indonesia to participate in today's meeting. We consider the midterm review to be an opportunity to reinvigorate political momentum and strengthen international cooperation to support the development of landlocked developing countries. Moreover, Indonesia welcomes the adoption of resolution 74/15, entitled "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", and expresses its appreciation to the Permanent Representatives of Bhutan and Austria for their valuable leadership throughout the intergovernmental consultations.

The world today is characterized by the growing interdependence in trade, finance and technology, as well as the increasingly uneven distribution of wealth and knowledge within and among countries. While some progress has been achieved by the landlocked developing countries to advance their economies and development, this group of countries continues to



face specific constraints and challenges, including poverty, low productivity, limited economic resources, deficiencies in physical infrastructure and inadequate market access. We welcome development in such areas as the deepening of regional integration and cooperation, the high rate of acceptance of the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement and improvements in the quality of infrastructure and access to energy and information and communication technologies. Progress has also been recorded in the areas of health, education, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

Unfortunately, limited progress has been experienced in other areas. One third of the population of landlocked developing countries is still living in extreme poverty, while the prevalence of undernourishment has increased and the share of landlocked developing countries in global merchandise trade remains very small — decreasing, in fact, to only 0.98 per cent in 2018.

It is imperative to strengthen partnerships and collaboration and muster support and assistance in order to transform landlocked developing countries into “landlinked” countries. Indonesia stands ready to work with the United Nations and the international community to achieve this objective through, inter alia, bridging the financing gap for transportation and infrastructure and enhancing capacity to participate in the global supply chain. Moreover, it is important to address the means of implementation in relation to the needs of landlocked developing countries. Although significant efforts in domestic resources mobilization have been made, enormous financing gaps persist. The international community must provide enhanced resources to these countries in the form, for example, of official development assistance, foreign direct investment and South-South and triangular cooperation. They should also continue to provide technical assistance and capacity development support, based on the needs and priorities of the respective LLDCs. Such support can be in areas such as economic diversification, the promotion of innovation and technology and the strengthening of resource mobilization, including obtaining access to available financing.

We all have the shared duty to leave no one behind. Indonesia reiterates that the Vienna Programme of Action is the global commitment to which we are all dedicated. We must continue our support for LLDCs in accelerating its implementation.

**Ms. Rodríguez Abascal (Cuba)** (*spoke in Spanish*):

The delegation of Cuba aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Cuba wishes to express its appreciation for the convening of this high-level meeting to follow up on and propose actions in relation to the provisions of the Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024.

The timely and effective implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action is critical to fully achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Both development programmes must be pursued in unison, as the delays in their implementation have an impact on our aspirations for sustainability and resilience. In that regard, we welcome the progress made in implementing the Vienna Programme of Action, while regretting that significant challenges and objectives remain to be achieved for the sustainable development of landlocked developing countries.

Cuba recognizes the particular needs and challenges faced by landlocked developing countries, arising from their circumstances and geographical limitations, which negatively affect their sustainable development. To that end, we urge the international community, in particular the United Nations development system, to give special attention to the six priority areas of the Vienna Programme of Action in a coordinated, coherent and effective manner. We must work to strengthen the means of implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, in particular with regard to financing, technology transfer, capacity-building and the promotion of partnerships.

We must also promote a new, just and balanced international economic order. Developed countries must honour their historic responsibilities and international commitments, including regarding official development assistance, as well as more ambitious targets for climate-change mitigation.

Cuba supports the universal right to development based on mutual respect and recognition of common but differentiated responsibilities, including the special vulnerabilities of landlocked developing countries.

On that basis, and in line with the principle of solidarity and close fraternal ties with developing peoples that Cuba has always advocated, we reaffirm our strong commitment to South-South cooperation as a means of contributing to the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action.

**Mr. Margaryan** (Armenia): At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, President of the General Assembly, for prioritizing the needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within the Assembly's agenda. We also thank Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa Utoikamanu, High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, and her Office for the continuous efforts to mobilize international support for the implementation of programmes and initiatives for Landlocked Developing Countries in partnership with the relevant agencies and bodies of the United Nations, civil society, academia and other relevant stakeholders.

The high-level midterm review on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 is an important milestone to assess the progress and identify the gaps and challenges ahead of the second, decisive five-year period for the realization of the Programme's objectives.

The implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action should be seen in the broader context of the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as its interlinkage with other strategic framework documents, such as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. Addressing the specific challenges faced by landlocked developing countries is essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. As a landlocked developing country, Armenia strongly advocates regional and subregional cooperation and connectivity through trade and transport. In the development of regional connectivity, we are guided by the principles of inclusivity, transparency and equal and non-discriminatory partnership. Connectivity plays a crucial role in promoting cross-border cooperation and connecting people divided by conflicts and crises, thereby promoting confidence and trust.

Despite the volatile situation in our region, Armenia continues to develop its transit potential as a corridor between Europe and Asia. The North-South highway project, which is currently under way, will connect the Persian Gulf with the ports of the Black Sea.

The Government of Armenia prioritizes development of information and communications technologies (ICT) as an important tool to lower costs and facilitate access

to foreign markets, thus contributing to an increase in foreign trade. With a very high Internet penetration rate and a rapidly growing ICT industry, Armenia has ensured open and affordable Internet access throughout the country.

I would like to stress that unilateral coercive measures are detrimental to the sustainable development of landlocked countries and their effective integration into the global markets. The continuing land blockade of Armenia's borders by its neighbours from the west and the east multiplies the challenges arising from being a landlocked country. The attempts to isolate Armenia from regional economic cooperation and transport corridors violate the principles of international law and are contrary to the aims of the Convention on Transit Trade of Land-locked States, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the norms of the multilateral trading system.

The land blockade directly contradicts the letter and spirit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, impeding the realization of economic and social rights and economic participation, thus negatively affecting the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The construction of regional transport corridors, circumventing a particular country, not only does not promote regional connectivity and cooperation but solidifies the dividing lines. It is therefore crucial that the international community, international financial organizations and other development actors conduct a thorough and careful assessment of regional transport infrastructure projects.

Armenia attaches special importance to inclusive regional cooperation between landlocked and transit countries as an essential prerequisite for removing political barriers to the free movement of people, goods and services and the realization of economic and social rights and the right to development.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Armenia's commitment to the full and effective implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action in cooperation with the United Nations and our international partners.

**Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Ecuador associates itself with the statement read out by the observer of the State of Palestine on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Ecuador reiterates its support and underlines the need to step up cooperation commitments towards the 32 Landlocked

Developing Countries around the world on their path to development.

We appreciate the presentation of the Secretary-General's report, contained in document A/74/113, on progress in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, which focuses on a review of achievements and outstanding challenges over the first five years. While we welcome the fact that the real gross domestic product (GDP) of landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) rose to 4.5 per cent in 2017 and is expected to remain at that level until 2020, the difference in GDP growth among these countries is of concern. It is also worrying that, overall, their share of world exports declined by 18 per cent between 2014 and 2019, as did employment rates, falling from approximately 27 per cent in 2015 to 25.5 per cent in 2017.

In our region, and according to the most recent report of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean on the issue, we welcome the fact that efforts have been made to improve the transport and connectivity infrastructure of landlocked developing countries. International cooperation in various areas, support for disaster-resistant infrastructure, initiatives to close digital and innovation gaps and access to financial resources are vital to support the structural transformation of such countries.

Globally, we note with concern that, owing to such challenges, between 2014 and 2018 the average ranking of landlocked developing countries on the Human Development Index of the United Nations Development Programme was 20 per cent below the world average.

As a developing country, my Government shares several challenges with Governments of other Member States, namely, ending poverty, hunger, combating inequalities, building peaceful, just and inclusive societies, protecting human rights, promoting sustained and inclusive economic growth and achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions — economic, social and environmental.

We must therefore note the actions of various national and international actors that led to the political, economic and social destabilization plot faced by my Government between 3 and 14 October in order to bring about a coup d'état. There were blocked roads and highways, assaults, looting, damage to public and private facilities of various productive and Government

sectors, significant violence against law enforcement, such as attacks, kidnappings and aggression, attacks on the independent media and even restrictions on relief personnel carrying out humanitarian work, as in the case of the Red Cross. The damage to facilities and the initial estimated losses of these evil actions are estimated to be several billion dollars, particularly for those small and medium-sized entrepreneurs whose means of production were affected.

In reiterating our full respect for international law, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, my Government reaffirms its commitment to democracy, good governance, justice and the rule of law and to the responsible role of the State in promoting social protection measures to achieve a just, balanced, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world.

We emphasize our duty to build peaceful societies, in which frank and open dialogue, respect and tolerance are the tools to resolve disputes and with Governments that are responsible and accountable to their constituents.

**Ms. Ward** (Botswana): This meeting comes at an opportune time for us to examine and reflect on our achievements and challenges in our efforts to implement the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024. As clearly set out in the background papers prepared by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, our countries are still faced with challenges emanating from being landlocked. Such challenges have been ably articulated by speakers before me. In the interest of time, I will not repeat what has already been said.

Botswana has made and continues to make efforts to address these challenges. Allow me to share Botswana's national efforts aimed at improving interconnectivity and competitiveness. Let me first reiterate that Botswana's national development priorities are growth and economic resilience, economic diversification, employment creation and poverty alleviation. Botswana has put in place policies and programmes to achieve these objectives, including, among others, our national development plan and Vision 2036.

Furthermore, infrastructure development, including information and communications technology, transport and energy infrastructure, has been afforded more prominence in the development of our National

Development Plan 11. To that end, Botswana is also actively pursuing strategies for regional cooperation on infrastructure development and integration as a means of creating more active trade routes and expanding market access. Botswana, together with Namibia and South Africa, has developed a Trans Kalahari Corridor, which is a highway aimed at facilitating the faster and cheaper movement of goods between the three countries. Botswana has also signed a memorandum of understanding for the development of the North-South Corridor, which will further link Botswana to other trading partners in the north and the south.

Botswana and Zambia are in the process of constructing the Kazungula Bridge, which is a joint project between the two countries aimed at further facilitating movements of goods and persons along the North-South Corridor as well as to facilitate trade.

In relation to the infrastructural development projects mentioned above, Botswana further envisages the development of the trans-Kalahari railway to Namibia. The railway will also link to Zambia via the Kazungula road and rail bridge. These projects are expected to reduce transport costs and link Botswana to regional and global markets.

Botswana attaches great importance to the implementation of the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement, as attested to by the fact that the country was one of the first to ratify the Agreement and to present notifications of all categorizations of its provisions. Botswana is undertaking reforms to facilitate the implementation of the Agreement. Botswana is grateful for the assistance of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, which has enabled us to develop a national trade facilitation roadmap as well as training for the members of the national trade facilitation committee.

As I conclude, allow me to share the fact that Botswana has completed the review of its national trade policy and national export strategy, which are intended to contribute to, inter alia, economic and export diversification, improved global competitiveness, private-sector development, citizen economic empowerment and poverty eradication. Those policies were reviewed through the assistance of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the Commonwealth secretariat, respectively.

Finally, allow me to express my Government's appreciation to other development partners and

international organizations for their continued support and to emphasize that we would not have done all the above without their assistance. We also fully support the Political Declaration of the High-level Midterm Review on the Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action adopted this morning (resolution 74/15) and thank the co-facilitators for their tireless efforts.

**Ms. Quiel Murcia** (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to begin by recognizing the importance of convening the midterm comprehensive review of the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 and welcoming the adoption of the Political Declaration by consensus at the beginning of this meeting (resolution 74/15).

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Five years since the adoption of the Vienna Programme of Action, with its six priority areas addressing the cross-cutting challenges and specificities of the 32 landlocked developing countries, progress has undoubtedly been made. However, the holistic approach, building on the intrinsic linkage with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, requires significant additional efforts to effectively address their disadvantages and constraints. The special needs of landlocked developing countries and the challenges arising from their lack of access to the sea constitute serious impediments to their full development and, in particular, to their integration into global trade.

The first five-year period of the Vienna Programme of Action highlights the fact that the eradication of poverty and disaster-risk reduction related to the devastating effects of climate change remain unavoidable priorities and that accelerating the pace of those efforts is increasingly indispensable. The need to implement actions in specific areas, such as the mobilization of financial resources, the generation of reliable and periodical data as a basis for policy formulation, technical assistance and capacity-building support in various fields for those 30-odd countries, is fundamental for leveraging the Vienna Programme of Action.

In my delegation's view, it is also important to recognize that all countries face challenges at different levels, in particular with regard to establishing a coherent and consistent development-financing framework that provides for the coordination and combining of actors,



instruments and modes of financing. We welcome the reference in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action to the importance for the international community to increase its support in the form of official development assistance, South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation, as well as foreign direct investment for the advancement of the Vienna Programme of Action (A/74/113, para. 107).

For Panama, as a developing country, quality infrastructure and connectivity play a key role in achieving development and remain a challenge for developing countries. It is therefore crucial to establish strategic alliances that enable greater public and private investment in infrastructure with the aim of closing the gaps within and among countries. Accordingly, the year 2020 will offer the opportunity to strengthen the dialogue on sustainable transport, which is of vital importance to countries in special situations, and the discussion of the impact of climate change and the cross-cutting actions required to address each of those challenges and make the most of opportunities.

I conclude by expressing my Government's commitment to showing solidarity and joining the collective efforts to effectively implement the Political Declaration and Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries. Ensuring the resilience of this group of countries must be a firm commitment of all.

**Mr. Kakanur (India):** We associate ourselves with the statement delivered by the observer of the State of Palestine on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

We would also like to thank the Permanent Representatives of Bhutan and Austria, for their leadership and dynamism in the facilitating the negotiations on the Political Declaration adopted earlier (resolution 74/15).

Today's meeting provides a useful occasion for Member States to deliberate on the challenges faced by landlocked developing countries, strategize on concrete actions and share best practices that would help unlock the potential of these countries.

Despite the remarkable socioeconomic progress the world has witnessed over the past few decades, the geographic remoteness of landlocked developing countries, compounded by weak transit, transport and customs infrastructure, resource and capacity

constraints and limited access to technology, has prevented the effective integration of landlocked developing countries into the global economic and supply-chain system. The implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 is integral to the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the commitment of the international community to leaving no one behind, including the landlocked developing countries. As a transit country and as a fellow developing country, India remains fully committed to offering its support and experience to landlocked developing countries.

India has established the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) initiative to strengthen economic cooperation and the transport connectivity of landlocked Nepal and Bhutan and to give the BBIN countries greater access to global supply chains. The motor-vehicles agreement among the BBIN countries will promote the continuation of multimodal cargo movement, which will help reduce costs. Cooperation under the BBIN initiative is also being discussed in the areas of power, water resource management, inland-waterways connectivity and rail connectivity.

The India-Afghanistan direct air-freight corridor, established in 2017, provides Afghan nationals, including the country's farming and trading communities, with quick, direct access to the Indian markets for health services and education and for marketing their produce and commodities. India is also working closely with Afghanistan and Iran to develop the Chabahar port. Linking Chabahar to the Persian Gulf and Central Asia through the International North-South Transport Corridor is another project on which India is working closely with Iran and other partners.

India's two latest initiatives, namely, the International Solar Alliance and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, are aimed at assisting developing countries, least developed countries and landlocked developing countries gain access to affordable solar energy and develop disaster-resilient infrastructure, respectively. These initiatives will help successfully implement the 2030 Agenda, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

In 2017, in the spirit of South-South cooperation, India set up the \$150 million India-United Nations Development Partnership Fund to support

Southern-owned, Southern-led and demand-driven transformational projects aimed at fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals in developing, least developed and landlocked developing countries. In approximately two years, the Fund has been able to develop 38 projects in 36 partner countries.

Let me once again reassure the Assembly of India's strong support and steadfast commitment to continuing to share its development experience and expertise with landlocked developing countries in order to overcome the challenges they face and achieve the 2030 Agenda.

**The Acting President:** We have heard the last speaker on the list for this meeting. We will hear the remaining speakers this afternoon.

### **Programme of work**

**The Acting President:** Before adjourning, I would like to draw the attention of members to the date of recess of the current session. Members will recall that, at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 20 September, the General Assembly decided that the seventy-fourth session would recess on Monday, 16 December (see A/74/PV.2). However, in view of the work that remains to be completed for this part of the session, I would like to propose to the Assembly that it postpone the date of recess to Tuesday, 24 December.

May I take it that the Assembly agrees to postpone the date of recess of the seventy-fourth session to Tuesday, 24 December 2019?

*It was so decided.*

**The Acting President:** I should also like to consult members regarding an extension of the work of the Fifth Committee.

Members will recall that, at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 20 September 2019, the General Assembly approved the recommendation of the General Committee that the Fifth Committee would complete its work on Friday, 13 December. However, the President has been informed by the Chair of the Fifth Committee that the Committee requests an extension of its work to Tuesday, 24 December, as such an extension would facilitate a comprehensive consideration of the agenda items before the Committee.

May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to extend the work of the Fifth Committee until Tuesday, 24 December 2019?

*It was so decided.*

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*