**DRAFT CLOSING REMARKS**

**FOR**

**H.E MR RAUL CANO RICCIARDI,**

**AMBASSADOR OF PARAGUAY**

**AT THE**

**DEDICATED SESSION ON TRANSIT FOR LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING AND TRANSIT WTO MEMBERS**

**GENEVA, SWITZERLAND**

**16TH June 2023**

**Representative of International Organisations**

**Excellencies**

**Distinguished Delegates,**

1. It gives me great honour to address this closing session.
2. I would like to applaud all of you for your dedication and active engagement in this dialogue on addressing specific transit challenges faced by LLDCs. I thank you all for your contributions.
3. Allow me to convey special thanks and appreciation to the Permanent Mission of Botswana for coordinating and organizing this dedicated session for the LLDCs group.
4. Special thanks are also conveyed to the resource persons and representatives of COMESA, EAC, World Bank, World Customs Organisation, WTO, UN-OHRLLS, UNCTAD for providing valuable insights in addressing common transit challenges LLDCs are confronted with.
5. The dedicated session covered a wide range of topics from transit coordination, transit corridors, formalities for goods in transit, key steps involved in tracking goods in transit, guarantees as well as the Vienna Programme of Action. Importantly, the session highlighted potential solutions for addressing transit challenges.
6. I understand that the session appreciated outcomes of the training workshop on transit issues for Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), which includes a set of comprehensive recommendations and proposals that address the specific transit challenges faced by LLDCs. Thanks to all the capital delegates who presented today from Eswatini, Gabon, Pakistan and Zimbabwe.
7. The session therefore provided a platform to collaborate, brainstorm, and consolidate knowledge gained from the training session into actionable solutions.
8. Our session entailed intense discussions on key potential solutions for addressing transit challenges. Allow me to mention but a few of those possible solutions, strengthening coordinated and integrated border management mechanisms; joint control of the movement of people and goods across borders; capacity building initiatives using international instruments to ensure the best and most efficient practices; harmonisation of transit procedures; as well as the Vienna Programme of Action.
9. The crucial role of capacity building was emphasised in the session. Different development partners also highlighted the assistance they offer to LLDCs. Adequate capacity-building cannot be overstated in LLDCs since it will immensely enable our policymakers and transit experts to contribute effectively in designing sound and evidence-based policies, that we urgently need to deal with our existing challenges as LLDCS.
10. Discussions under the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA) cannot be ignored. Through the programme, many LLDCS have made incremental investments in quality infrastructure, and in raising awareness of trade-facilitation issues, which resulted in significant reduction in lead time to import and export on most corridors with connectivity issues, such as the development of internet and Communications Technology (ICT), also proving useful.
11. However, as has also been indicated during the session progress has been slow in relation to the implementation of regional cooperation schemes to facilitate transit of goods, and the closing of gaps and shortfalls in bilateral, regional, and multilateral agreements.
12. Hence, it is essential to engage in collaborative efforts with our neighboring nations to effectively address transit challenges in a coordinated manner. This will undoubtedly entail increased investments and the refinement of cross-border agreements that prioritize the needs of landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and enhance customs facilitation. Moreover, it will help alleviate persistent bottlenecks in administrative and operational procedures that involve transit countries.
13. The important takeaways from this session will be captured in a summary report, which will be presented to the formal WTO Trade Facilitation committee meeting later today.

**Distinguished Delegates,**

1. Allow me to conclude by expressing my appreciation for your diligent efforts thus far. However, it is important to recognize that the true labor lies ahead of us. We are now embarking on a collective endeavor, joining forces with our partners, to assist landlocked and transit countries in meeting their capacity requirements and effectively tackling transit-related challenges. This strengthens our continued collaborative journey towards facilitating smoother transit operations. I would like to take this opportunity to invite all organizations and partners to participate actively during the next Regional Conference for LLDCs for Latin America which will be held in my country, the 27 and 28 July in Asuncion. This high level meeting is key to build support towards the Third UN Conference for LLDCs in 2024.
2. I would like to thank all of you once again for your engagement and encourage you all, to deploy the knowledge and skills gained during this session to inform policymaking and drive implementation of transit related agreements and programmes in our respective countries.
3. My great appreciation also goes to our new chair, Carlos from the dear delegation of Ecuador, the Secretariat team, as well as the interpreters for their important support to our dedicated session.

 Thank you.