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WORKING PAPER

ASSEMBLY — 41ST SESSION

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 24: Technical Assistance Programme

IMPROVING AIR CONNECTIVITY IN LLDCs

(Presented by Mongolia)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Due to the inherent geographical disadvantage, limited human and financial resources landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) face exceptional challenges in developing safe, regular, reliable and cost-effective air transport systems. The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified the pre-existing vulnerabilities that this group of countries experiences and we now see risks of serious reversals in development gains that LLDCs have made over the years. LLDCs need particular attention and prioritization of necessary resources under the Technical Assistance Programme to better implement ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices, enhance their connectivity and further attain the objectives of the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Action: The Assembly is invited to:

- a) urge ICAO to conduct an Aviation Needs Analysis Study of the LLDCs to better understand the nature and extent of the challenges faced by these countries; and
- b) give priority in appropriating a sufficient amount from the ICAO Regular Budget and/or extra budgetary resources and other necessary technical and capacity building assistance to LLDCs to help them meet the recommendations of the intended Aviation Needs Analysis Study.

<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	This working paper relates to all Strategic Objectives.
<i>Financial implications:</i>	The activities referred to in this paper will be subject to the resources available in the 2022-2024 Regular ICAO Programme Budget and/or from extra budgetary contributions.

<i>References:</i>	C-WP/14788 Doc 10140, <i>Assembly Resolutions in Force (as of 4 October 2019)</i> Resolution A40-21, <i>Aviation contribution towards the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development</i> Resolution A39-23, <i>No Country Left Behind (NCLB) Initiative</i> Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development ¹ The Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA) for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 Second United Nations Conference on LLDCs (A/RES/69/137) ² Political Declaration of the High-level Midterm Review on the Implementation of the VPoA for LLDCs (A/RES/74/15) ³ Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 (A/74/113) ⁴ UN Roadmap for Accelerated Implementation of the Vienna Program of Action for LLDCs in the Decade of Action and COVID-19 Era ⁵ Impact of COVID-19 and Responses in Landlocked Developing Countries UN-OHRLLS International Think tank for LLDC
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 LLDCs as a group, are among the poorest and most vulnerable countries in the world. Given their lack of direct access to seaborne trade, LLDCs find themselves on an inherently disadvantaged development path compared with countries with coastlines as deep-sea ports.

1.2 The remoteness, lack of territorial access to the sea, fragmented road, rail, and aviation infrastructures, as well as ICT connectivity, substantially increases the cost of trade for LLDCs and distance them from world markets. The World Bank estimated the LLDCs pay approximately 50 per cent more in transport costs compared to the coastal countries and continue to account for less than one percent of the global merchandise trade.⁶

1.3 At present, 32 countries belong to the group of Landlocked Developing Countries. LLDCs are home to more than 540 million people and one quarter of them are living in poverty.

1.4 LLDCs have 174 registered airports and 105 airlines with an annual movement of 51 million passengers. Air transport supported 2.6 million jobs and \$13 billion contribution to GDP in LLDCs in 2018 and expected to continue to grow at about 3.6 per cent per year over the next two decades⁷.

1.5 Tourism is one of the key sectors for LLDCs and this sector is highly reliant on-air transport. Oxford Economics forecasts that by 2036 the impact of air transport and the tourism it facilitates

¹ https://www.undp.org/ukraine/publications/transforming-our-world-2030-agenda-sustainable-development?utm_source=EN&utm_medium=GSR&utm_content=US_UNDP_PaidSearch_Brand_English&utm_campaign=CENTRAL&c_src=CENTRAL&c_src2=GSR&gclid=Cj0KCQjw8uOWBhDXARIsAOxKJ2HoFjkp2MzM6IO4ifMjrFW399zYAmyojJ9u9tUvDSAopCQ_71rnGH0aAIN3EALw_wcB

² <http://undocs.org/A/RES/69/137%20#un>

³ <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3831653?ln=en>

⁴ <https://www.un.org/ohrls/content/report-secretary-general-implementation-vienna-programme-action-landlocked-developing>

⁵ <https://sdgs.un.org/events/un-roadmap-accelerated-implementation-vienna-programme-action-lldc-decade-action-and-covid>

⁶ [Comprehensive high-level midterm review of the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for the decade 2014-2024.](#)

⁷ [Aviation:Benefits Beyond Borders](#)

in LLDCs will have grown to support 3.6 million jobs (33 per cent more than in 2016) and a \$54.7 billion contribution to GDP (a 162 per cent increase)⁸.

1.6 Air transport offers LLDCs a means of avoiding the transit problems associated with overland and overseas freight movements.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 To address the challenges faced by LLDCs the the Vienna Programme of Action for the LLDCs for the decade 2014-2024 (VPoA) was adopted in November 2014 at the Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries that was mandated by the UN General Assembly. The VPoA is a holistic development plan aimed at addressing the challenges of the LLDCs through actions by the entire international community along six priority areas, namely fundamental transit policy issues, infrastructure development, international trade and trade facilitation, regional integration, structural economic transformation and means of implementation. The VPoA aims to help transform LLDCs into land-linked countries by, among others, the development of efficient transit systems, enhancement of competitiveness, and regional cooperation.

2.2 Alas, the High-level Midterm Review on the Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024, that took place in 2019, shows a decline of economic growth in LLDCs since the adoption of the VPoA in 2014, and very little progress has been achieved in structural economic transformation. Despite the many efforts at all levels, a quarter of the population of landlocked developing countries is still below the international poverty line of \$1.90 per day⁹, the prevalence of moderate to severe food insecurity persists, and the average human development index of landlocked developing countries lags behind the world average.

2.3 The LLDCs continue to face greater difficulties than coastal countries in expanding international trade. The competitiveness of landlocked developing countries remains limited owing to the high trade costs, which are double that of transit developing countries. UNCTAD assessments in 2019 show that progress has fallen far short of what is needed to meet the VPoA's goals. In some areas, LLDCs have regressed. Specifically, trade integration remains low, LLDCs accounts for less than 1 per cent of the global exports and more than 80 per cent of their exports are commodities and natural resources; infrastructure remains inadequate; foreign direct investment continues relatively low and concentrated on few sectors and fewer countries. Their average share of manufacturing in total value added has decreased. Average GDP growth fell sharply from 5.2 per cent in 2014 to 3.1 per cent in 2016. While growth recovered to 4.4 per cent in 2018, it remains below the average of 6 per cent achieved in the decade prior to the VPoA. Similarly, despite the goal to substantially increase the participation of LLDCs in trade, their share of global merchandise exports fell from 1.1 per cent in 2014 to 0.98 per cent in 2021.

2.4 The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified the pre-existing vulnerabilities that this group of countries experiences such as heavy reliance of transit countries for trade, fragmented road, rail and aviation infrastructures, inadequate ICT connectivity and high dependency on primary commodities for export. While the situation was already complex prior to the pandemic¹⁰, we now see risks of serious reversals in development gains that LLDCs have made over the years. Given the LLDCs' geographical constraints, prevention and mitigation measures such as border closures and restrictions have had resounding effects on this group of countries. COVID-19 has greatly affected the movement of goods and services to and from LLDCs. The imposition of border restrictions by neighbouring transit countries in their efforts to combat the spread of the virus greatly impacted the timely delivery and access to much-needed goods, such as medical supplies and food to LLDCs. The additional cross-border controls and checks, introduced to deal with COVID-19 in LLDCs and their main trading and transit partners are likely to have exacerbated the

⁸ https://aviationbenefits.org/media/167517/aw-oct-final-atag_abb-2020-publication-digital.pdf

⁹ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.DDAY>

¹⁰ [Impact of COVID-19 and Responses in Landlocked Developing Countries.](#)

already high costs of trade and transport operations in LLDCs. In all regions this resulted in many freight trucks being delayed at the borders thereby affecting the timely delivery of the much-needed essential supplies including pharmaceuticals, medical supplies, foods, and fuels. Most of the LLDCs rely heavily on imports to cover their basic needs.¹¹

2.5 Following the High-level Review of the Implementation of the VPoA, the UN General Assembly adopted a Political Declaration of the High-level Midterm Review on the Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024¹² and called upon landlocked developing countries and transit countries to make additional efforts to reduce travel time along the transport corridors and to adopt an integrated and sustainable approach to the management of international transport corridors in order to avoid the duplication of efforts, to promote regional connectivity and to maximize the associated economic opportunities. The Assembly called upon the United Nations system, regional and international development partners, and other international organizations to support landlocked developing countries and transit countries in leveraging the opportunities provided by regional initiatives and integration. The Assembly further urged the UN system and other international and regional organizations to promote efforts to capture reliable, high-quality and timely data to monitor progress against the specific objectives of the VPoA.

2.6 Furthermore, the General Assembly in its resolution 76/217 decided, in accordance with paragraph 66 of the Political Declaration of the High-level Midterm Review on the Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024, to hold the third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries in 2024 with the mandate to undertake a comprehensive review of the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and to formulate and adopt a renewed framework for international support to address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and to strengthen partnerships between the landlocked developing countries and transit countries and their development partners. The General Assembly noted that the Conference should be preceded, where necessary, by national- and regional-level reviews, as well as thematic preparations, in the most effective, well-structured and broad participatory manner and the entities of the United Nations system were called upon to provide necessary support and contribute actively to the preparatory process and the Conference itself.

2.7 During the ICAO High-level conference on COVID-19, the Ministers recognized the continued, unprecedented global crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and its serious public health, social and economic consequences and the key role played by the operation of cargo air services in keeping the essential supply chains in operation and the importance of developing mechanisms to assist and provide technical aviation support to States and their professionals in overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic leaving no one behind. ICAO and the development partners need to urgently step-up capacity building and technical assistance to LLDC's in support of the air transport the most critical lifeline of the LLDCs.

2.8 Reliable research and data on air transport is highlighted as a key challenge in the revision and follow up of the implementation of the VPoA and in further formulating effective policy. At this critical juncture, conducting comprehensive Aviation Needs Analysis Study of the LLDCs in conjunction with LLDC specific research centers of excellence namely the International Think Tank for LLDCs (ITLLDC) is imperative to better understand the nature and extent of the challenges faced by these countries and to further suggest coordinated policy towards promoting air connectivity, aviation liberalization and reducing air transportation costs in LLDCs.

2.9 In this regard, this paper calls on the Assembly to give particular attention and priority in developing safe, regular, reliable and cost-effective air transport systems in LLDCs. It urges ICAO to conduct Aviation Needs Analysis Study of the LLDCs to better understand the nature and extent of the challenges faced by these countries and to further appropriate sufficient amount of budgetary resources and other necessary technical assistance to LLDCs.

– END –

¹¹ [Impact of COVID-19 and Responses in Landlocked Developing Countries.](#)

¹² Resolution 74/15