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Groups of countries in special situations: specific actions related to the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries: outcome of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation

Implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 64/214 of 21 December 2009, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its sixty-fifth session an analytical report on the progress made in the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and the declaration on the midterm review thereof.

As 10 years have passed since the adoption of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, the present report also reviews the progress made by landlocked developing countries towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals and highlights some of the challenges experienced, including climate change.

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I. Introduction

1. The Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries,¹ adopted in 2003, and the outcome of its midterm review, contained in General Assembly resolution 63/2 of 3 October 2008, underscore the need to strengthen global partnerships in recognition of the special needs and challenges confronted by the landlocked developing countries in their efforts to eradicate poverty, sustain economic growth and better integrate into the world economy.

2. Given their inherent geographical difficulties depriving them of direct access to seaborne trade, the landlocked developing countries find themselves on a disadvantaged development path, compounded by the long distance from major international markets, cumbersome transit procedures, inadequate transport infrastructure and dependence on the political stability, infrastructure and institutional quality of coastal transit countries. These challenges not only affect economic growth, but have major ramifications for social and environmental aspects of development, including the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

3. The Almaty Programme, with its overarching goal to forge partnerships to overcome the special problems of landlocked developing countries, contributes directly to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by this group of vulnerable countries. The Programme recognizes the direct link between transport, international trade and economic growth and aims at ensuring fuller and more effective integration of the landlocked developing countries in the global economy through the implementation of specific actions to be undertaken by all Almaty stakeholders in only five priority areas, namely: (a) fundamental transit policy issues; (b) infrastructure development and maintenance; (c) international trade and trade facilitation; (d) international support measures; and (e) implementation and review. The Programme constitutes a sound and effective global framework for genuine transit transport cooperation, providing a win-win solution to both landlocked and transit developing countries.

II. Progress in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals in landlocked developing countries

4. The progress made by the landlocked developing countries towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals is uneven owing to the level of development reached by each of the concerned countries. However, data available allow us to draw trends common to this group of countries.

5. The economies of the landlocked developing countries grew at an average annual rate of 7.8 per cent in the period 2003-2007, which slowed down to 6 per cent in 2008 (see annex, table 1). The factors that favourably contributed to such performance include generally prudent macroeconomic policies, soaring commodity prices, high export demand, debt relief and sustained aid and foreign direct

¹ *Report of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation, Almaty, Kazakhstan, 28 and 29 August 2003 (A/CONF.202/3), annex I.*

investment inflows. Domestic resources are supposed to be a major source of financial resources to be used in accelerating the progress towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. However, their landlockedness, when associated with transit transport inefficiencies and inadequate infrastructure, has remained a major challenge to overcome for this group of vulnerable countries in increasing domestic spending required for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. In 18 landlocked developing countries the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is still below \$1,000. The persistence of such low per capita incomes in landlocked developing countries has resulted in a vicious circle where transport infrastructure investment is not viable owing to too little demand for transport services and simultaneously less economic activity takes place because of inadequate infrastructure resulting in less domestic revenue available for investment into the social sectors required to attain the Millennium Development Goals.

6. Overall, the landlocked developing countries have made commendable progress towards achieving some of the Millennium Development Goals targets. In particular, the landlocked developing countries have made progress in improving enrolment in primary education, gender parity in primary education, combating the spread of HIV/AIDS and increasing the proportion of people with access to improved water source. Although countries have made some progress in reducing child mortality, the rates are still high and many landlocked developing countries are unlikely to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

7. Landlocked developing countries have made progress in increasing the net enrolment in primary education and most of the countries are on course to attain this target of the Millennium Development Goals. Landlocked developing countries have also shown significant improvement in primary completion rates, as 80 per cent of them have improved the primary completion rates over the period 2000-2008.² Gender parity in primary education has significantly improved in most of the landlocked developing countries and the target is likely to be achieved. The landlocked developing countries have also made impressive improvements in women's representation in national parliaments since 2000. During the period 2000-2007, 21 countries significantly increased the proportion of seats held by women by more than 15 per cent, with one country reaching an impressive 56.3 per cent (Rwanda) and four at 30 per cent or more (Nepal, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Uganda and Burundi).³

8. The HIV prevalence rate has either stabilized or declined in most of the heavily affected landlocked developing countries, although the prevalence rate is still higher than 10 per cent in 20 per cent of the countries. The coverage of antiretroviral treatment for HIV/AIDS significantly increased, although the treatment gap is still very large. All except two landlocked developing countries have made some progress towards reducing under-five and infant mortality rates over the period 2000-2008. Most of the countries, however, have a high under-five mortality rate, exceeding 50 per 1,000 live births and the highest child mortality rates are in African landlocked developing countries.

9. In the period 2000-2008, 83 per cent of the landlocked developing countries made progress in improving access to an improved water source.

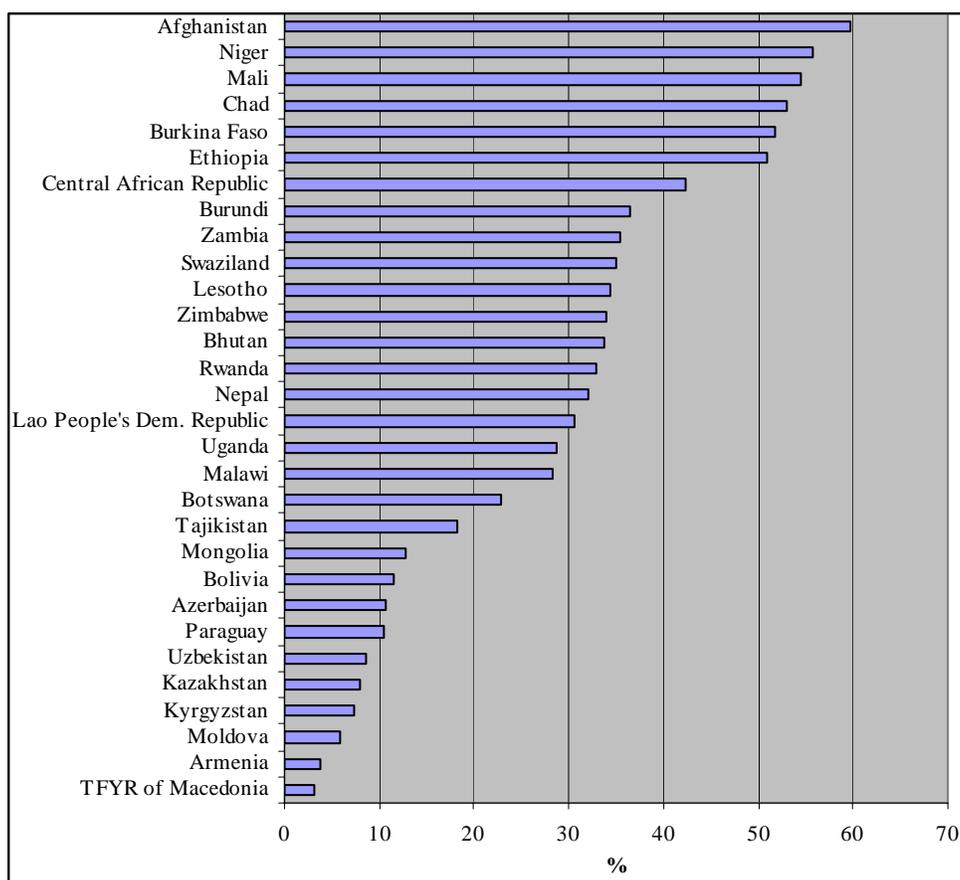
² All data on Millennium Development Goals, unless specified, is from the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) database; available from <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Data.aspx>.

³ Inter-Parliamentary Union 2010; available from www.ipu.org/parline-e/ParliamentsAtAGlance.asp.

10. Communication infrastructure is important for integrating the landlocked developing countries into the global economy. The number of fixed telephone lines increased over the period 2003-2008 in 87 per cent of the landlocked developing countries and the rate of cellular subscription and Internet users significantly increased in all countries the same period (see annex, table 6).

11. Against the significant progress recorded in the aforementioned Millennium Development Goals, progress has been much slower in reducing poverty, hunger and maternal mortality, and in improving the area covered by forests, the proportion of the population using improved sanitation, and gender parity in secondary and tertiary education. The proportion of the population living in extreme poverty in landlocked developing countries is still high (see fig. 1 and annex, table 8). Women and children are most affected by poverty. Poverty is highly linked to unemployment, which is still higher than 10 per cent on average in many of the landlocked developing countries that are in Africa and South-East Asia.⁴

Figure 1
Human Poverty Index in landlocked developing countries (2007)



Source: United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report* (2009).

⁴ See International Labour Organization database; available from <http://laborsta.ilo.org> (accessed 20 June 2010).

12. The progress made by landlocked developing countries towards reducing the proportion of people who suffer from hunger has been slow. Most of the landlocked developing countries either have not made progress or the progress has been insufficient to meet the Millennium Development Goal target of reducing the prevalence of underweight children under the age of 5 (see annex, table 8). All landlocked developing countries, particularly those that are net food importers, are the most seriously hurt by rising food prices because of high transport charges.

13. Progress on gender parity in secondary education has been slower, and gender parity at tertiary education level is still very low in most of the countries. Recent estimates show that, although landlocked developing countries have made some progress to reduce their maternal mortality ratios over the period 2000-2008, 42 per cent of the countries still have a maternal mortality ratio that is higher than 500 per 100,000 live births and four of these countries have very high maternal mortality ratios that are in excess of 1,000 per 100,000 live births (see annex, table 8). Progress in improving the proportion of the population using improved sanitation has been slow, and in some countries the level of coverage is still low. There is still a wide disparity between rural and urban areas in all countries with urban areas having greater access than the rural population.

14. The greatest challenges faced by landlocked developing countries in trying to achieve the Millennium Development Goals include limited financial and human resources; unavailability of data to report on progress and for decision-making, particularly on indicators such as unemployment; persistent gender inequalities in some sectors such as employment; the rural-urban and income disparities; and the multiple crises, including the financial and economic crisis, and climate change. These challenges are exacerbated by the fundamental characteristics of landlocked developing countries, including remoteness from major international markets, inadequate transport infrastructure and high trade transaction costs.

15. International cooperation and global partnership is critical for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and some progress has been recorded in this area. Since the adoption of the Almaty Programme of Action, total flows of official development assistance (ODA) to the group of landlocked developing countries have recorded a notable increase of about 13 per cent annually, from \$12 million in 2003 to \$22.6 million in 2008 (see annex, table 2). Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Uganda and Zambia were the top recipients of ODA among the group in 2008.

16. External debt as a percentage of the gross national income (GNI) was significantly reduced from 66 per cent in 2003 to 42 per cent in 2008 (see annex, table 3). In 2010, Afghanistan reached completion point under the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative, thus qualifying also for additional debt relief under the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI). Afghanistan joins 11 other landlocked developing countries at the same final stage of the Initiative. Total HIPC and MDRI debt relief granted to the landlocked developing countries amounted to more than \$27 billion in February 2010. However, continued macroeconomic prudence and enhanced efforts must be deployed to address the debt problem of the landlocked developing countries, as several of them may be at risk of debt distress on account of the global financial and economic crisis.

17. Foreign direct investment flows to landlocked developing countries increased at the remarkable annual rate of 23 per cent during the period 2003-2008, reaching a total of \$25 billion, up from less than \$9 billion in 2003 (see annex, table 7).

However, their distribution among the members of the group has remained skewed, as more than half of the total inflows in 2008 went to Kazakhstan alone. Other top receivers were Armenia and Zambia. Furthermore, total flows to landlocked developing countries still accounted for only about 1.4 per cent of global foreign direct investment. Efforts to attract more growth- and employment-inducing foreign direct investment should be strengthened by landlocked developing countries through measures such as facilitating entry, establishment and protection of foreign direct investment, targeted incentive schemes, partnerships with research and development institutions, grants for employment creation, financial assistance for the acquisition of industrial/commercial premises, and strengthening the quality and quantity of the local workforce and of national technical and administrative institutions. However, fiscal incentives should be used in a nuanced way, taking into account the long-term impact on government revenue.

18. Limited progress has been made in the negotiations of the World Trade Organization Doha Round on the multilateral trading system. It is important that the development needs of landlocked developing countries are taken fully into consideration. The reduction or the removal of agricultural subsidies in major developed countries and improvements in non-agricultural market access will positively benefit landlocked developing countries. In this regard, early agreement on the World Trade Organization Doha Round negotiations on trade facilitation is particularly important for landlocked developing countries.

19. Progress is being made in making the Aid for Trade Initiative operational, which is intended to serve as a tool to build capacities in trading and marketing and to boost trade-related infrastructure and will particularly benefit landlocked developing countries (see sect. 4.D).

20. The global recession has brought to the fore the ever more urgent need for landlocked developing countries to strategically transform their economies, broaden their productive base so as to enhance their competitiveness on the global markets, build resilience to external shocks and achieve higher and sustainable economic growth necessary for promoting investment in social and human development. The timely and effective implementation of the goals of the Almaty Programme in its intertwined priority areas would directly contribute to that strategic policy direction, and help the landlocked developing countries advance on the path to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

III. Climate change and landlocked developing countries

21. Climate change poses a major threat to the achievement of sustainable development, poverty reduction and the Millennium Development Goals by landlocked developing countries. Climate change has exacerbated land degradation, desertification and deforestation in landlocked developing countries. Between the period 1990-2005, 65 per cent of the landlocked developing countries experienced deforestation (United Nations Statistics Division database). Severe droughts result in food shortages, such as those experienced between 2002-2005 in Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Swaziland,⁵ the Niger and Ethiopia, and depress

⁵ United Nations Environment Programme and World Agroforestry Centre, *Climate Change and Variability in Southern Africa: Impacts and Adaptation in the Agricultural Sector* (2006).

hydroelectric power generation, such as in Zambia. The Central Asian landlocked developing countries, including Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, have been affected by desertification owing to increasing water shortages, while Nepal has experienced massive degradation of arable land due to floods and storms.⁶ Climate change has exacerbated the drying up of already arid zones in Africa; for example, the drying up of Lake Chad has resulted in shortages of water and reduction in biodiversity. The temperatures over the African continent have been increasing since the 1960s; for example, the decadal warming rates of 0.29° C was recorded in the African tropical forests. Increasing temperatures are threatening some crop varieties, such as coffee and tea, and thereby increasing the vulnerability of landlocked developing countries, whose economies rely heavily on one or two agricultural products. Climate change is also affecting freshwater fisheries of landlocked countries through changes in water temperature, nutrient levels and lower dry-season water levels, leading to reduced fish yields. For example, Malawi and Uganda suffered from decreased yield of inland fisheries that are important sources of food and employment for their populations.

22. In order to effectively address climate change, landlocked developing countries need to undertake both mitigation and adaptation actions. In this regard, the full support of the international community through reliable financial resources, technology development and transfer, and capacity-building are crucial in order to bridge the gap between policy and implementation. Landlocked developing countries should strive to take advantage of the existing opportunities such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the green growth and green jobs initiatives provided by the international climate change regime. The 17 landlocked developing countries that are least developed countries should utilize the national adaptation programmes of action support available under article 4.9 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. There is, however, need to develop support measures for the other landlocked countries that are not least developed countries; thus the landlocked developing countries as a group should negotiate for special climate change financing.

IV. Priorities

A. Fundamental transit policy issues

23. Burdensome and inefficient regulations, cross-border restrictions on vehicle movements, trans-loading, physical inspections and offloading of freight at borders, unwarranted inspections of goods en route, differing vehicle standards between neighbouring countries, inadequate security for drivers and freight, and corruption have emerged as among the principal bottlenecks hindering reliability, speediness and security of cross-border transport and logistics networks connecting landlocked developing countries to seaports.

24. Recent analysis finds that being landlocked adds four days to land distribution of exports and nine days to imports compared with equivalent distances within the coastal transit country. Even more problematic are the lack of predictability in the transit chain, transit overheads, such as superfluous regulations and corruption that

⁶ Asian Development Bank, "Combating Desertification in Asia"; available from www.adb.org/Environment/desertification.asp.

can add 30 to 100 per cent to transport costs, and the lack of effective implementation of regional transit agreements, which aggravate the problems faced by landlocked developing countries in engaging in international trade. In sub-Saharan Africa, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) reports that trucks spend just 21 per cent of their time driving, while the rest of the time is spent on clearance procedures at the borders, pre-departure delays in transit ports, weigh bridges and other police stops en route. According to the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), more than half of transit time from Central Asia to Europe is spent waiting at borders.

25. The removal of the non-physical impediments to landlocked developing countries' cross-border trade can be attained only through broader and stronger cooperation at the bilateral and regional levels, between landlocked and transit developing countries, and, within Governments, among all of the many agencies and authorities engaged in border control. The efficient functioning of proper inter-agency coordination institutions, incorporating both public and private sector stakeholders in transit transport, is critical for successful corridor management, infrastructure development and investment and transit service operations. Such cooperation is indispensable in order to adopt a harmonized common approach to the design, the implementation and the monitoring of trade and transport facilitation policy reforms. The legal frameworks pertaining to these areas must be harmonized and their implementation pursued with strong political will and commitment, especially in the implementation phase, as they constitute the single most important component of a coherent transit transport cooperation strategy for the landlocked developing countries and their regional transit partners.

26. Such a strategy should encompass all modes of transport. In the rail sector, for example, an urgent area that needs to be addressed is the interoperability of national and international transport laws to improve transport over long distances. At present, for instance, in Central Asia two legal systems define rules for international railway and multimodal transport, including consignment notes and other documentation. The interoperability of national rail transport laws is difficult to achieve, but the recent development of a joint consignment note of the Uniform Rules concerning the Contract of International Carriage of Goods by Rail (Appendix B to the Convention concerning International Carriage by Rail (COTIF)/Agreement on International Goods Transport by Rail demonstrates that non-physical obstacles can be overcome through negotiations. Nevertheless, important differences between the two legal regimes continue to exist. For instance, the liability clauses in the Uniform Rules and the Agreement are almost identical, but compensation levels differ significantly. The adoption of a unified rail transport law by all countries along the

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