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From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: Council Conclusions on the European Union's Key Objectives and
Priorities for the 2nd United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing
Countries (Vienna, Austria, 3-5 November 2014)

At its meeting on 29 September 2014, the Council (General Affairs) adopted the Conclusions set out in the Annex to this note.

Council Conclusions

European Union's Key Objectives and Priorities for the 2nd United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries (Vienna, Austria, 3-5 November 2014)

1. The EU and its Member States (hereafter the EU) welcome the comprehensive 10-year review conference on the 'Implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries' which will be held in Vienna, Austria, on 3-5 November 2014.
2. The EU considers that the focus for this LLDC conference should remain on LLDC's core areas of interest, including trade, transport, regional integration, investment and development, based on good governance principles and internationally agreed standards. The EU looks forward to open, productive and outcome-oriented discussions in view of establishing the LLDC Programme of Action for the following ten years. The EU emphasises that this future work programme should build on, and take into account, lessons learned from the Almaty Programme of Action (2004), as well as contribute to inclusive growth and sustainable development in its environmental, social and economic dimensions.

3. The EU firmly believes that the conference and the new Programme of Action should focus on a select number of key challenges that are common to many LLDC and of strategic importance for their development opportunities.
- (a) Trade facilitation: The EU considers that open markets and reducing the barriers to trade are essential to enhancing inclusive growth and sustainable development. The EU, together with other partners, will continue to support trade facilitation in the context of its development policy as well as through the provision of targeted Aid for Trade. The Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) approved in Bali (2013) is of particular relevance to LLDCs. The EU is committed to continue providing developing countries with technical assistance in order to help them to implement TF reforms.
 - (b) Aid for Trade: The EU collectively accounts for one third of all global Aid for Trade. The EU is committed to promoting the integration of the LLDCs into the multilateral trading system; providing continued preferential market access for LDCs and countries most in need; working towards inclusive growth and sustainable development; and developing more tailored, results based and coordinated Aid for Trade. The EU also stresses the importance of the new Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) regulation which entered into force on 1 January 2014. The GSP Rules of Origin are very favourable to LDCs.
 - (c) Regional integration and cooperation: Regional integration is intended to help enlarge regional market size, reduce the cost of inputs, enhance competitiveness and connectivity and help attract new Foreign Direct Investment. Coordinated multilateral action is crucial to ensure that regional initiatives on transit and trade facilitation achieve impact taking into account interests of all riparian countries engaged in concrete projects and initiatives. The EU supports regional cooperation efforts and welcomes the creation of networks to address energy dependency, which is a major source of economic vulnerability for many LLDCs. These countries will also continue to benefit from EU support for the implementation of the Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) initiative.

- (d) Trade infrastructure including transportation: The EU notes that more diverse infrastructure networks play a significant role for growth performance in LLDCs. Existing infrastructure gaps and administrative inefficiencies remain critical bottlenecks that hinder economic growth in LLDCs. Enhanced interconnectivity between places of production and points of export and import is therefore essential. Furthermore, transportation of passengers and especially agricultural goods to markets helps reduce poverty and is an enabling factor for universal access to health and educational services mostly available in cities. As required investments are considerable and public finance will not suffice, the private sector can play a critical role to bridge this gap and blending can be used as a financing tool to encourage private sector participation. There is need for considering questions of social, ecological and labour standards in investment relations in order to achieve a fair and sustainable balance between all stakeholders involved.
- (e) Economic diversification: The EU strongly supports the efforts of LLDCs to create and maintain a sound macroeconomic environment, to identify and build upon comparative advantages in productive and potential future promising sectors and diversify their economies. The process of diversification will require investment in infrastructure, supportive policy, institutional capacity (legal and regulatory framework), education, including vocational training and a dynamic private sector. The EU remains committed to help developing countries to eliminate restrictions to international trade; to explore options for structural transformation by diversifying their exports and attracting foreign investments; and to improve their productive capacities; and to strengthen state capacities for steering sound economic policy and sustainable development.
4. The EU is fully engaged in the current work towards a new post-2015 development agenda. The Council recalls its Conclusions of June 2013 on the Overarching Post-2015 Agenda. In this context, the EU looks forward to ensuring that the partnership with the LLDCs evolves coherently with the commitments that will be made in the post-2015 framework.