



Concept Note

Consultative Meeting (retreat) on the third United Nations Conference on LLDCs 1 – 2 February 2024, Tarrytown House Estate

The third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDC3) will be held from 18 to 21 June 2024, in Kigali, Rwanda, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 76/217, 77/246 and 77/329. The Conference will conduct a comprehensive review of the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and formulate and adopt a renewed framework for international support to address the special needs of LLDCs and to strengthen partnerships between LLDCs and transit countries, and their development partners.

Over the past decade, progress in implementing the six priority areas of the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA) has been mixed. The combined effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical tensions and conflicts seriously hindered progress. Adverse global economic conditions, characterized by subdued growth, surging inflation, rising energy and food prices, supply chain disruptions and elevated trade costs continue to affect LLDCs' recovery efforts. Furthermore, LLDCs continue to be disproportionately affected by climate-induced hazards and disasters, such as desertification, recurrent droughts, biodiversity loss, melting glaciers and floods.

LLDCs face inherent disadvantages due to their lack of direct access to the sea, isolation from global markets and high trade and transport costs. These challenges are exacerbated by insufficient infrastructure connectivity. To reach the global average density of transport infrastructure, LLDCs would need to construct nearly 200,000 kilometers of paved roads and over 46,000 kilometers of railways. This would cost an estimated US\$509 billion. They are also lagging in energy and ICT infrastructure. The combined effects of these factors have further impeded LLDCs' integration into regional and global value chains and markets.

The development of reliable and resilient infrastructure (SDG9) is not only an important Goal of the 2030 agenda, but also generates significant spillover effects on various other SDGs. It is therefore imperative that infrastructure financing be given proper attention. In this regard, innovative approaches, such as new infrastructure finance facilities for LLDCs, could be considered.

International trade is paramount for LLDCs, accounting for a higher share of their Gross Domestic Product than the world average. Despite considerable potential, LLDCs' share in global merchandise exports was just 1.1 per cent in 2022, while accounting for 7% of the world population. The export structure of many LLDCs continues to be characterized by a limited number of products, which often have low value addition, with primary commodities accounting

for 83% of LLDCs' exports in 2022. Such dependency makes commodity dependent LLDCs highly vulnerable to commodity price fluctuations and external shocks.

LLDCs need continued support from the international community to promote value addition, enhance domestic productive capacities, diversify exports, and ensure that international trade better serves as an engine for growth and sustainable development. Enhanced market access with simplified rules of origin and favourable conditions can help. Active participation of LLDCs as a group in the WTO trade negotiations can better ensure due reflection of their special needs, challenges, and priorities in the multilateral trading system.

LLDCs have made limited progress in achieving structural transformation. Most of the LLDCs are struggling to industrialize and integrate into regional and global markets. Prioritizing economic diversification, especially through value addition, industrialization, and leveraging science, technology, and innovation, is vital.

Agriculture remains pivotal to the economies of LLDCs, accounting for on average 17 per cent of their GDP. However, the sector grapples with low productivity, vulnerability, high informality, and limited value addition. Establishing or strengthening agricultural research centers can promote agricultural research, value addition, capacity building and sustainable innovation practices.

LLDCs are among the lowest greenhouse gas emitters yet are facing severe climate related impacts. They are predominantly situated in internal drylands, where desertification and heat stress are worsening, or mountainous regions exposed to melting glaciers, landslides and flash floods. As a result, the incidence of being affected by climate-related disasters was about 70 per cent higher in LLDCs than the world average between 2012 and 2021, while disaster-related economic losses reached almost three times the world average in 2021. Urgent support is required to enhance LLDCs' resilience, adaptation planning, mitigate climate change impacts, and safeguard progress towards the SDGs.

LLDCs face growing investment and spending needs to achieve the SDGs. However, the available resources—domestic, external, public, and private—are far short of the requirements. LLDCs face high reliance on external resources, including ODA, FDI, concessional lending and private flows, such as remittances and portfolio investment. During the VPoA implementation period, external debt for LLDCs has increased and is, in some cases, exacerbated by large costs caused by multiple global crises and geopolitical tensions.

LLDCs therefore need enhanced access to domestic and external sources of finance, including ODA, FDI and debt relief measures. Equally important for LLDCs is to leverage the power of science, technology and innovation, including artificial intelligence, machine learning, robotics and big data, as key drivers of industrialization, structural transformation, and sustainable development. These are critical elements to support LLDCs to overcome their unique challenges, build resilience against future shocks, and achieve their development ambitions.

The third United Nations Conference on LLDCs provides a once-in-a-decade opportunity to articulate a new and ambitious global compact for LLDCs to enable them to overcome ongoing

challenges, build resilience against future shocks and accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Objectives

The Consultative Meeting, convened by UN-OHRLLS, aims to facilitate informal exchanges among Permanent Representatives of LLDCs, transit countries, Friends of LLDCs, and selected experts, focusing on key priorities, potential outcomes, and deliverables of the LLDC3.

Format

The event will feature a working dinner on Thursday 1 February and a full day of thematic working sessions on Friday 2 February on the following areas:

Session 1: Seizing the transformative potentials of trade, trade facilitation and regional integration for sustainable development of LLDCs.

Session 2: Deepening resilient connectivity and promoting unfettered transit system to improve LLDCs' competitiveness in regional and global trading system.

Session 3: Enhancing adaptation capacity and strengthening resilience to address the worsening impacts of climate change in LLDCs.

Session 4: Mobilizing domestic and external resources and fostering access to technologies for the effective implementation of the New Programme of Action for LLDCs and the SDGs.

These sessions will include expert presentations on specific topics followed by interactive discussions. OHRLLS will prepare a summary focusing on emerging areas of convergence from the working sessions.

Participants

Permanent Representative plus one expert from each of the LLDCs, transit countries and the Friends of LLDCs as well as some experts from within the UN system and beyond will be invited.

Transportation (a bus), accommodation for one night (1 February) and meals will be covered by the UN-OHRLLS.

Contact Information

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