



Third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries

Awaza, Turkmenistan, 5-8 August 2025

High-Level Special Event

Integrating LLDCs into the Multilateral Trading System

**Tuesday 5 August 2025, 13:15 - 14:45
Awaza Conference Centre, Building 3-07.09**

Concept Note

A. Abstract

This High-Level special event focuses on advancing the objectives of the Awaza Programme of Action, with particular emphasis on strengthening multilateral trading system to better support the Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) to address the unique challenges these countries face in global trade. The event will be held as part of the third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDC3) in Awaza, Turkmenistan, from August 5-8, 2025. The event will bring together representatives from LLDCs, WTO members, trade experts, and development organizations to identify available tools, identify needs and gaps and explore potential multilateral trade solutions tailored specifically to the context of LLDCs.

B. Background and Rationale

LLDCs face structural trade disadvantages due to their lack of direct access to seaports, relying on transit through neighboring countries. This dependence results in high transportation costs and logistical complexities that limit market access and increase trade vulnerability. Although LLDCs represent about 7% of the global population, they contributed just 1.2% to global trade in 2024, with as much as 80% of their exports largely comprising primary commodities, making their economies susceptible to market fluctuations and limiting job creation.

While progress was made in the Almaty and Vienna Programmes of Action on these issues, LLDCs continue to struggle with fully seizing the opportunities of trade as an engine of development. LLDC3 is an opportunity to push forward recommendations from the Secretary-General's 10-year assessment of the Vienna Programme, which emphasizes multilateral efforts to support LLDC trade integration. This High-level special event aims to build momentum towards better understanding the available tools, needs, gaps and potential solutions for addressing the unique LLDC trade challenges. It will take stock of the dedicated sessions on transit at the WTO Committee on Trade Facilitation and the focused sessions of the WTO Committee on Trade and Development on the trade-related challenges identified for the fuller integration of landlocked developing countries into the multilateral trading system.

The event will feature opening remarks, followed by a moderated panel discussion and an interactive audience session to capture a range of perspectives. The goal is to facilitate a realistic, tempered dialogue that acknowledges the complex political and economic dynamics surrounding LLDC-specific solutions to foster sustainable and inclusive growth for LLDCs within the global trade environment.

C. Expected Outcomes

The High-level special event aims to build a consensus around these outcomes:

1. **Clear Definition of LLDC Trade Issues:** Articulate the specific trade challenges LLDCs face, emphasizing issues beyond transit, including digital trade, services, transport infrastructure, and regional cooperation.

2. **Identification of Needs and Gaps:** Highlight areas where LLDCs may require additional targeted support, such as transit corridors and customs digitalization, including to comply with the trade facilitation agreement.
3. **Roadmap for Engaging on Multilateral Trade Fora:** Develop a collaborative approach for engaging WTO members and stakeholders in creating a more inclusive trading system for LLDCs.
4. **Full integration into multilateral trading system:** Facilitate the fuller integration of LLDCs into the global trading system, in line with the priorities outlined in the Awaza Programme of Action.

D. Speakers

Opening remarks:

- Ms. Rabab Fatima, *Under-Secretary-General and High Representative of Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLS), and Secretary-General of the Third United Nations conference on Landlocked Developing Countries*
- Ms. Rebeca Grynspan, *Secretary-General of UNCTAD*

Moderator:

- Ms. Trudi Hartzenberg, *Executive Director, Trade Law Centre for Southern Africa*

Keynote:

- H.E. Mr. Uchral Nyam-Osor, *First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Development of Mongolia*

Panelists:

- Hon. Mr. Manqoba Bheki Khumalo, *Minister of Commerce, Industry and Trade of Eswatini*
- Mr. Sepp Schellhorn, *State Secretary of the Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Austria*
- Mr. Escipion Joaquin Oliveira Gomez, *Director of Country Programmes, International Trade Centre (ITC)*

E. Interactive discussions and Q&A

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