



Opening Remarks

by

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and Small Island Developing States**

LLDC3 Digital Session (Connectivity Track)

HIGH-LEVEL CLOSING

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Awaza Conference Center

Awaza, Turkmenistan

Thank you very much Hon'ble Minister of Communications of Turkmenistan.

**Distinguished Ministers,
Distinguished delegates,**

It's an honor to deliver the closing remarks of this Digital segment of the LLDC3 Connectivity Track.

Let me begin by expressing our deep appreciation to the Government of Turkmenistan for its generous hospitality and leadership.

I also extend sincere thanks to our valued partners, including International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the European Union and the Digital Cooperation Organization, whose support made this event possible.

I thank all government representatives, for your rich and forward-looking contributions. Your insights have been both timely and thought-provoking.

It is clear from today's dialogue that digital transformation for LLDCs can no longer remain a distant goal. It must be accelerated with purpose and with investment.

Throughout today's session, five critical priorities emerged for advancing digital transformation in LLDCs.

First, we need targeted infrastructure investments that reach the last mile.

Most people in LLDCs are still offline.

Affordability remains a major barrier, particularly in African LLDCs, where the cost of both mobile and fixed broadband exceeds global benchmarks. We must close these infrastructure and affordability gaps, urgently and equitably.

Second, we must invest in inclusive digital policy and regulatory frameworks.

More than half of LLDCs remain in the early stages of developing their ICT regulation.

This is holding back investment, innovation, and competitiveness. National digital strategies must be adopted – and fully operationalized.

Third, we must build digital skills and literacy for all.

While young people in LLDCs are leading the way—51 per cent of LLDC youth aged 15- to 24-year are online- many women, rural communities, and older persons are being left behind.

Digital inclusion must be synonymous with social inclusion.

Fourth, we must enable value creation through digital economies.

LLDCs account for just 0.3 per cent of global exports in digitally deliverable services.

While many have e-commerce strategies, they often lack the data, regulatory frameworks, or financing to realize them.

Digital trade can be a gamechanger, but only if we create the right enabling environment.

Fifth and finally, we must scale up partnerships and financing.

Initiatives such as Partner2Connect Digital Coalition, GIGA, and the Digital Infrastructure Investment Initiative offer scalable models to support universal and meaningful connectivity.

But we must go further.

LLDCs need a dedicated digital investment facility to accelerate national and regional transformation.

In this regard, I urge the European Union's Global Gateway Initiative to consider how to reach more LLDCs.

Excellencies, colleagues,

As highlighted in the Awaza Programme of Action, digital transformation is central to structural transformation.

We must now ensure that the bold digitalization agenda in the APOA is translated into national strategies and investment priorities, supported by partners and aligned with regional frameworks.

Transformation on the scale we wish to see requires leadership, long-term vision, and solidarity.

The landlocked status of these countries should become a launchpad for a new leap forward into a more connected, inclusive, and prosperous future.

My Office, alongside ITU and all our partners, remains committed to this vision.

Let us carry forward the insights and momentum from today's dialogue and ensure that no LLDC is left behind in the digital era.

Thank you.