



**Statement by
Ms. Rabab Fatima**

**Under-Secretary-General and High Representative
for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS and
Secretary General of the Third UN Conference of
Landlocked Developing Countries**

**Ministerial Meeting of the Landlocked Developing Countries
UNCTAD XVI**

**Wednesday 22 October
1.15 – 2.45
Assembly Hall, Palais des Nations**

**Ambassador Davasuren Gerelmaa, Coordinator of the LLDC
Group in Geneva,
Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan,
Hon'ble Ministers,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Colleagues,**

**I thank you Madam Chair for convening this important and
timely Ministerial Meeting of the Landlocked Developing
Countries (LLDCs).**

**I thank you Secretary General for your participation at the Third
United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries,
which clearly demonstrates your steadfast support to the LLDCs.**

**I also congratulate Turkmenistan on the resounding success of
the Conference.**

**The LLDC3 Conference in Awaza was the largest and most
inclusive event ever held for the 32 landlocked developing
countries.**

It elevated the visibility of LLDCs within the United Nations, among traditional and emerging development partners, and with transit countries.

The theme of today's meeting, "From Vulnerability to Resilient Prosperity: Unlocking Trade and Investment for LLDCs", builds upon the momentum of LLDC3.

It speaks to our collective resolve to transform the structural constraints of geography into engines of growth and opportunity.

Excellencies,

Allow me to begin by acknowledging the resilience and determination of the 32 LLDCs, home to over 600 million people, who continue to confront the formidable development challenges imposed by geography.

The lack of territorial access to the sea, compounded by remoteness from global markets, high transit costs, and fragile infrastructure, has kept LLDCs at the margins of international trade and investment.

The data is revealing.

**LLDCs' share of global merchandise exports remains below 1.2%
- practically unchanged over the past decade.**

**83% of their exports are concentrated in primary commodities,
with 26 of the 32 LLDCs officially classified as commodity
dependent.**

**And despite the promise of digital trade, LLDCs' exports account
for just 0.3 per cent of global trade in digitally deliverable
services.**

**Despite these daunting challenges, we gather today with
unprecedented momentum behind the LLDC agenda.**

Excellencies,

**The adoption of the Awaza Programme of Action for LLDCs by
consensus marks a new chapter in our collective efforts.**

The APOA is a comprehensive and action-oriented political commitment. It reflects LLDCs' aspirations for economic diversification, connectivity, climate resilience, and digital transformation.

As we turn to its implementation, allow me to highlight four priority areas requiring our urgent attention.

We must start by lowering the cost of transit.

Research from my Office shows that logistics costs on exports from LLDCs are 63% higher than those of transit countries.

To address this, we are supporting the establishment of a High-Level Panel of the UN Secretary-General on Freedom of Transit as called for in APOA.

This panel will examine the application of international law, identify constraints, and recommend actionable solutions to ensure seamless access for LLDCs.

We will be working very closely with all relevant partners in the UN [and I see them present here in this room] to advance this important deliverable of APOA.

Second, we are preparing a feasibility study for an Infrastructure Investment Financing Facility for LLDCs, another important APOA deliverable, to help address the more than \$500bn infrastructure deficit in LLDCs.

This will contribute to bridging the current gap of nearly 200,000 km of paved roads and over 46,000 km of railways needed to reach global averages.

Third, 27 LLDCs are net importers of cereals, exposing them to severe climate-induced supply risks.

The launch of the new LLDC Climate Negotiating Group under the UNFCCC during the LLDC3 will ensure that LLDCs' specific vulnerabilities are recognized in global climate negotiations [they will be meeting for the first time as a Group in COP30, Belem].

We are also exploring the establishment of Regional Research Agriculture Hubs as called for in APOA. Four countries have already expressed interest in hosting these hubs.

Finally, the APOA underscores political support for the LLDCs' interest in establishing a dedicated work programme under the World Trade Organization.

This initiative would allow for a focused examination of LLDCs' unique challenges in the multilateral trading system and propose concrete measures to enhance their participation.

The POA also commits to supporting the six LLDCs that are in different stages of the process of acceding to the WTO.

Excellencies,

The Awaza Programme of Action provides us with a clear roadmap – to move from vulnerability to resilient prosperity.

Realizing this vision will require concerted efforts and leadership, particularly from your delegations here in Geneva,

where many of the key institutions for trade, investment, and development cooperation reside.

And I am very happy to see many of our partners from the UN system present here today. We deeply value your engagement and partnership.

UNCTAD XVI provides a platform to advance this agenda, and the LLDC Ministerial Declaration adopted here today offers clear guidance on our collective priorities.

My Office and I, remain committed to this goal, as we coordinate across the United Nations system in delivering for the LLDCs.

Together, let us ensure that geography does not define destiny, and that no country is left behind because of where it is located.

I thank you.