

## **Meeting of the Group of Friends of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs)**

**Wednesday, 23 November 2022, 9:00 am – 9:45 am**

**UN Secretariat, New York, Conference Room 11**

### **SUMMARY**

The first meeting of the revitalized Group of Friends of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs)<sup>1</sup> took place on 23 November 2022 at the UN Secretariat in New York.

Convened by the Co-Chairs of the Group (Permanent Representatives of Austria, India and Rwanda) and the Chair of the Group of LLDCs (serving as ex officio member), with the support of UN-OHRLLS, the Group's first meeting was held in the context of preparations for the Third UN Conference on LLDCs<sup>2</sup> that is scheduled to take place in 2024 in Kigali, Rwanda.

The meeting brought together representatives from 37 development partners, transit countries and LLDCs. The list of participants is included in Annex 2.

The meeting's discussions highlighted the need to ensure that the Group would provide the maximum level of support to the preparatory work of the Conference, by functioning as a platform for regular updates and exchange. Discussions also outlined the importance for the Group of Friends to stay active beyond the Conference to ensure the successful implementation of its outcome.

The Co-Chairs aim to organize the next meeting of the group in the Spring of 2023, following the LDC 5 Conference, at a date and time to be confirmed.

The summary below, structured according to the Agenda of the meeting (available in Annex 1), provides a more detailed overview of the meeting's discussions.

#### **1. Welcome remarks by the Co-Chairs of the Group of Friends of LLDCs**

**H.E. Mr. Alexander Marschik, Permanent Representative of Austria to the UN**, on behalf of the Co-Chairs, welcomed participants to the meeting. He noted that the first meeting of the newly revitalized Group was taking place at a crucial moment for the LLDCs, which corresponded to the end of the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs for the Decade 2014-2024 (VPoA), and to the beginning of the preparation for its 10-year review. He highlighted the "unprecedented challenges" faced by LLDCs, noting their high vulnerability to climate change and to the socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the political tensions and conflicts

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<sup>1</sup> The Group informally existed between 2015 and 2018 and then ceased its activities.

<sup>2</sup> As mandated in UN General Assembly resolution 76/217.

that further exacerbate LLDCs' challenges. These include the lack of growth, rising energy and food prices, increasing shipping and trade costs, which in turn, impact the capacity of LLDCs to invest in climate adaptation and mitigation.

Citing the following quote from the UN Secretary-General "The perils we face are no match for a world united," Ambassador Marschik remarked that LLDCs' friends and partners and the UN were all united to support LLDCs. The Ambassador informed that the UN General Assembly (UNGA) Second Committee would, in the morning of 23 November 2022, take action on the resolution on 'Follow-up to the second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries,' which would set out the milestones in preparation for the Third UN Conference on LLDCs in 2024 in Kigali, Rwanda. He congratulated H.E. Mr. Claver Gatete, Permanent Representative of Rwanda to the UN, for hosting "this important Conference," assured him of Austria's full support, and invited the Group of Friends to engage in the preparatory process of the Conference in order to ensure the best possible outcome for the LLDCs.

**H.E. Mr. Claver Gatete, Permanent Representative of Rwanda to the UN,** shared that Rwanda was very experienced in hosting major conferences, and that it was planning to host the Third UN Conference on LLDCs during the last week of May 2024. He invited participants to attend the Conference, adding that Kigali has various touristic activities that would be open for the occasion.

Based on concrete examples, the Ambassador shared the trade challenges faced by Rwanda as an LLDC, including the long waiting time for crossing at borders and the high trading fees, among other issues. He added that regional cooperation measures and cooperation with transit countries (including the harmonization of trade and transit procedures) had helped his country reduce trading time and costs.

He stressed the importance of the Group of Friends to share experiences with other countries in order to learn from each other. He also called on the Group to best prepare and support the Third UN Conference on LLDCs in order to "make the Conference a unique one".

**H.E. Ms. Ruchira Kamboj, Permanent Representative of India to the UN,** noted that the Group of Friends is an "important rallying point" and a platform to strengthen support towards the LLDC. She added that the Group could play an "instrumental role" in supporting the stock-taking of the VPoA including the regional review meetings, thematic pre-conference events and other preparatory activities; and in helping to build intergovernmental consensus on LLDCs' priorities until 2030 (the SDGs' target year) and beyond.

Noting that India, as a transit country, was aware of LLDCs' challenges, the Ambassador stressed the importance of effective cooperation between LLDCs and transit countries on issues such as transit and trade facilitation, which are critical for making transport and trade efficient and effective. Among other examples of cooperation, she reported that India assisted LLDCs in their COVID-19 response, with medical assistance through the supply of vaccines, therapeutics, and

equipment. She noted that the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal initiative (BBIN) to strengthen economic cooperation and transport connectivity was geared to assist landlocked Nepal and Bhutan, and to provide BBIN countries greater access to global supply chains. She also mentioned extensive cooperation with LLDCs in the context of the India-UN Development Partnership Fund in sectors including information technology, infrastructure and water.

On preparations for the Third UN Conference on LLDCs, H.E. Ms. Kamboj stressed the need to identify gaps in the target areas of the VPoA and the 2030 Agenda within LLDCs, and to seek solutions to enhance investment and technical assistance to bridge the gaps. Among other areas of focus, she mentioned economic diversification, productive capacity-building, innovation, skills and knowledge, enhanced trade and transit facilitation, and increased digitalization.

## **2. Remarks by the Chair of the Group of LLDCs, H.E. Mr. Collen Vixen Kelapile, Permanent Representative of Botswana to the United Nations**

**H.E. Mr. Collen Vixen Kelapile, Permanent Representative of Botswana to the UN and Chair of the Group of LLDCs**, highlighted the unique development challenges of LLDCs, namely the lack of access to the sea and their isolation from global markets, combined with difficult terrain, road and railway conditions, which make it extremely expensive to transport goods and people. He added that many of LLDCs' transit neighbors are themselves developing countries and often face similar economic and infrastructure challenges. Because of these issues, he said, LLDCs pay, on average, more than double what the transit countries incur in transport costs, and it takes a longer time for LLDCs to send and receive merchandise from overseas markets. He also noted the additional challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the increased risk of disasters related to climate change that exacerbate LLDCs' vulnerability due to their great reliance on climate sensitive sectors.

H.E. Mr. Kelapile highly welcomed the revitalization of the Group of Friends of LLDCs, noting that this initiative had been part of the LLDCs' Group discussions at the global level for the past few months. He stressed the importance of the Group of Friends to raise awareness on LLDC issues, to mobilize increased global commitments and support, and to enhance partnerships and outline solutions to address LLDCs' current and emerging challenges. He further noted the critical role of the Group as we move towards the Third UN Conference on LLDCs, adding that resource mobilization for facilitating LLDCs' participation will be paramount to ensure their full representation in the preparatory process and in the Conference itself. He also called on the Group of Friends to remain active beyond 2024 to support the implementation of the Conference's outcome.

### **3. Remarks by Ms. Rabab Fatima, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States**

**Madam Rabab Fatima, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLS)**, congratulated and commended the Co-Chairs and the LLDC Chair for organizing “this very important meeting” and for taking the lead in revitalizing the Group of Friends of LLDCs. Having a development partner country, a transit country and the host of the next major LLDC Conference as Co-Chairs of the Group of Friends was, she remarked, a remarkable winning combination. She also welcomed the participation of many partner countries and transit neighbors of LLDCs in the meeting.

The Under-Secretary-General noted that the revitalization of the Group of Friends is very timely, especially as we approach 2024, which will mark the end of the 10-year Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs, and an opportunity for the international community to recommit its support to the LLDCs at the Third United Nations Conference on LLDCs with a new programme of action. She called on the Group to be strongly involved in the Third Conference and in its preparatory process at the national, regional and global levels. She further outlined the crucial role of the Group of Friends in raising awareness and mobilizing support for the LLDCs to address their priorities and challenges, and in serving as a platform to strengthen international partnerships.

Under-Secretary-General Fatima reported that progress achieved over the past eight years (since the adoption of the VPoA) fell short of achieving the targets on all the priority areas, and that the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate crisis, and the ongoing geopolitical situation and conflicts had all taken their toll on LLDCs. In view of these challenges, she informed the Group that the UN Secretary-General was placing great emphasis on the LLDCs’ issues and had given her clear instructions to raise the profile and visibility of the LLDCs.

Among other activities undertaken by her Office to feed into the preparatory processes of the 2024 Conference, the Under-Secretary-General mentioned: a Ministerial Transport Conference of LLDCs that took place in Awaza, Turkmenistan in August 2022; a session on the integration of LLDCs into the global trade during the WTO Public Forum in September 2022; and an Expert Group Meeting on foreign investment for structural economic transformation in LLDCs that was held in New Delhi, in November 2022. She also noted the organization, by her office, the LLDC Chair and other partners, of two high-level events during the Sharm el-Sheikh Climate Change Conference (COP 27) in November 2022: one on strengthening climate action in LLDCs; and the other one on promoting resilience and sustainability of transport systems in LLDCs. She informed the Group that her Office would, in the coming months, organize and stand ready to support additional pre-Conference and Conference activities on LLDCs’ issues that require global attention. She further noted that her Office’s support would be extended after the Conference to ensure the full implementation of the Kigali Programme of Action.

#### 4. Open floor discussion

**Mr. Omar Kadiri, Deputy Permanent Representative of Morocco to the UN,** remarked that the Group of Friends will be critical to foster action-oriented initiatives, including meetings, and assured of his country's strong support to the Group. He reminded participants that Morocco hosted the Regional African Review in the lead-up to the Comprehensive High-Level Midterm review of the Implementation of the VPoA in 2019, and stressed the need to invest in strengthening in LLDCs' economies and in improving connectivity.

**Mr. Donald Camp, Senior Advisor, Minister Counsellor, United States Mission to the UN,** noted his country's commitment to work bilaterally and multilaterally to support LLDCs and to serve the most vulnerable people in the world. He stressed the need to combat crises, including the climate one, and noted that the Funding Arrangements for Loss and Damage agreed during COP 27 would positively impact LLDCs.

**Ms. Hongbo Wang, Minister, Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations,** welcomed the revitalization of the Group of Friends of LLDCs. Noting that China is a transit country and faces many challenges, she looked forward to share experiences. She called for global awareness and partnership building through concrete measures to support capacity building with a view to ensure the resilience of LLDCs. She also mentioned the importance of the China's Global Development Initiative as her country engages as a strong partner for LLDCs.

**H.E. Mr. Amrit Bahadur Rai, Permanent Representative of Nepal to the UN,** remarked that as preparations for the Third United Nations Conference on LLDCs begin, the Group of Friends can play a critical role on "solidarity for resources for another 10 years". He noted that the Group is an LLDCs' constant companion and that its support should be continue after the Conference. He also expressed his appreciation for transit countries' support towards Nepal, including in terms of trade facilitation and access to vaccine.

**H.E. Mr. Ronaldo Costa Filho, Permanent Representative of Brazil to the UN,** welcomed the revitalization of the Group of Friends, and remarked that its composition is a good indication of the seriousness of the Group. In this regard, he noted that India, as one of the Group's Co-Chairs, is a long-standing champion of the developing world, which adds to the strength of the Group. H.E. Mr. Costa Filho noted Brazil's commitment to the Group, to the preparatory process of the Third Conference and to the Conference's concrete deliverables. He stressed the importance of trade facilitation.

**H.E. Mr. Enkhbold Vorshilov, Permanent Representative of Mongolia to the UN,** highlighted the logistical challenges faced by LLDCs, and their reliance on other countries' support. With less than two years before the Third United Nations Conference on LLDCs, he called on the Group of Friends to support the Conference's preparatory process and UN-OHRLLS in an active manner. He also highlighted the need for the Group to meet regularly.

**Mr. Andranik Grigoryan, Second Secretary, Permanent Mission of Armenia to the UN,** welcomed the revitalization of the Group of Friends, noting that it will serve as an invaluable platform to raise awareness on LLDCs' challenges.

**H.E. Mr. Chola Milambo, Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Zambia to the UN,** stressed the importance of cooperation and partnerships to generate benefits, including economic ones, and called on the Group of Friends to further expand.

## **5. Next steps**

Closing the meeting, **H.E. Ms. Ruchira Kamboj, Permanent Representative of India to the UN,** referred to the resolution to be adopted on 23 November by the UNGA Second Committee on 'Follow-up to the second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries.' Based on this resolution, which includes modalities for preparations of the Third UN Conference on LLDCs in 2024 in Kigali, Rwanda, she outlined the preparatory steps towards the Conference. She reported that:

- three regional preparatory meetings would be held over the course of 2023, namely, one in the Africa region, one in the Euro-Asia region, and one in the Latin America region;
- the Bureau of the Intergovernmental preparatory committee (PrepCom) will be formed by mid-2023;
- the President of the UNGA and the President of the Economic and Social Council will be asked to organize a half-day dedicated thematic event in the third quarter of 2023 to provide substantive input to the Conference; and
- two sessions of the PrepCom will be held in New York towards the end of 2023 and/or early in 2024.

H.E. Ms. Kamboj announced that the Co-Chairs of the Group of Friends would aim to organize the next meeting of the Group in the Spring of 2023, following the LDC 5 conference.

She also noted that a [webpage](#) for the Group of Friends had been set up on UN-OHRLLS' website, and would include updates, when necessary. She thanked all participants for their valuable comments and insights, and for taking the time to attend the meeting.

## **ANNEX 1**

**Meeting of the Group of Friends of LLDCs**  
**Wednesday, 23 November 2022, 9:00 am – 9:45 am**  
**Location: UNHQ, Conference Room 11**

### **AGENDA**

- Welcome remarks by the Co-Chairs of the Group of Friends of LLDCs:
  - H.E. Mr. Alexander Marschik, Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations
  - H.E. Mr. Claver Gatete, Permanent Representative of Rwanda to the United Nations
  - H.E. Ms. Ruchira Kamboj, Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations
  
- Remarks by the Chair of the Group of LLDCs, H.E. Mr. Collen Vixen Kelapile, Permanent Representative of Botswana to the United Nations
  
- Remarks by Ms. Rabab Fatima, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States
  
- Open floor discussion
  
- Next steps

## ANNEX 2

### Meeting of the Group of Friends of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs)

Wednesday, 23 November 2022, 9:00 am – 9:45 am

#### List of participants

Permanent Mission to the UN/Organization	Name	Title
Armenia	H.E. Ms. Mher Margaryan	Deputy Permanent Representative
Armenia	Mr. Andranik Grigoryan	Second Secretary
Austria	H.E. Mr. Alexander Marschik	Permanent Representative (Co-Chair)
Austria	Ms. Claudia Kluger-Ribeiro	First Secretary
Austria	Ms. Selcan Marlen Fabiankovits	Assistant Attaché
Austria	Ms. Lara Rendl	Advisor
Austria	Ms. Moumi Awudu	Advisor
Belgium	H.E. Mr. Karl Lagatie	Deputy Permanent Representative
Bhutan	Mr. Phuntsho Norbu	Deputy Permanent Representative
Botswana	H.E. Mr. Collen Vixen Kelapile	Permanent Representative (LLDC Chair and Ex Officio Member)
Brazil	H.E. Mr. Ronaldo Costa Filho	Permanent Representative
Burundi	Ms. Desire Barahwihura	Counsellor
China	Ms. Qi Zhang	Second Secretary
China	Ms. Hongbo Wang	Minister
Denmark	Ms. Christensen, Stine Nørgaard	Assistant
European Union	Ms. Sinead Flynn	Traineeship
France	Ms. Lisa Segovia	Counsellor
Germany	H.E. Mr. Thomas Zahneisen	Deputy Permanent Representative
Indonesia	Mr. Dicky Pamungkas	First Secretary
India	H.E. Ms. Ruchira Kamboj	Permanent Representative (Co-Chair)
India	Mr. Mijito Vinito	First Secretary
Ireland	Mr. John Gilroy	First Secretary
Italy	Mr. Marco Romiti	First Counsellor
Japan	Mr. Yuya Ota	First Secretary
Lao PDR	Mr. Natthakith Thaphanya	Third Secretary
Mongolia	H.E. Mr. Enkhbold Vorshilov	Permanent Representative
Morocco	Mr. Omar Kadiri	Deputy Permanent Representative
Nepal	H.E. Mr. Amrit Bahadur Rai	Permanent Representative
Paraguay	Mr. José Eduardo Pereira Sosa	Deputy Permanent Representative
Poland	H.E. Ms. Joanna Skoczek	Deputy Permanent Representative



<b>Permanent Mission to the UN/Organization</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>
Portugal	Ms. Afonso Lages	First Secretary
Republic of Korea	Mr. Dongwoo Shin	Counsellor
Republic of Korea	Ms. Sujin Kim	Attache of Development Cooperation
Republic of Malawi	H.E. Ms. Agnes Chimbiri-Molande	Permanent Representative
Republic of Tanzania	Mr. John Pamgipita	Counsellor
Romania	H.E. Ms. Andrea Mocanu	Deputy Permanent Representative
Rwanda	H.E. Mr. Claver Gatete	Permanent Representative (Co-Chair)
Rwanda	Mr. Yannick Uzabumwana Tona	Political coordinator
Singapore	Ms. Wan Zhi Yi	Delegate
Tajikistan	Mr. Golibjon Gulov	First Secretary
Türkiye	Mr. Muhammed Enes Uslu	Third Secretary
United Arab Emirates	Mr. Abdullah Khalil	Expert
United States	Mr. Faith Kroeker Maus	Advisor
United States	Mr. Donald Camp	Senior Advisor, Minister Counsellor
Uzbekistan	H.E. Mr. Azizkhan Nazirov	Deputy Permanent Representative
Zambia	H.E. Mr. Chola Milambo	Permanent Representative
Zimbabwe	Mr. Kingstone Ziyera	Minister Counsellor
UN-OHRLS	Ms. Rabab Fatima	Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States
UN-OHRLS	Mr. Sandagdorj Erdenebileg	Chief
UN-OHRLS	Mr. Yeshey Dorji	Special Assistant to the Under-Secretary-General
UN-OHRLS	Ms. Gladys Mutangadura	Senior Programme Management Officer
UN-OHRLS	Ms. Nathalie Risse	Economic Affairs Officer
UN-OHRLS	Ms. Nnana Pheto	Economic Affairs Officer
UN-OHRLS	Mr. David Martinez Sugastti	Programme Management Officer
UN-OHRLS	Ms. Tingyu Li	Intern