



**FIRST MEETING OF THE PGA'S BOARD OF ADVISORS ON
LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES
AND SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES**

28 NOVEMBER 2023

INFORMAL SUMMARY

The President of the General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Dennis Francis, convened the first meeting of his Board of Advisors on Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States on 28 November 2023.

The President expressed profound gratitude to Members of the Advisory Board for accepting his invitation and reiterated his pledge to prioritize countries in special situations throughout the 78th Session of the General Assembly.

He highlighted the vulnerability of LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS, that stems from structural, financial, socio-economic, environmental and climate change challenges. It was stressed that LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS have been left on the margins for far too long, and that it was time to reaffirm the commitment to the principles of inclusivity, collaboration, and sustainable development for all, to forge a brighter future for these countries and ensure that no person or nation is left behind in the pursuit of a more just and equitable world.

The Board launch meeting focused primarily on developing key messages ahead of the GA-ECOSOC Thematic Event on LLDCs, which took place later on 7 December 2023, under the theme “*Road to Kigali: New Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries as an Accelerator of the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*”.

During the meeting the setbacks on the implementation of Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs because of the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing crises were highlighted, as well as the lack of territorial access to the sea, combined with high trade and transportation costs and unpredictable transit risks, immensely hampering the economic growth of LLDCs.

It was underlined that the solutions to address the specific situation of LLDCs lie in sustainable development strategies that leverage modern technological advancements, and foster collaboration between landlocked and transit countries, and building on regional integration efforts.

Members of the Advisory Board highly commended PGA's strong leadership in placing the vulnerable countries at the center of the international community's agenda. They shared their perspectives and recommendations on priority issues necessary to support LLDCs to achieve sustainable development.

Key messages highlighted throughout the discussion are as follows:

- The lack of connectivity continues to constrain the ability of LLDCs to participate in international trade and their access to markets, given that 32 LLDCs only amounted approximately 1% of total global trade.
- Nearly half of LLDCs are in debt distress or at high risk, and it is pressing for them to break the vicious circle of debt burden, including improving taxation system at national level, scaling up foreign direct investment. Domestic bonds and climate finance are also important tools to promote financing.
- LLDCs have disproportionate loss in disasters with high impacts on critical infrastructure; currently only 4% of disaster financing is being spent on prevention in LLDCs.
- Increased investment in prevention, including in building resilience and reducing disaster risk should be a priority for LLDCs.
- Constant, predictable, and accountable financing resources are needed to close the huge gap on transportation infrastructure of LLDCs.
- The development of sustainable and resilient infrastructure coupled with a successful energy transition will be necessary to bring about structural transformation.
- LLDCs need to transform their economic structure, and better facilitate the movement of goods, services, and the movement of people through coordination with transit countries.
- Digital connectivity is imperative an accelerator for LLDCs to be involved in the world economy activities. Information and communication technology (ICT) must be improved in LLDCs, including e-government, e-commerce, as well as the average rate of individuals access to internet.
- Capacity building and technical assistance and relevant funding must be strengthened and improved for LLDCs to unlock the full potential of the LLDCs to achieve meaningful sustainable development.
- Partnerships are key for LLDCs, not only the collaboration with transit countries, but also the commitments from the international community and effective engagement with all stakeholders.
- The transformation of agri-food system is much-needed for LLDCs, and a network must be generated to implement the transformation.
- Gender equality should be addressed, the voice of women and girls must be meaningfully heard on the third UN Conference on LLDCs and its preparatory process; and women and girls should be involved in the decision-making processes.
- Children in LLDCs should also be prioritized.
- Public expenditure on education, health, nutrition, social protection, and other social services must be sustained in LLDCs.
- The reduction of obstacles to the flow of and access to remittances as well as the involvement of the diaspora in the LLDCs' pursuit of sustainable development.
