

**The Awaza Summary Statement of the Ministerial Transport Conference of Landlocked
Developing Countries,
16 August 2022, Turkmenbashi, Turkmenistan**

Ministers and high-level representatives from landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), met in person (and virtually) on 15 and 16 August 2022 in Awaza, in the city of Turkmenbashi, Turkmenistan, with participation of other relevant stakeholders including representatives from transit developing countries, development partners, United Nations, international, regional and sub-regional organizations, regional development banks, think tanks, private sector and other stakeholders. The Ministerial Conference was organized by the Government of Turkmenistan in collaboration with the United Nations Office of the High Representative for Least Developing Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) under the theme Ashgabat Process: Financing for Better Connectivity.

In view of the discussions held, the Ministerial Conference made a call on the following actions to enhance transport connectivity of LLDCs and accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs and for consideration as input to the preparatory process of the Third United Nations Conference on LLDCs to be held in 2024.

The important role of enhanced transport connectivity for sustainable recovery of LLDCs from COVID-19 pandemic

The important role of transit transport in connecting LLDCs to international and regional markets was underscored. The critical role of efficient transit mechanisms through close cooperation with transit countries was also underscored in bringing LLDCs' connectivity at par with other countries. All modes of transport were addressed (road, rail, aviation and waterways).

Transport connectivity was viewed as an essential means to achieve the priorities of the Vienna Programme of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals and as critical for sustainable recovery of LLDCs from COVID-19 pandemic.

The Ministers acknowledged the opportunity to not only build back better but to include the development of sustainable and resilient infrastructure to help mitigate climate change.

Progress and challenges in achieving the transport connectivity specific objectives of the VPoA, and the transport related SDGs, and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

Although the LLDCs made some progress on the indicators of transport infrastructure development and connectivity, it is uneven and LLDCs are not on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the relevant priorities of the Vienna Programme of Action.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the introduction of new border and transit requirements that led to border restrictions or closures, disrupted global supply chains, delays in delivery of essential goods including food and medicines, and loss of jobs in the transport sector. These impacts exposed LLDCs' vulnerabilities.

The COVID-19 pandemic further hindered the pace of transport infrastructure development and maintenance in LLDCs as resources were diverted to more urgent health and welfare needs arising from the pandemic.

While transport activity has begun to recover globally, the recovery is uneven and LLDCs remain behind. Pandemic recovery funds should also be directed to the development of sustainable transport infrastructure.

The LLDCs need support to expand their sustainable transport systems, build resilient infrastructure and improve their links with international markets, trade and tourism, including by adopting the “peoples first” public private partnership (PPP) approach.

The Conference called on the international community to support activities on enhancing regional cooperation and coordination in transport development to establish an efficient transport system

It was also underlined that, beyond provision of physical transport infrastructure, improving the soft infrastructure components was also very important to facilitate the efficient movement of goods, passengers and vehicles, and to reduce transport costs.

Deliberations concluded that energy infrastructure and ICT connectivity were also crucial for increased efficiency in transport and transit systems in LLDCs.

Enhancing Financing of Transport connectivity for sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and strengthening of partnerships

Bridging the transport infrastructure gap to

The international community should work towards at-least doubling annual investments for infrastructure development in the LLDCs from all sources, including domestic resources, official development assistance, north-south, south-south and triangular cooperation and public-private partnerships and national and multilateral development banks.

Multilateral financial and development institutions and regional development banks should establish dedicated infrastructure funding for the LLDCs and provide the LLDCs with a special window for allocation of resources for infrastructure development and maintenance. Participants emphasized the need for international and regional finance institutions to simplify and expedite the process for LLDCs' transport infrastructure projects' funding applications.

The international community should provide financial and technical support for LLDCs to develop bankable projects and concrete project pipelines, particularly with regard to the preparation of feasibility studies, negotiation of complex contracts, and the management of projects. Efforts should aim to develop local skills and capacity.

The Conference asserted that for LLDCs to achieve seamless connectivity and develop resilient infrastructure, strengthened cooperation and partnerships between all stakeholders was imperative.

It particularly called for greater collaboration on capacity building, transport data, road safety, formulating bankable infrastructure projects, and the greater use of information and communication technologies in transport and transit systems.

Promotion of corridors, regional connectivity, integrated multimodal transport systems and seamless connectivity of transport and trade

Transport corridors are considered as backbones of transportation networks, linking major gateways and hubs and can be an important means to enhancing LLDCs connectivity to markets, achieving efficient transit and reducing LLDCs transport costs by providing more efficient and effective transport and logistics services.

Effective and efficient, transit transport corridors need not only to have good and well-maintained transport infrastructure, they also require smooth implementation of agreed legal frameworks, transit rules and policr-7(ga(s 96211(h)-9(a)4(v)-9(e)4()-219(g)10(ood)-219(a)4(nd)-209(w)-7

Efficient and effective preparations and successful organization of the Third United Nations Conference on LLDCs to be held in 2024 is important as outlined in the General Assembly resolution 76/217. The Conference will formulate and adopt a renewed framework for international support to address the special needs of LLDCs and to strengthen partnerships between the LLDCs and transit countries and their development partners. The relevant United Nations Organizations and other international and regional organizations are invited to provide inputs to the preparatory process.

Landlocked and transit developing countries and their development partners were encouraged to take a very active role in the preparatory process and attend the conference in 2024 at the highest possible level.

Acknowledgement

The participants expressed profound appreciation to the Government of Turkmenistan for generously hosting the meeting and for its financial contribution to the successful organization of the Ministerial Conference.

The participants expressed gratitude to the substantial support of UN-OHRLLS for the successful preparation for and organization of the conference.

The participants expressed appreciation for the efforts undertaken by Botswana in its capacity as the Global Chair of the Group of LLDCs and its capacity of Coordinator for trade and development issues of the Group of LLDCs in Geneva

The participants also appreciated the active participation and substantive contributions by LLDCs, transit developing countries, development partners, UN system organizations, multi-lateral and regional development banks, other international and regional organizations, development partners, the private sector, think tanks and other stakeholders.