

High-level Thematic Roundtable 2: Seizing the transformative potential of trade,
trade facilitation, and regional integration for landlocked developing countries

Wednesday, 11 December 2024, 10 am – 1 pm

Introduction

year for which comparable data is available).⁴ A similar trend is observed in services exports, which rose from 0.51 per cent

Committee would hold a dedicated session on transit issues annually until the next review of the Trade Facilitation Agreement was completed and called for the strengthening and continuation of these sessions.

The current implementation rate of the TFA stands at 81.1 per cent for all developing countries, but only 61.8 per cent for LLDCs.⁷ Additional support is required to assist both LLDCs and transit developing countries with fully implementing the TFA.

Regional trade offers valuable opportunities for LLDCs to integrate into regional value chains and diversify their exports. While, only 17 per cent of LLDCs' overall exports are manufactures, this proportion rises to 30 per cent in the context of their regional trade.⁸ Boosting regional trade can help LLDCs' to increase their manufacturing exports and support their much-needed industrialization and structural transformation.⁹ In the course of the Vienna Programme of Action, from 2013 to 2022, LLDCs' regional exports of manufactures increased by 70 per cent, compared to 16 per cent growth of their total exports of goods to all partners.

Significant progress has been made in regional trade agreements and initiatives involving LLDCs, including the commencement of trade under the African Continental Free Trade Area in 2021, development of economic corridors like the Trans-African Highway, and the launch of the Single African Air Transport Market in 2018.

The number of regional trade agreements that each LLDC is a party to has increased, on average, from 3.3 in 2014 to 4.3 in 2023.¹⁰ The African Collaborative Transit Guarantee Scheme of the Afreximbank announced its first-ever multi-

integration into the multilateral trading system is also prioritized. The programme aims to simplify and streamline documentation and border crossing procedures, with the goal of substantially reducing port and border delays and costs. It also seeks to improve transit facilities and efficiency to reduce the time and cost of clearing goods between and through transit countries.

Some key commitments include promoting the full implementation of the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation, supporting LLDCs' participation in standards-setting organizations involved in trade facilitation, and substantially increasing the implementation rate of measures under the UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation. The Programme also emphasizes increasing regional and sub-regional trade, with targets to substantially increase LLDCs' share in intra-regional trade and create provisions on transit trade within regional trade agreements. The Programme also takes note of LLDCs' ambition to establish a work programme under the WTO.

Against this backdrop, the round table will discuss strategies, lessons learned and innovative approaches for leveraging trade opportunities to drive sustainable development in LLDCs, in alignment with the key priorities of the new Programme of Action.

1. How can LLDCs respond to changing trade-related challenges and opportunities, including the emergence of digital trade and green growth?
2. What role can regional integration play in transforming LLDCs' trade?
3. How can the multilateral trading system evolve to better recognize and support the specific trade-related challenges faced by LLDCs?
4. How should partnerships be forged with transit countries, development partners and institutions, to support trade diversification and growth in LLDCs?

-
1. Co-Chair 1
 2. Co-Chair 2
 3. Keynote presenter
 4. Member State 1
 5. Member State 2
 6. UN system 1
 7. UN system 2
 8. Stakeholder