



**United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries,
Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS)**

**Report of the Inter-Agency Consultative Group Meeting on the Follow-up
and Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs**

Held on 15 November 2023, 9:00 pm-12:00 pm (New York time)

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1. Introduction

The meeting of the Inter-Agency Consultative Group (IACG) on Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) was held on 15 November 2023. It discussed progress made by IACG members to implement the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA) and allowed for an update and exchange of views on the Third United Nations Conference on LLDCs (LLDC3), scheduled for June 2024.¹

The meeting took place in a virtual format and brought together representatives from 29 UN and other international and regional organizations (detailed in Annex I). It involved an opening session that included opening remarks delivered by Ms. Rabab Fatima, Under Secretary General and High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS, and by Mr. Ishmael Dabutha, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Mission of Botswana to the United Nations and Chair of the Group of LLDCs.

The subsequent session of the meeting was on the Third UN Conference on LLDCs and comprised a presentation from OHRLLS on preparations for the Conference followed by statements and presentations from IACG members on priorities for the new Programme of Action.

2. Opening session

Chairing the opening session,

, provided an update on preparations for LLDC3. She thanked participants for their active engagement in the three regional preparatory meetings for LLDC3 held in Gaborone-Botswana, Asunción-Paraguay, and Bangkok-Thailand, in 2023, and indicated that the outcome documents from these meetings are to serve as important inputs for the upcoming work of the LLDC3 Preparatory Committee.

Ms. Rabab Fatima stressed the importance of developing informative knowledge products and hosting dissemination events in the lead up to LLDC3. She welcomed and encouraged the production and distribution of upcoming thematic publications and dedicated events by IACG members in preparation for LLDC3.

Ms. Rabab Fatima provided updates on the planning for the LLDC3 conference, including the findings of a planning mission to Kigali in November 2023, indicating that we are in excellent and experienced hands with Rwanda as the host and that President Kagame has assured of his support for excellent organization and facilities, as well as a strong and ambitious outcome. She indicated that LLDC3 will follow the approach of LDC5 in aiming to garner the broadest stakeholder engagement, including with dedicated tracks on South-South cooperation, the Private Sector, Civil society, Parliamentarians and Youth. Ms. Rabab Fatima further shared that LLDC3 is to be preceded by a meeting of the Broadband Commission on the margins of LLDCs, which will reinforce the conference and bring numerous synergies.

Ms. Rabab Fatima indicated that a letter of invitation to the Conference has been sent out to principals of the members of the IACG for LLDCs and that she was looking forward to hearing of initial confirmations. She indicated that the Secretary General will convene a high-level event of the UN system during the Conference, with a view to ensuring the full mobilization of the United Nations system in support of the landlocked developing countries. The date and time of this event will be determined in consultation with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, but is provisionally being considered for the afternoon of

¹ As decided in UN General Assembly Resolution [A/RES/76/217](#) of 17 December 2021 (paragraph 25).

transport connectivity as a driver for more sustainable and resilient economies in LLDCs", and a Ministerial Meeting on the sidelines of the 13th Ministerial Conference of the WTO in February 2023.

Mr. Sandagdorj Erdenebileg shared that OHRLLS had recently worked on the 10-year assessment report on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs which was already issued as the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the VPoA, He indicated that OHRLLS are finalizing a report on

about the High-Level Ministerial Event Transforming agrifood systems to increase resilience and achieve the 2030 Agenda - Harnessing the potential of Small Island Developing States, Least Developed Countries and Landlocked Developing Countries held at FAO Headquarters on 29 June 2023. During the event, ministers issued a

Mr. Purevdorj Vaanchig also referenced WIPO's recent suggestions in the Secretary General's report on the implementation of the Vienna Program of Action. These suggestions included assisting LLDCs in developing inclusive intellectual property ecosystems, enhancing support services, and mechanisms for IP stakeholders in LLDCs, and increasing intellectual property knowledge and skills for various stakeholders. The speaker expressed WIPO's commitment to actively participate in the preparation of the third UN Conference on LLDCs with a focus on supporting LLDCs in promoting the use of intellectual property for economic transformation, productive capacity enhancement, and economic diversification.

, expressed support for upholding the commitment to digital transformation for landlocked developing countries and a planned call for commitments using the Partner to Connect platform. The speaker also highlighted the excitement about hosting a Broadband Commission meeting, emphasizing two priorities to accelerate SDG progress for LLDCs: universal and meaningful connectivity, and sustainable digital transformation.

Addressing the challenges, the Ms. Ursula Wynhoven noted that 3.6 billion people have never been connected to the internet, and many lack meaningful access. They emphasized the need for landlocked countries to be part of the digital revolution to benefit from the artificial intelligence (AI) revolution. Access to undersea cables poses a cost barrier for internet connection in landlocked countries.

Referring to the Doha Programme of Action, Ms. Ursula Wynhoven mentioned its digital references, suggesting that these could benefit landlocked developing countries. Specifically, they outlined opportunities to strengthen the focus on digital infrastructure, policy frameworks, cross-border data flows, regional and global harmonization, and building digital economies and societies. In the context of means of implementation, the speaker proposed adding a focus on digital enablers and building local capacity in areas such as innovation policy implementation and law enforcement. The speaker concluded with gratitude.

Additionally, ITC focuses on climate resilience, gender empowerment through SheTrades hubs, and digitalization and digital transformation as key priorities for LLDCs.

Ms. Michelle Lau-Burke detailed how digital technologies and online services could empower LLDCs by addressing key barriers such as long distances, customs procedures, administrative hurdles at borders, limited transport infrastructure, and challenges in accessing finance. Online marketplaces and digitalization can help overcome these barriers, making trade more predictable, lowering costs, and facilitating access to finance for MSMEs in LLDCs.

, emphasized the need for a results-oriented focus in contributing to the new program of action for Landlocked Developing Countries. He outlined a set of concrete initiatives designed to address key challenges and foster sustainable development involving the following in the areas of the Trade Division:

The first initiative centers on Trade Facilitation and Digitalization for Connectivity, where governments will receive support in establishing paperless trading systems and risk-based customs clearance aligned with WTO requirements, facilitated through the UN Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business. The second initiative, Transformative Change, aims to assist governments in developing coherent policies that promote transformative innovation. This involves the implementation of national innovation for sustainable development reviews and regional innovation policy outlooks. For the third initiative, the focus is on the intersection of Circular Economy and STEP (Stakeholder Engagement Platform). This effort is geared towards helping governments transition to a circular economy through effective engagement with the multi-stakeholder network of the STEP. Optimization of Supply Chain Efficiency, the fourth initiative, underscores the importance of conducting national studies on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade. This initiative aims to enhance supply chain efficiency and contribute to a more seamless trade environment. Addressing sustainability concerns, the fifth initiative aims to support governments in Sustainable Trade, particularly in building traceability for sustainable garment and footwear. This effort is supported by a team of specialists focusing on environment, social, and governance. The final initiative in the Trade Division is focused on Innovative Finance. ECE will provide a public-private partnership and infrastructure evaluation and rating system free of charge to support innovative finance for sustainable development.

Mr. Konstantinos Alexopoulos further highlighted relevant initiatives from the ECE Transport Division

Mr. Raul Torres highlighted the importance of LLDCs adopting policies and strategies to leverage the upcoming energy transition. He expressed commitment to working closely with OHRLLS, staying in touch frequently, and coordinating for the ministerial meeting at the 13th WTO conference.

, highlighted their commitment to supporting sustainable development in commodity value chains, with a special focus on landlocked developing countries (LLDCs). The CFC considers LLDCs a vulnerable priority group and plans to increase attention to this group with the upcoming Kigali meeting.

He emphasized the importance of impact investments in commodity value chains as effective instruments for promoting sustainable development. The CFC is actively promoting innovation in technology and financial instruments to support these value chains. An example mentioned was the development of impact bonds for commodity value chains and ongoing work on various forms of collaboration between the public and private sectors.

Mr. Kuleshov shared the progress made with the Agricultural Commodity Transformation Fund, aiming to be the first public-private

and value chains, resilient infrastructure, and climate-resilient projects in transport, energy, and ICT. UNDRR strongly advocates for partnerships and cooperation around Disaster Risk Reduction, emphasizing financing for risk reduction, de-risking investments, and improving access to climate finance for LLDCs. Freckleton assured full support from UNDRR through providing language proposals to the secretariat and active participation in the Kigali conference.

expressed gratitude to OHRLLS for convening the meeting and commended the timely preparation for LLDC3, acknowledging the thematic issues identified during regional consultations. She highlighted UNDP's on-the-ground presence in 32 LLDCs through country offices, emphasizing years of support for addressing landlockedness challenges, including aid for trade programs.

UNDP is enthusiastic about aligning its work in LLDCs with the new 10-year agenda of action, focusing on thematic issues such as innovation, climate change, and digital public infrastructure. Ms. Oksana Leshchenko mentioned the strategic plan of UNDP, emphasizing the organization's commitment to contributing substantively, participating in conferences, and actively engaging in the drafting of the new agenda for 2024.

UNDP particularly emphasized the importance of addressing issues like access to finance, digital public infrastructure, and energy transition, aligning with the broader themes of climate action, resilient infrastructure, and ICT. Ms. Oksana Leshchenko assured the IACG of UNDP's commitment to contributing substantively to discussions leading up to and during the conference.

, emphasized the importance of keeping transit policy issues and trade facilitation as priorities in the next program of action for LLDCs. WCO is ready to support customs administrations, especially in transit developing countries, in these areas. Ms. Vyara Filipova highlighted that efficient, harmonized, and automatic paperless customs procedures represent soft infrastructure that can enhance transport connectivity and increase countries' economic competitiveness.

Ms. Vyara Filipova referenced the outcome documents from the three regional high-level meetings, emphasizing the significance of the efficient implementation of agreements and initiatives promoting trade facilitation, such as the WCO Revised Kyoto Convention. Transit transport corridors were underscored as vi

in the Western Central Africa region and regional transit guarantee teams. She concluded by expressing gratitude and passing the floor back to the audience.

, highlighted the coordination with OHRLLS for the review of the Vienna Program of Action implementation in Latin America. She mentioned the completion of a document

15 November 2023, 9:00 – 12:00, New York time
Virtual meeting

Mission of Botswana

1. Mr. Ishmael Dabutha, Deputy Permanent Representative
2. Ms. Lorato Motsumi, First Secretary

Common Fund for Commodities (CFC)

3. Mr. Andrey Kuleshov, Senior Project Manager

Development Coordination Office (DCO)

4. Ms. Carmen Arguello, Sustainable Development Officer

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)

5. Mr. Konstantinos Alexopoulos, Chief of Section

United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

6. Miryam Saade Hazin, Economic Affairs Officer

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

7. Mr. Oliver Paddison, Chief of Section
8. Mr. Yusuke Tateno, Economic Affairs Officer

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

9. Ms. Angélica María Jácome Daza, Diunrector, FAO Office for LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS
10. Ms. Doris Ngirwa-Mpesha, Sustainable Development Advisory

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

11. Mr. Shaukat Abdulrazak, Director, Division for Africa, Department of Technical Cooperation
12. Mr. Mickel Edwerd, Section Head, Division for Africa, Department of Technical Cooperation
- 13.

Through our SheTrades Hubs in the Mongolia and Rwanda we support women's economic empowerment in LLDCs. ST Hub in Mongolia was launched in June 2023 WEDF

ITC work emphasizes the importance of digital transformation for small business in LLDCs. Adopting digital technologies and implementing online services could have a particularly empowering impact on LLDCs, which currently face high costs when it comes to achieving digital connectivity.

Three key barriers that particularly hamper LLDCs' trading opportunities, and digitalization can make a difference.

First, we have the distances involved in getting goods and services to markets. Online markets allow buyers and sellers to find one another efficiently and settle terms of trade, reducing unknowns and risks for both buyer and seller.

Second, we have onerous customs procedures and other administrative hurdles at the border. Again, digitalization can help, such as by providing greater transparency around key processes, and helping harmonize and simplify them. This makes trade far more predictable—a must for smaller businesses—and lowers costs. Given that LLDCs, by virtue of their geography, are often sinesse

ITU very much looks forward to LLDC3. We are working on a publication on connectivity and LLDCs, and plan a call for commitments for LLDCs leveraging the Partner 2 Connect platform. Will be holding a Broadband Commission meeting there too, as was mentioned by the USG.

Top priorities, we believe, to help LLDCs accelerate progress on the SDGs are universal meaningful connectivity and sustainable digital transformation. 2.6 billion people have never ever been connected to the internet and many more don't have meaningful access – the current threshold for being considered connected is having accessed the internet once in the past three months. In September, with UNDP and other partners we released an SDG Digital Acceleration Agenda that notes that 70% of SDG targets can be accelerated through greater leveraging of digital technologies, including AI. To benefit from the AI revolution it is necessary to be part of the digital revolution. However, without direct access to the undersea cables, landlocked countct

Integrate an emphasis on –

Locally led and owned, people-centred and sustainable assistance approaches to digital transformation of economies and societies centred around countries' needs and own priorities;

Policy acceleration to equip countries with legal and policy frameworks enabling the achievement of SDGs;

Building local human and institutional capacities in key transversal areas such as governance (national and local) and law enforcement, innovation and entrepreneurship;

Regional harmonization beyond the transport sector;

Open innovation as a driver of developing digital economies; and

Science, technology and innovation to accelerate the achievement of SDGs.

2. What are your suggestions for making a new program of action attractive for triangular cooperation or support from development partners from the North and their institutions?

Narratives around –

People-centered development approaches;

Twin green and digital transformation;

Gender mainstreaming and diversity angle

in policies and development initiatives.

The World Customs Organization (WCO) believes that transit policy issues and trade facilitation should be kept as priorities in the next programme of action for LLDCs and the WCO stands ready to support the Customs administrations of LLDCs and transit developing countries in these areas.

We consider that efficient, harmonized, automated, paperless Customs procedures represent the soft infrastructure that can boost transport connectivity and increase countries' economic competitiveness.

This is in line with the three regional outcome documents, which highlight the importance of efficient implementation by LLDCs and transit countries of agreements and initiatives that promote trade facilitation, such as the WTO TFA and the WCO RKC; the importance of effective and efficient transit transport corridors that are the backbone of transportation networks; the need to improve transit, and the need for innovative approaches to treat in a holistic manner the issues of transit, transport and trade facilitation; as well as the need to enhance LLDCs' efforts to integrate into e-commerce.

In October 2023, the main WCO committee responsible for matters in the area of procedures and facilitation, the Permanent Technical Committee, had a discussion with regard to the preparatory process and outcome document of the Third UN Conference on LLDCs, and also highlighted the importance of addressing Customs transit challenges in a holistic manner through efficient implementation of all relevant instruments and tools.

With regard to the proposed priorities, some key aspects in the area of trade facilitation are transparency and predictability; border agency cooperation; freedom of transit; and coordination through the NCTF. What is key in the area of transit is efficient exchange of information through automated systems; efficient guarantee systems – regional or international; and efficient security measures, such as e-seals, which need to follow a regional approach to achieve maximum effectiveness.

And once again, we are committed to supporting LLDCs to implement the global standards in these areas.

We can also provide support to the Customs administrations of LLDCs on e-commerce, use of advanced technologies by Customs, gender equality and diversity, disaster relief, and Green Customs, the last two falling under the broader area of climate change.

Last, the WCO will hold a pre-conference event in the end of February 2024 in Douala, Cameroon. This will be a regional workshop for the Members of the West and Central Africa region on transit interconnectivity and the use of regional transit guarantees.

4.

Statement by Mr. Chi Dung Duong, Director, Division for Least Developed Countries, RNDS, WIPO at Inter-Agency Consultative Group Meeting on the Follow-up and Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs

Mr. Chair,

Dear Colleagues,

We highly appreciate the update on preparations for the Third United Nations Conference on LLDCs (LLDC3) and for the opportunity to share our views on the priorities for the new Programme of Action for the LLDCs.

As a UN specialized agency, which leads the development of a global intellectual property (IP) ecosystem to promote innovation and creativity, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) has been contributing continuously to the implementation of relevant recommendations of the Vienna Programme of Action for the Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) for 2014 – 2024.

Despite the efforts of LLDC Member States and the international community, significant challenges remain in LLDCs in science, technology and innovation, which are crucial for their structural transformation, economic growth and sustainable development.

During the implementation period of the Vienna Programme of Action, the LLDCs lagged in the main innovation indicators compared to other world economies.

As Member States stated at the regional review meetings held this year, the progress on structural transformation by many LLDCs has been slow during the last decade.

Thus, the outcome documents of the regional reviews call upon LLDCs to take concrete initiatives to foster productive capacities and facilitate structural transformation, such as enabling policies to enhance science, research and development, innovation capacity.

They also urge the international community to support LLDCs to further promote economic diversification, focusing on innovation, entrepreneurship, and investment in non-traditional sectors.

For instance, it was highlighted that over 90% exports from African LLDCs have remained largely concentrated in raw materials and the contribution of African LLDCs to global trade remained flat at around 0.2%. The merchandise exports of Latin American LLDCs and many Asian LLDCs remain predominantly composed of primary products.

IP can be a powerful tool for growth and sustainable development and a catalyst for innovation, business, investment, and economic development in LLDCs.

The new Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries may benefit from encompassing specific support actions for the LLDCs, aimed at facilitating the creation of enabling IP ecosystems to promote innovation and creativity and empowering people, businesses and communities to leverage IP effectively. This would be important support for promoting science, technology and innovation essential for structural transformation, as well as for the economic diversification in the LLDCs.

WIPO's submission to the recent Report of the Secretary-General on Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA) for Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) for the Decade 2014 – 2024, contained the specific suggestions for the new Programme of Action for LLDCs for the next decade.

It includes the following support action areas, aimed to facilitate the use of IP as a powerful tool for growth and sustainable development in LLDCs:

and creativity for structural economic transformation, productive capacity development and economic diversification.

Thank you.