



**Statement by
Ms. Rabab Fatima**

**Under-Secretary-General and High Representative
for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS and
Secretary General of the Third UN Conference of
Landlocked Developing Countries**

at the Opening

**Second Session of the Preparatory Committee on the Third
United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries**

Conference Room # 2

3 June 2024

UNHQs, New York

**Distinguished Co-Chairs of the Preparatory Committee,
His Excellency Mr. Alexander Marschik, Permanent
Representative of Austria, and
His Excellency Mr. Enkhbold Vorshilov, Permanent
Representative of Mongolia,
Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues,**

I am delighted that the next Programme of Action for the LLDCs has been agreed by consensus! I congratulate you all for this remarkable achievement.

I congratulate and thank our co-chairs, Ambassador Mershick and Ambassador Vorshilov, for their outstanding leadership in steering this process to a successful conclusion.

I have seen how tirelessly you and your experts, Olivia and Ulzii, have worked over the past four months to bring us to where we are today.

I also thank the other members of the Bureau for their support & guidance to the work of the PrepCom.

I take this opportunity to commend Ambassador Gladys Mokhawa, the Permanent Representative of Botswana and Chair of LLDCs Group for her leadership, and for presenting an excellent zero draft on behalf of the Group, that provided a solid basis for the negotiations. I also acknowledge the tireless efforts of her expert Lorato and the core team, throughout the negotiating process.

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to all delegations, especially the development partners, for their constructive engagement, flexibility, and strong spirit of partnership.

Your dedication and collaboration have demonstrated that we are all united in a common purpose to support the LLDCs for a sustainable and more prosperous decade ahead.

The Programme of Action that has been agreed stands as a shared global compact.

It reflects the collective commitment of the LLDCs and their development partners with concrete targets, commitments, and key deliverables under five broad thematic areas.

The document aims to alleviate the hardships faced by the 576 million people of the 32 LLDCs.

Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues,

The Programme of Action captures the most pressing challenges that LLDCs are currently grappling with.

It also suggests potential remedies to regain the lost ground of the SDGs, and commits to support the LLDCs in their transformative journey towards a resilient and prosperous future.

Let me highlight some of the most significant elements of the Programme.

First: despite the paramount importance of agriculture for the LLDCs economy, this sector struggles with low productivity and high vulnerability to various shocks. The new proposed agricultural research hubs can address such critical weaknesses and facilitate improved agricultural practices. It can also create further opportunities for structural transformation within the agricultural sector.

Second: the benefits of digital technologies have not been evenly spread within and across LLDCs. Internet usage in LLDCs is roughly half the global average; and usage among women remains lower still. The POA proposes **new regional digital platforms and centers of science, technology, and innovation** for peer-to-peer learning, training, and capacity building. These initiatives can be game changers for the LLDCs.

Third: LLDCs are unable to harness their full potential in international trade. Their share of global merchandise exports is only 1.1 percent, and their share of global exports of services is just 0.7 percent. The target set in the Programme of Action is to double this trade by 2034. The document also details the work needed to fully integrate LLDCs into the multilateral trading system.

Fourth: LLDCs face special challenges associated with their lack of direct territorial access to the sea and isolation from world markets. Little progress has achieved in the implementation of various international conventions granting freedom of transit for LLDCs. A **new high-level panel**, proposed by the POA, will examine what more needs to be done to finally guarantee that crucial access to the sea.

Fifth: while LLDCs' infrastructure needs are rising, their investment capacities are dwindling due to budget constraints, high debt burdens, and cascading crises. The establishment of a dedicated infrastructure investment finance facility for LLDCs, as proposed in the POA, can open a new window of opportunities for LLDCs to meet their growing infrastructure finance needs.

Sixth: climate change and natural hazards severely impact LLDCs' lives, livelihoods, economies, and infrastructures. The current provision of climate finance for adaptation is insufficient to respond to worsening impacts. LLDCs have been calling for a dedicated work programme under the UNFCCC, which the Programme of Action has duly noted. It is also encouraging that development partners have committed to increasing adaptation and mitigation finance and technology transfer to LLDCs.

Finally: the Programme of Action sets a target to substantially increase the volume of development finance through traditional and innovative sources of finance. The POA urged development partners to honor their ODA commitments fully and step-up efforts to increase official development assistance to LLDCs.

The POA also sets concrete targets to substantially increase foreign direct investment flows and sets out various mechanisms to address the growing problem of debt.

Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues,

We have an ambitious document at hand, which provides the blueprint for a transformative change in the LLDCs in the next decade. This is truly a remarkable achievement. However, its real success will rest on our collective efforts to ensure its full and effective implementation.

And the first step towards that end, would be to have highest level political participation at LLDC3 to demonstrate strong solidarity and commitment to these countries.

Please rest assured that my Office and I, will do our utmost to translate the ambitions of this POA into real actions on the ground.

I thank you.