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**Keynote Statement by  
H.E. Mr. Lok Bahadur Thapa  
President of the Economic and Social Council**

**At  
Side Event on “Scaling up Innovative  
Solutions for Leveraging Investment in  
Agriculture and Agribusiness in LLDCs”**

**7 August 2025, 13:15 – 14:45  
Awaza, Turkmenistan**



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**Excellencies,**

**Distinguished Panelists, Partners and  
Friends,**

It is a great honour to join you for this important side event on scaling up investment in agriculture and agribusiness, an area that holds the key to unlocking inclusive, resilient and sustainable growth in Landlocked Developing Countries.

As President of the Economic and Social Council, my perspective is deeply shaped by my national experience as a representative of Nepal – a country where agriculture is not only the economic backbone, but also our cultural identity, our food system and our future.

Yet across LLDCs, too many farmers remain disconnected – from markets, from finance, from infrastructure, and from opportunity.



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This must change.

If we are to realize the bold vision of the Awaza Programme of Action, and truly deliver on the promise of the 2030 Agenda, we must put rural people — especially farmers, women and youth — at the centre of investment, innovation and implementation.

Excellencies,

Agriculture in LLDCs is full of potential. But it lacks investment, infrastructure and integration.

That is why this session is so timely.

By showcasing agro-park models and the successful initiatives in Uzbekistan, Ethiopia and others, we are shining a spotlight on practical, scalable solutions that connect rural producers to urban markets, innovation, and capacity-building.



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These models connect the dots between production and processing, logistics and trade, science and policy.

And provide a structured way to bring nutritious food from field to fork, while empowering smallholders and creating rural jobs.

As someone deeply passionate about holistic food systems, I believe agro-industrial investment must not only be economically viable.

It must also be nutrition-sensitive.

Good nutrition is foundational to health, productivity and long-term development.

This is why raising awareness and building the capacity of farmers and rural communities on the nutritional value of diverse foods is essential.



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Investment must go hand in hand with training, knowledge-sharing and local innovation ecosystems, so that farmers and rural communities to produce more, earn more, and eat better.

Distinguished delegates,

The “hidden middle” of value chains — cold chains, storage, transport and processing — holds some of the highest returns. Yet it remains underinvested.

We need to fix that. And we need to do it in a way that works for LLDCs.

Here, the *Compromiso de Sevilla* provides a vital framework.

It offers strategic actions to mobilize investment, address debt sustainability, and reform the international financial system.



Crucially, it explicitly recognizes the unique challenges faced by LLDCs and supports full implementation of the Awaza Programme of Action.

The Compromiso de Sevilla emphasizes the urgent need to close infrastructure gaps, improve market access and establish a dedicated Infrastructure Investment and Financing Facility for LLDCs — a game-changer to reduce the high costs of transport and logistics that impede agro-industrial growth and market integration.

The Economic and Social Council is committed to driving this change, by:

- Championing public-private partnerships that de-risk investment in agro-industrial infrastructure;
- Supporting integrated financing frameworks that include concessional finance, blended capital and guarantees tailored for LLDCs;



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- Promoting digital and scientific innovation through partnerships with UN entities, multilateral banks and platforms like the UN Technology Bank;
- Fostering multilateral cooperation to align international investment efforts, share best practices and coordinate actions for LLDC agro-industrial development;
- And, most importantly, making smallholders central actors, not afterthoughts, in the agro-industrial transformation.

Excellencies,

The Awaza Programme of Action provides the strategic direction.

What we need now is collaborative implementation — across governments, regional bodies,



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international financial institutions and the private sector.

No LLDC should be held back because of geography.

Neither should any farmer be left behind because of neglect.

Let us commit not just to scaling investment but to scaling impact: on livelihoods, on nutrition, on rural opportunity, and on sustainability.

Together, let us plant the seeds of transformation and grow a future where all countries, regardless of location, can thrive.

The Economic and Social Council will remain steadfast in making food systems, connectivity and strategic financing as engines of inclusive and resilient development for LLDCs.

Thank you.