



ECOSOC



Building
Our Future
Together

Statement by
H.E. Mr. Lok Bahadur Thapa
President of the UN Economic and Social
Council
At
Opening Ceremony of the Third United
Nations Conference on Landlocked
Developing Countries

5 August 2025
Awaza, Turkmenistan

**Your Excellency Mr. Serdar
Berdimuhamedow, President of
Turkmenistan and
President of the Third United Nations
Conference on Landlocked Developing
Countries,**

**Your Excellency Mr. António Guterres,
Secretary-General of the United Nations,**

**Your Excellency Mr. Philemon Yang,
President of the United Nations General
Assembly,**

**Honourable Heads of State and government,
Excellencies,**

Distinguished Delegates,

It is an honor and privilege for me to join you in the
Opening Ceremony of the Third United Nations
Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries.

Let me begin by expressing my sincere appreciation to the Government of Turkmenistan for its generous hospitality and leadership in hosting this once-in-a-decade gathering in this beautiful city.

Excellencies,

This Conference marks a pivotal moment for the 32 landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and a new decade of opportunity.

It offers a renewed pathway toward inclusive growth and sustainable development for over 570 million people.

As President of ECOSOC and the Permanent Representative of Nepal— a country that is both landlocked and least developed — I recognize the urgency of the task before us and the transformative opportunity this Conference presents.

LLDCs continue to face structural constraints:

- Lack of direct access to the sea,
- Limited transport and communication infrastructure,
- Long distance from major markets, and
- Cumbersome transit procedures.

These geographical and structural vulnerabilities are compounded by multiple and interconnected global challenges — from the lingering impacts of the pandemic, geopolitical tension and conflict to climate change and biodiversity loss.

Despite rapid advances in science and technology, LLDCs struggle to harness their benefits due to digital infrastructure gaps and high service costs.

Many LLDCs are also burdened by debt distress, with debt servicing often exceeding investment in health, education, and social protection.

These challenges are not new.

But they are growing in complexity, scale and urgency.

So, our response must be timely, ambitious, adequate, and sustained.

We must build on the progress achieved in the last decade.

While the experiences of LLDCs are diverse, our shared vision is clear: to turn structural barriers into pathways for inclusive, resilient, and sustainable development.

Excellencies,

The Awaza Programme of Action is a bold, ambitious, actionable, and future-oriented blueprint.

A blueprint to unlock the development potential of LLDCs.

And to strengthen coherence across national, regional, and global efforts.

It aligns LLDCs' priorities with the 2030 Agenda.

It calls for urgent mobilization of collective resources, decisive action, and innovative solutions.

To realize its vision and deliver meaningful progress, LLDCs' priorities and their specific needs must be fully reflected in global development efforts and be implemented through targeted support, integrated policy frameworks and strengthened international cooperation.

Regional cooperation is vital. LLDCs are key links in regional supply chains. Deepening collaboration with transit countries and regional organizations is a must to enhance connectivity, trade, and resilience.

The upcoming UN Decade of Sustainable Transport presents a timely opportunity to make transport a true driver of sustainable development. I commend Turkmenistan's leadership in championing this agenda.

We must prioritize the establishment of an Infrastructure Investment Facility for LLDCs with

urgency in order to boost transit infrastructure and connectivity.

Most importantly, financing must be mobilized at scale as LLDCs face significant investment gap. In Asia and the Pacific alone, transport infrastructure needs are estimated at \$43 trillion by 2035 — nearly 2% of regional GDP.

To bridge this gap, LLDCs need enhanced international cooperation, increased private investment, blended finance, greater access to concessional resources, and sustainable debt solutions.

Climate finance must be scaled up, with a special focus on adaptation to address LLDCs' growing vulnerabilities.

Accelerated technology transfer is essential to help LLDCs to catch up in digitalization and innovation.

Equally, reliable data and robust national statistical systems are critical for effective planning, monitoring, and accountability.

Together, let us turn the Awaza Programme of Action into a catalyst for inclusive, resilient, and sustainable development for LLDCs.

Excellencies,

ECOSOC will support the effective implementation and follow-up of the Awaza Programme of Action by enhancing UN system coordination and accelerating SDG delivery where it's needed most.

Through renewed multilateralism and collective resolve, we can turn vulnerability into opportunity and promise into progress.

Under the banner of *Delivering Better*, during Nepal's Presidency, I will place special emphasis on the priorities of LLDC—food security, connectivity, youth empowerment, climate resilience, and

sustainable financing—across ECOSOC's discussions and processes.

This Conference is not only about LLDCs—it is about our shared responsibility to build a more equitable and resilient global system.

Let us turn commitments into action, and action into impact.

And let us ensure that no country is left behind because of geography.

I thank you.