



**Third United Nations  
Conference on  
Landlocked Developing  
Countries**

# **Ministerial Meeting on South-South Cooperation**

**6 August 2025**

**Awaza, Turkmenistan**

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**PROGRAMME**

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10:00-10:20	<b>High-level opening segment</b>
10:25-11:40	<p><b>Session 1: Catalyzing South-South and triangular cooperation in science, technology and innovation to spur structural economic transformation and achieve digital leapfrogging in LLDCs</b></p> <p><i>Science, technology, and innovation (STI) have a huge potential to support LLDCs to bring about structural transformation and achieve the SDGs. Yet the LLDCs are not able to leverage the full benefits of STI due to stark gaps in the areas of infrastructure including energy infrastructure and ICT connectivity, as well as lack of enabling policy framework, enforcement capabilities, institutions and digital skills. LLDCs need to elevate the application of STI both at the policy and operational levels. It is imperative for the LLDCs to build a broad coalition of partnerships to increase investments in STI infrastructure, build innovative capacity and achieve technological upgrading and improvements.</i></p> <p><i>In the meantime, LLDCs are vulnerable to and remain negatively affected by the adverse impacts of climate change. Concerted efforts by all partners are required to help promote innovation and greater use of adaptive technologies in LLDCs, including developing and adopting clean technologies and build adaptive and mitigation capacity through South-South and triangular cooperation.</i></p> <p><i>During the implementation period of the VpoA, LLDCs continued to face high costs for broadband connectivity. In order for LLDCs to close the digital divide including gender digital divide and reach the hardest to connect communities for transformative, inclusive and equitable development, LLDCs need substantial investments from all sources in digital, human and institutional capacity building to improve the digital transit and transport infrastructure and expand connectivity. To increase the participation of LLDCs in digital economy and reap the benefits of the ICT and digital technology are among priority action areas of the Awaza Programme of Action.</i></p> <p><i>Through South-South and triangular cooperation, LLDCs can promote peer-to-peer learning and share experiences in developing conducive national digital strategies and regulatory frameworks. LLDCs and development partners can pool resources including innovative financing solutions and technological know-how to improve digital literacy and skills in LLDCs and expand meaningful digital connectivity of LLDCs.</i></p> <p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How South-South and triangular cooperation can support LLDCs in accessing technology and know-how and improving their scientific and</li> </ul>

	<p>innovative capacity needed for structural transformation and preparedness to external shocks?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can the national level policies help develop effective foundations for digitalization and fast track structural transformation in LLDCs?</li> <li>• How to leverage South-South and triangular cooperation to enhance STEM education in LLDCs, with a particular focus on bridging digital divides, including gender digital divide?</li> <li>• What does it take for regional and subregional platforms and initiatives under South-South and triangular cooperation to foster the ecosystems for STI adoption and digitalization in LLDCs?</li> </ul>
<p>11:45-13:00</p>	<p><b>Session 2: Best practices and experience sharing in unlocking the potential of South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable, resilient and transformative development of LLDCs</b></p> <p><i>The achievements of LLDCs are reliant on partnerships that facilitate collaborative development, sharing of common resources and investment costs. Furthermore, ownership of the development process, policy, planning, laying of legal frameworks by the LLDCs is imperative.</i></p> <p><i>This session will focus on showcasing South-South cooperation through five illustrative case studies on the Awaza Programme of Action themes, covering Central Asia, South-East Asia, Latin America, and two African nations. It will demonstrate how selected LLDCs have leveraged South-South cooperation to address the development challenges. Some of the case studies will be forward-looking at initiatives aimed at achieving economic transformation and addressing sustainable development issues such as job creation, inclusive development and climate change mitigation.</i></p> <p><i>In the case studies, the role of partnership brokerage is highlighted with a focus on the specific priorities of Member States. This will lead to a deeper understanding of South-South cooperation and how it can be harnessed to address developmental challenges in LLDCs. Furthermore, the case studies help identify the catalytic role of the UN System in facilitating partnerships to scale up successful South-South and triangular cooperation.</i></p> <p><i>The selected five case studies include: structural transformation and STI in Ethiopia, transit transport and connectivity in Tajikistan, climate change and</i></p>

	<p><i>energy transition in Paraguay, trade, trade facilitation, value chain and regional integration in Rwanda, and means of implementation in Lao PDR.</i></p> <p><b>Questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did the case studies illustrate the wide scope of South-South and triangular cooperation, especially actions that may not be recognized as South-South cooperation and yet reflect all the traits of South-South cooperation, grants, concessional funding, trade preferences etc?</li> <li>• Multistakeholder approaches in South-South cooperation: How did the case studies illustrate the roles of various stakeholders beyond national governments, such as the private sector, civil society, and local governments, in South-South cooperation? What lessons can be drawn about the types of partnerships that LLDCs need to build?</li> <li>• How can South-South and triangular cooperation be better leveraged and further strengthened to enhance the implementation of APoA?</li> <li>• What role can regional cooperation and integration play in unlocking the means of implementation necessary for development and growth in LLDCs?</li> </ul>
Lunch break	
15:00-16:15	<p><b>Session 3: Leveraging South-South cooperation to promote trade facilitation and deepen regional integration for increased participation of LLDCs in international trade</b></p> <p><i>LLDCs continue to face relatively high trade costs which have been exacerbated by the pandemic and the current geopolitical tensions and conflicts. Trade costs of LLDCs are estimated to be 30 per cent higher for LLDCs than for coastal developing countries due to isolation from global markets, inadequate transport and transit systems, multiple border crossings and cumbersome transit procedures.</i></p> <p><i>Improved trade facilitation, such as streamlining and harmonization of customs and transit procedures, transparent and efficient border management and coordination in border clearance would help LLDCs towards enhancing the competitiveness of their exports and strengthening the global value chains. This requires enhanced cooperation at the global, regional and subregional levels including South-South cooperation in sharing best practices in customs, border and corridor management and in the implementation of trade facilitation policies.</i></p> <p><i>There is a need to promote meaningful regional integration to encompass cooperation among countries in a broader range of areas than just trade and</i></p>

	<p><i>trade facilitation, to include investment, research and development, and policies aimed at accelerating regional industrial development and regional connectivity.</i></p> <p><i>South-South cooperation plays an instrumental role in regional integration. It provides a practical means to strengthen technical, financial and capacity building support to LLDCs and transit developing countries. LLDCs can leverage South-South cooperation to deepen regional and sub-regional integration arrangements and their effective implementation, including through joint projects on transport, communication, digital and energy networks, the harmonization of regional policies, sharing of best practices, and the alignment of development assistance. Through South-South cooperation, LLDCs can draw upon lessons learned, achieve technology catch-up, raise much needed resources and promote systematic exchange of knowledge for regional infrastructure development and integration.</i></p> <p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can LLDCs and transit countries establish collaborative platforms to improve information sharing, data collection and coordination among relevant stakeholders including government agencies, customs authorities and the private sector for efficient trade facilitation?</li> <li>• What are the constraints for LLDCs to effectively leverage South-South cooperation in improving trade facilitation? How to monitor and measure the impact of capacity building and technical assistance support under South-South cooperation for LLDCs to improve infrastructure and transit connectivity?</li> <li>• What are the opportunities for LLDCs to engage in South-South cooperation in enhancing trade competitiveness including the development of ecommerce for improved integration into the global trading system?</li> <li>• How to structure regional integration in South-South cooperation in a holistic, cohesive and inclusive manner that contributes to regional economic growth, peace and prosperity?</li> </ul>
16:20-17:35	<p><b>Session 4: Strengthening development financing through South-South and triangular cooperation for inclusive, equitable and affordable connectivity of LLDCs</b></p> <p><i>LLDCs face unique development challenges stemming from their lack of direct access to the sea and consequent isolation from global markets. These</i></p>

*structural disadvantages are compounded by critical infrastructure deficits across transport, energy, and digital networks, which constrain connectivity and economic integration. Under the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA), notable progress has been achieved in expanding transit corridors, energy grids, and digital infrastructure. However, the scale of financing required to close these gaps far exceeds the capacity of LLDCs' domestic resources and official development assistance (ODA), highlighting the urgent need for innovative financing solutions.*

*The COVID-19 pandemic and recent geopolitical shocks have exacerbated LLDCs' vulnerabilities, deepening existing financing and infrastructure challenges. Many LLDCs have integrated ambitious connectivity projects into national development plans but continue to struggle with high investment risks, weak sovereign credit ratings, and the lack of tailored financing instruments. The Awaza Programme of Action (APoA) for LLDCs (2024–2034) reaffirms the centrality of connectivity for economic diversification and sustainable development, while emphasizing that transforming transit corridors into economic development corridors is essential for enhancing LLDCs' competitiveness and resilience.*

*The outcomes of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4) provide a critical opportunity to reposition development financing as a catalyst for bridging LLDCs' connectivity gaps. Expanding access to innovative financing mechanisms — such as the proposed LLDC Infrastructure Investment Financing Facility — is key to mobilizing blended finance from public, private, and philanthropic sources. Regional and subregional pooled funds under the South-South cooperation framework, as well as strengthened public-private partnerships (PPPs), can enhance the bankability of cross-border infrastructure projects and align investments with regional development priorities. Digital cooperation initiatives, including the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Africa's Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), offer further avenues to build resilient, diversified economies.*

*To maximize impact, LLDCs must strengthen national capacity for project preparation and implementation. South-South and triangular cooperation frameworks play a pivotal role by delivering technical assistance, peer learning, and institutional support to help LLDCs develop and execute bankable infrastructure projects. By aligning the APoA's implementation with the financing commitments and innovations emerging from the FfD4 Conference, the LLDC3 Conference provides a crucial platform to explore how strengthened partnerships and financing mechanisms can accelerate inclusive, equitable, and sustainable connectivity for LLDCs.*

Questions:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can South-South and triangular cooperation be more effectively leveraged to mobilize innovative, inclusive, and long-term financing for LLDCs’ connectivity priorities?</li> <li>• What policy and institutional measures are needed at the national and regional levels to improve the bankability of LLDC infrastructure projects and reduce investment risks that deter private sector engagement?</li> <li>• How can LLDCs better align their national development plans with regional and subregional initiatives to ensure that transit corridors function as broader economic development corridors?</li> <li>• What role should development partners, including multilateral development banks and international financial institutions, play in supporting capacity-building efforts for project preparation and implementation in LLDCs under the South-South and triangular cooperation framework?</li> </ul>
17:40-18:00	<b>Closing segment</b>