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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
On:	18 November 2024
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Council Conclusions on Land Locked Developing Countries (LLDCs) - (Council Conclusions - 18 November 2024)

Delegations will find in the annex the Council Conclusions on Land Locked Developing Countries (LLDCs), adopted by the Council at its 4058th meeting held on 18 November 2024.

Draft Council Conclusions on Land Locked Developing Countries (LLDCs)

1. The European Union (EU) and its Member States welcome the 3rd UN Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs)¹, to be held on 10-13 December 2024 in Gaborone, Botswana. The theme of ‘Driving Progress through partnerships’ emphasises the importance of collective action for sustainable development. This conference (LLDC3) provides a once-in-a-decade opportunity to articulate a new and ambitious framework for LLDCs, to tackle ongoing challenges, to build resilience against future shocks and accelerate implementation of the SDGs.
2. The EU has been actively strengthening its partnership with the LLDCs, both at the bilateral level and through regional engagements as well as on the global level. The EU is fully committed to further broadening its cooperation with the Group of LLDCs and its Bureau, currently chaired by Botswana.
3. The 32 LLDCs represent a population of about 570 million situated across different parts of Africa, Asia, Europe and South America. Each faces unique opportunities and challenges. A lack of direct access to the open sea, especially when combined with geographical remoteness, presents a number of issues to global integration and trade. These include obstacles to transport and communication, long distances from major markets and cumbersome transit procedures. A reliance on transit through neighbouring countries puts additional demand on infrastructure and results in higher cost for goods. Altogether this may add to difficulties in accessing international finance and investment.
4. In September 2023 UN Member States gathered to reaffirm their “commitment to effectively implement the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and uphold all principles enshrined in it.”

¹ Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bhutan, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Republic of Moldova, Mongolia, Nepal, Niger, North Macedonia, Paraguay, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

5. The EU welcomes the renewed global commitment to reinvigorate the multilateral system and accelerate the achievement of the SDGs, which are at the heart of the Pact for the Future adopted in September 2024. We concur with the recognition of the special situations of the landlocked developing countries and that they require assistance to implement the 2030 Agenda.
6. The EU is committed to supporting work to this effect and recognises the need for action-oriented commitments to empower LLDCs to accelerate achievement of the SDGs, overcome ongoing challenges, and build resilience against future shocks. The EU underlines the significance of formulating and implementing concrete priorities that cater to the distinct needs of LLDCs, in line with our commitment to leave no one behind in delivering the SDGs.
7. The 2014 Vienna Programme of Action has provided a clear framework through its six priority areas: transit policy; infrastructure development; trade and trade facilitation; regional integration and cooperation; structural economic transformation; and means of implementation. Efforts to realise the ambitions of the Vienna Programme of Action need to be stepped up – not least in response to setbacks related to the Covid-19 pandemic, geopolitical tensions, conflict, climate change, insecurity of food and nutrition, and adverse global economic conditions. The EU looks forward to working with the LLDCs on implementing priorities to be set in Gaborone.
8. The EU welcomes the Resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly on 21 December 2020, concerning the ‘Quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system’, which includes references to the need for the UN development system to enhance support for the LLDCs. The EU also welcomes the proposed Global Multidimensional Poverty Index.

9. The EU advocates enhanced regional cooperation and integration as a means to support LLDCs in overcoming geographical constraints and improving their access to international markets, including on infrastructure, digital transformation and enhancing innovation ecosystems. The EU and its Member States are particularly supportive of the African Continental Free Trade Area, which presents great transformative potential for countries of the region, especially LLDCs, through a dedicated Team Europe Initiative. In addition to infrastructure development, such as the Asian Highway Network and the Trans-Asian Railway Network, the EU recognises the need for investment in clean, renewable, and digital technologies to bolster the economic integration and resilience of LLDCs. The harmonisation of trade rules is paramount and will help LLDCs to simplify regulations and administrative procedures, in order to ensure trade in essential supplies and guarantee faster, more transparent trade procedures, thereby protecting public interests.
10. The EU and its Member States are committed to playing a constructive role before, during and after LLDC3, across the range of priorities identified in the Draft Programme of Action. To this end, the EU is ready to cooperate with partners such as the International Think Tank for Land Locked Developing countries and the UN-OHRLLS (United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States).
11. The EU highlights the transformative potential of renewable energies, including solar, wind and hydrogen. These offer sustainable solutions to the needs of LLDCs and offer great scope for the development of digital and entrepreneurial skills to advance job creation in green value chains and digital skills to enhance connectivity.

12. The EU is committed to working closely with partners, to accelerate and benefit from the green transition and support the implementation of global commitments. The EU and its Member States will continue to strengthen collaboration with partners in developing and implementing ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) that effectively address the commitments taken in the Global Stocktake, including transitioning away from fossil fuels in a just, orderly and equitable manner, as well as developing National Adaptation Plans to enhance adaptive capacity, strengthen resilience and reduce vulnerability.
13. The EU is dedicated to bridging digital divides in LLDCs by supporting digital literacy programs, enhancing digital infrastructure, and facilitating access to information and communication technologies. Digital technologies offer great prospects for transforming systems of education, health and social protection, as well as strengthening institutions. The EU stresses the significance of robust, disaggregated data collection and analysis, to better understand the specific needs of LLDCs, thereby enabling more targeted and effective policy interventions.
14. The EU and its Member States support ongoing efforts to reform the International Financial Architecture and multilateral development banks, building on the ‘Paris Pact for People and the Planet’ (4P) and the Bridgetown Agenda 2.0. The EU and its Member States welcome the strong commitment that the Pact for the Future has delivered in this regard. The EU will engage constructively, working with its partners to achieve a meaningful progress in this regard at the 4th International Conference on Financing For Development, to be held in Spain in 2025.
15. The aim must be to mobilise, in a global effort, the necessary resources from all sources for full and accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, including increasing liquidity and making the best possible use of scarce concessional financing. There is a shared interest in better addressing global challenges and inequalities, and safeguarding global public goods, to ensure that no country has to choose between fighting poverty and fighting for the planet. In this regard, the EU and its Member States support the development of innovative financing instruments such as climate resilience debt clauses for the most vulnerable countries.

16. The EU has long been a partner of LLDCs. According to the latest available figures, the EU allocated ODA funding to LLDCs equivalent to EUR 10.6 billion in 2022. The European Investment Bank has financed more than EUR 3 billion of projects in LLDCs over the last six years. These projects are aimed at improving lives and enhancing opportunities in 24 of the 32 LLDCs, supporting them to achieve the SDGs. EU Member States provide their own assistance, not included in these figures.
17. Under its Global Gateway strategy, the EU is partnering with LLDCs in investments in digital, climate and energy, transport, health, education and research. The EU is funding selected strategic flagship projects that benefit LLDCs, such as the Lobito Corridor project, which involves laying hundreds of miles of railway track from the Copperbelt provinces of the DRC and Zambia to an existing line in neighbouring Angola. In Central Asia, two flagship Team Europe Initiatives on Digital Connectivity and Water Energy and Climate Change will contribute to increase connectivity and regional integration. At the Investors Forum for EU-Central Asia Transport Connectivity in January 2024, the EU agreed with Central Asian leaders to kick-start development of the fast route Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor, providing a fast route between Europe and Central Asia. The EU is also supporting a range of LLDCs across the Sudan-Sahel band through its landmark pledge towards the Great Green Wall Initiative, including in the framework of the Great Green Wall Accelerator. This engagement helps develop a mosaic of green and productive landscapes to increase food security and resilience, profitability, and sustainability of rural livelihoods throughout the region.
18. Furthermore, the EU is working to ensure that public funds can be used also to catalyse investments by the private sector in filling the global infrastructure investment gap. Leveraging the investment capacity of the private sector is a strategic priority, pursued by improving the business environment and investment climate, removing technical trade barriers, ensuring a level playing field and using financial tools to crowd in funds. Through this framework of action, the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD+) provides guarantees to private sector investors through development financing institutions.

19. The new Partnership Agreement between the EU and its Member States with Members of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States, signed in November 2023, is being provisionally applied since 1 January 2024. It lays down a number of key common principles: human rights, democracy, peace and security, human and social development, climate change and the environment, and migration and mobility. The Economic and Partnership Agreements (EPAs) that the EU has signed with partners have shown a positive impact on the economies of the countries concerned. The EU looks forward to developing a comprehensive relationship with LLDCs within this framework.
20. Looking ahead, the EU is committed to strengthening its partnership with LLDCs through cooperation and dialogue, technical assistance and support for capacity development. Building on the outcome of the 2024 Summit of the Future and the 2023 SDG Summit and looking forward to the outcome of the LLDC3 conference there is a shared interest to address LLDCs specific needs, among other priorities during the 4th Conference on Financing for Development.
21. The EU is looking forward to the results of the LLDC3 conference and the next LLDC Action Programme expected to be adopted at the conference with the engagement of all relevant stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, academia and youth. We stand ready to contribute to the implementation of the Action Programme, on priority areas such as climate change, structural transformation, trade facilitation and connectivity, as well as easier access to climate and development finance and investments.
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