



Pre-Conference Event ITU/OHRLLS

31st October 2013

**COMPREHENSIVE TEN-YEAR REVIEW CONFERENCE OF
THE ALMATY PROGRAMME OF ACTION**

**Enhancing ICT development and connectivity for the Landlocked
Developing Countries (LLDCs)**

Concept Note

1. Overview

Lack of territorial access to the sea, remoteness and isolation from world markets, additional border crossings, cumbersome transit procedures, inefficient logistics systems, weak institutions and poor infrastructure make the LLDCs to incur substantially higher transport and other trade transaction costs when compared to coastal countries. According to the World Bank's Doing Business 2013 Report, the average costs of exporting a container for LLDCs are higher than transit countries and have increased from US\$2200 in 2006 to US\$3000 in 2013, while transit developing countries are only paying 50 percent of this cost. These high costs present a tremendous trade-reducing effect that has a direct negative impact on economic growth and puts them at a disadvantage in fully harnessing their potentials to support their sustainable development efforts. Improved ICT is important for improving the connectivity of LLDCs to international markets, for facilitating trade transactions, boosting enterprises' competitiveness and for speeding up customs and border crossing procedures.

The International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation, held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in 2003, adopted the Almaty Programme of Action (APoA) to address the special development needs and challenges faced by LLDCs. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) within its mandate is working towards everyone's right to communicate through access to infrastructure, and information and communication technology (ICT) services. The catalytic role ICTs play in today's modern society is of utmost importance for the landlocked developing countries (LLDCs). The rapid evolution of ICTs and their accelerated adoption over the past decade have put ICTs at the heart of today's Information Society and Digital Economy, with various applications and impact on other economic sectors and fields of activities.

ICTs are very important for achieving fast, reliable and efficient transit transport systems in LLDCs which could help reduce the high trade transaction costs that they face and improve their competitiveness. While the average number of documents and time for LLDCs to export and import has decreased between 2006 and 2013 – it is still much higher for LLDCs when compared to transit countries. For example according to the World Bank's Doing Business 2013 Report, the average number of documents that LLDCs take to export have decreased from 9 in 2006 to 8 in 2012 whilst for importing they have decreased from 11 to 10. The average time taken by LLDCs to complete export formalities has decreased from 48 days to 42 and in the case of import formalities, the time has decreased from 57 to 48 days. However when compared to transit developing countries where the average days to complete export formalities is 23 days and 27 days for import formalities. The broad application of ICT in reducing paperwork, customs clearance, border crossing, tracking of shipment that is in transit would have a major role to play to reduce delays in border and transit procedures and formalities, to speed up and ensure the seamless flow of data in order to make customs clearance more efficient, and reduce administrative burdens costs. The resulting improvement in efficiency is crucial for enhancing the growth of e-commerce and thereby improved economic performance.

Enhanced ICT development has other benefits which can help address other development challenges faced by LLDCs including lack of productive capacity, limited diversification of the export base, lack of value addition, low level of skills and technological base, and limited progress in structural transformation. For example LLDCs need to focus on increased trade in low-bulk and high-value products and services that can be exported without undue transport constraints related to landlockedness and this can help LLDCs to achieve structural transformation. In this regard, trade in ICT services/ e-services hold great potential for economic diversification for LLDCs as well as production of high-technology ICT products.

ICTs are increasingly recognized as a critical enabler of all three pillars of sustainable development – economic progress, social inclusion and environmental sustainability. Improving the access of both households and the private sector to affordable broadband internet could increase GDP by 1.5% per year and labour productivity. ITU's commitment to the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action (APoA) is being mainstreamed into the Hyderabad Action Plan, adopted during the fifth World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-10) that took place in Hyderabad, India from 24 May to 4 June 2010. ICTs are very important in disaster risk reduction and prevention, preparedness and response, and in addressing the effects of climate change.

In its resolution 66/214, the United Nations General Assembly decided to hold a comprehensive ten-year review conference of the Almaty Programme of Action in 2014. The Assembly also decided that the conference should be preceded by regional and global, as well as thematic preparations. It is against this background that the ITU and OHRLLS will host a pre-conference event in support of the preparatory process of the Ten-Year Review Conference of the Almaty Programme of Action that will take place in 2014.

2. Objectives:

The forum will feature how partnerships in particular South-South and Triangular cooperation at regional and international levels can help enhance development of ICTs in LLDCs, showcase major achievements and best practices; and how to enhance the role of the private and public sectors in development of ICT, including the role ICTs in climate change adaptation and emergency communication. LLDCs and other countries including regional communities will share experiences and concrete recommendations, deliverables and suggestions that can be included in the Comprehensive 10 Year Review Conference on the Almaty Programme of Action.

Expected outcome: A list of recommendations, deliverables and priorities for ICT development in LLDCs from partnerships and South-South cooperation that would contribute to the substantive preparation of the new development agenda for LLDCs for the ten-year review Conference of the Almaty Programme, to be held in 2014. Development of effective partnership among south-south stakeholders, particularly the private sector to narrow the infrastructure gap of the LLDCs, their full participation in international trade markets, and priority needs for climate change and emergency

telecommunication, for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals. The identified recommendations should help the landlocked developing countries to overcome their inherent geographical pitfalls and support their efforts to eradicate poverty, sustain economic growth for a better integration into the global.

The meeting will also reaffirm ITU/UNOHRLLS commitments to address the special needs of the landlocked developing countries pertaining specifically to infrastructure development, assist in maximizing the utilization of appropriate new technologies in the development of their ICT infrastructure and applications and towards narrowing the digital divide.

3. Speakers/Participants

Participants invited to attend the event will include senior officials from LLDCs and other Member States, officials of the United Nations, UN agencies, civil society, private sector, academia, and NGOs.

4. Contacts

Communication on the meeting should be addressed to:

UN OHRLLS

Ms. Gladys Mutangadura

UN OHRLLS, 405 East 42nd Street, 32nd Floor Room 3245

New York, NY, 10017.

Tel: 212-963-3316, fax: 917-367-3415

Email: mutangadura@un.org

ITU

Mrs. Gisa Fuatai Purcell,

Head, LSE Division, ITU,

Geneva

Tel: +41-22-730-6132, Fax: +41 22-733-7256

E-mail: Fuatai.Purcell@itu.int