**ITTLLDC and ITU JOINT SEMINAR**

**“Digital Development in LLDCs of Asia and CIS”**

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**OPENING REMARKS BY**

**Mr. Dulguun Damdin-Od**

**Executive Director of ITTLLDC**

Distinguished Delegates,

Dear participants,

I am honored and deeply grateful to extend my gratitude to each participant gathered here today under the crucial theme of "Digital Development in Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) in Asia and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)." I also extend my heartfelt appreciation to the esteemed co-organizers, ITU, MDDC, and CRC, for their dedicated efforts in arranging this significant event. Our purpose is to engage in discussions centered around digital development and technical ICT management topics that address the pressing issues of digital development within these countries.

In the world there are 32 landlocked developing countries worldwide. The level of trade for these nations remains dishearteningly low, standing at a mere 1%. The persisting challenges they face severely impact regional connectivity and hinder their active participation in the international trade arena.

The absence of direct access to the sea amplifies their struggle, with the average distance to the nearest seaport reaching a staggering 1,370 kilometers. LLDCs are compelled to rely on the infrastructure and administrative procedures of their transit neighbors for the transportation of their imports and exports.

And, the logistics performance indicator for LLDCs falls 17% below the global average. Inadequate transit transport infrastructure and poor maintenance, missing and substandard links, and the lack of integration between networks hinder their greater integration into regional and global trading networks.

Moreover, LLDCs bear a substantial burden in terms of trade costs, paying more than double compared to transit countries. Complicated border procedures, unharmonized cross-border and transit transport documentation, formalities, and procedures further hinder connectivity.

Additionally, the majority of exports—more than 60%—from 80% of landlocked developing countries depend on commodities. The recent decline in demand, disrupted logistics, and dropping commodity prices have inflicted financial strain, limiting their ability to procure essential goods, including food and medicines, and provide crucial social safety nets.

While digital transformation presents promising opportunities, particularly through the emergence of e-commerce marketplaces, LLDCs continue to handle with high transport and trade costs. Furthermore, their ability to track and trace shipments, expedite goods through transport corridors, and navigate border controls remains severely constrained.

Landlocked Developing Countries face unique challenges due to their geographic location, but ICT emerges as a powerful tool, a key to unlocking their full potential, and fostering their growth and development on the global stage. It streamlines trade processes, encourages trade in services, enhances education and healthcare access, and promotes transparency in governance.

To drive meaningful change in LLDCs, we must focus on targeted support, increased investment in both soft and hard ICT infrastructure, regional cooperation, and creating an enabling environment conducive to ICT development. These actions will pave the way for a more connected and prosperous future for LLDCs.

Particularly, our joint seminar will highlight the specific technical aspects and considerations for the landlocked development countries. Sessions on Key insights on granting IMT spectrum access in ASP region and Digital transformation will review the technical aspects and transformational potential of digital technologies by leveraging on emerging technology digital transformation is targeted in all key economic and social sectors, including agriculture, healthcare, financial services, Smart Sustainable Cities, transportation and manufacturing.

The seminar provides opportunities to share country experiences of Bhutan, Laos, Nepal and Mongolia that could assist in cross benchmarking with administrations facing similar geographical challenges. And, the Seminar goes on with the presentation on key findings of the study “Assessing the policy and regulatory frameworks for fostering the markets of intellectual property and copyright patents on digital technology products and services in Mongolia” conducted by the ITTLLDC and the presentation on “Towards development of Generation 5 regulatory regime” developed by the ITU.

Cross Border RF Interference Management and LLDCs and Infrastructure sharing for affordable connectivity issues will be covered as well during this joint seminar.

In closing, I extend my sincere gratitude for your firm attention and active participation in this seminar. May our collective deliberations bring fruitful outcomes, guiding us towards a brighter future for the landlocked developing nations.

Thank you, and I wish you all insightful and fruitful deliberations throughout the seminar.