

Session Outcome Document

High-Level Dialogue on Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs): Connectivity as a Catalyst – Delivering the Awaza Programme of Action through Digital Transformation

ITU

9 July 2026 17.00–18.00 CEST

<https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2026/Agenda/Session/420>

Key Issues discussed:

The High-Level Dialogue examined how digital connectivity and digital transformation can support implementation of the Awaza Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) (2024–2034) and contribute to sustainable development. Participants emphasized that while geography remains a structural constraint for LLDCs, digital technologies provide unprecedented opportunities to overcome barriers associated with remoteness, high trade costs, and limited market access.

Speakers highlighted persistent challenges facing LLDCs, including inadequate digital infrastructure, affordability barriers, limited digital skills, financing gaps, and dependence on transit countries for international connectivity. Discussions also underscored the importance of resilient broadband networks, data infrastructure, cybersecurity, digital governance, and inclusive digital ecosystems.

A recurring theme was the need to complement infrastructure investments with digital skills development, innovation support, practical digital applications, and demand creation. Several speakers stressed that connectivity should be viewed not merely as a technology issue but as an enabler of improved outcomes in education, healthcare, agriculture, trade, and public service delivery.

The dialogue further explored the role of regional cooperation, cross-border fibre networks, data centres, digital corridors, and regional connectivity gateways in helping LLDCs address geographic disadvantages. Development partners, international organizations, and private-sector representatives emphasized the importance of creating enabling policy and regulatory environments capable of attracting long-term investment and supporting sustainable digital transformation.

Key Outcomes of the session

The dialogue reaffirmed that digital connectivity is a foundational enabler of the Awaza Programme of Action and an essential component of broader sustainable development efforts in LLDCs.

Participants recognized that overcoming the digital divide in LLDCs requires a comprehensive approach that combines infrastructure investment, digital skills development, innovation, financing, and supportive policy frameworks.

There was broad agreement on the importance of regional cooperation to strengthen international connectivity, improve resilience, reduce costs, and expand access to digital infrastructure. Examples of successful collaboration demonstrated the value of coordinated approaches among landlocked and transit countries.

The discussion highlighted the need for stronger public-private partnerships and innovative financing mechanisms to mobilize investment for digital infrastructure, including last-mile connectivity and emerging digital technologies. Participants also emphasized the importance of developing investment-ready projects and reducing risks associated with infrastructure deployment.

The dialogue further underscored that resilience, redundancy, and diversification of connectivity routes should become central considerations in digital infrastructure planning for LLDCs.

Key Recommendations and Forward-Looking Actions

- Accelerate investment in resilient, affordable, and inclusive digital infrastructure, including broadband networks, cross-border fibre links, regional digital corridors, and last-mile connectivity solutions.
- Strengthen policy and regulatory frameworks that promote investment, competition, innovation, infrastructure sharing, and efficient spectrum management.
- Expand regional cooperation among LLDCs and transit countries to improve international connectivity, infrastructure resilience, roaming arrangements, and access to digital services.
- Support digital skills development, innovation ecosystems, entrepreneurship, and the adoption of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence and digital trade platforms.
- Mobilize greater financing through public-private partnerships, blended finance mechanisms, development finance institutions, and investment facilitation initiatives.
- Promote practical digital applications in sectors such as education, healthcare, agriculture, trade facilitation, and public administration to create demand and maximize development impact.
- Foster stronger partnerships among governments, international organizations, development partners, academia, civil society, and the private sector to support implementation of the Awaza Programme of Action.