

# **Civil Society Declaration on the implementation of the Awaza Programme of Action for Sustainable Development in LLDCs**

We, the representatives of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) gathered at the Third United Nations Conference on LLDCs (LLDC3), held from 5-8 August 2025 in Awaza, Turkmenistan, unite with a shared vision and commitment to support the sustainable development and inclusive growth of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs). We are deeply concerned by the strains on multilateralism and the unique development challenges faced by LLDCs, including economic smallness, geographical isolation and remoteness, limited access to global markets, and heightened vulnerability to climate change. These geographical constraints have significantly impacted our economic and political dynamics, making them reliant on neighboring countries for access to ports and international trade. We underscore the vital role of civil society in driving transformative change and advocating for people-centered solutions in LLDCs.

The history of LLDCs is deeply rooted in the evolving dynamics of international law and state sovereignty. Over centuries, territorial disputes and colonial legacies have contributed to the emergence of landlocked countries, often limiting their access to maritime resources and trade routes.

The establishment of international law frameworks, particularly post-World War II, highlighted the rights and needs of LLDCs to maritime access for economic development. The 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea marked a pivotal moment in recognizing the rights of landlocked states, and this was reaffirmed in the 2023 Agreement on Marine Biodiversity beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ).

However, we note with concern that LLDCs continue to face challenges such as high transit costs, dependency on transit countries, non-tariff barriers, and administrative burdens associated with border crossings. As stated in the Awaza Programme of Action, there has been mixed progress in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, and “years of cascading challenges, in which a health and socioeconomic crisis has shaken everyone, individually and collectively” with the situation for LLDCs being “particularly bleak”.

These historical and structural barriers underscore the urgent need for effective implementation of the Awaza Program of Action, renewed global solidarity and renewed multilateralism, just and equitable policy frameworks which uphold human rights and rights-based development, and inclusive partnerships to unlock the full development potential of LLDCs, and realize the right to development to all their peoples.

Therefore we, the representatives of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) gathered at the LLDC3 Conference in Awaza, Turkmenistan, reaffirm our unwavering commitment to advocate for a just, fair, sustainable development and inclusive growth of LLDCs, and reaffirm our commitment to monitor the implementation of the Awaza Plan of Action. We call for:

## **1. People-Centered Structural Transformation and Environmental Sustainability**

- Community-based solutions that address the environmental crisis and improve the livelihoods of local populations, especially those in situations of vulnerability. We pledge to promote sustainable economic diversification and resilient development strategies that prioritize social inclusion, equity and environmental stewardship; ensuring active, free and meaningful participation of affected individuals and people.
- Policies that integrate environmental sustainability and promote ecological integrity into economic planning, ensuring that people and the planet are at the center of economic decisions and that economic growth and industrialization do not come at the expense of natural resources. We support community empowerment in conservation and sustainable resource use as well as fair and equitable benefit sharing from such use, in line with the Rio Principles on Environment and development and the international commitments agreed on in Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs).
- Economic development that is accompanied by the creation of stable and decent jobs. It is essential that local development strategies protect the dignity of work, ensure fair conditions of employment, fair pay, and provide a safe and healthy working environment for all.
- A structural transformation that upholds relevant human rights agreements as well as the UN Declaration on Indigenous Rights and the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent, and that centers human rights such as the right to development and the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.
- Assessment and regulation of extractive industries such as the extraction of oil and critical minerals, that threaten human rights, displace communities, threaten the wellbeing of local communities and biodiversity.

## **2. Digital Economy, Innovation, Connectivity, and Sustainable Development**

- Bridging the digital divide and ensuring equitable access to digital technologies, digital literacy and inclusion for all, especially for youth, women and communities living in remote areas. We also call for social, economic, environmental and cultural impact assessment of digital technologies.
- The development of robust digital infrastructure and innovation ecosystems that drive productivity and public service delivery.
- Comprehensive and participatory impact assessment of new technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, and the Internet of Things on our economies, human rights and privacy, and strong regulations with regards to intellectual property rights and digital governance.
- Collaborative efforts, including South-South and triangular cooperation, to harness these technologies for LLDCs in an appropriate manner, within a framework of just digital governance principles and regulations.
- The establishment of an infrastructure and technology development fund for LLDCs to enhance their capacity on transport, digital and energy connectivity, taking into account the need of safeguards for social equity and ecosystem integrity.

- An expansion of digital infrastructure that is paired with substantial investments in human capital and in the modernization of social protection systems to reflect new labor realities, such as platform-based work.
- Safeguard Human Rights and Privacy in the Use of Emerging Technologies AI-enabled digital surveillance must not compromise the rights and freedoms of people of LLDCs.
- Sustainable and integrated connectivity support policies and initiatives at the global and regional levels to simultaneously address transport, energy and digital connectivity challenges confronting LLDCs.

### **3. Financial Architecture, Policies, and Partnerships for LLDCs**

- Debt relief and sustainability, and responsible lending and borrowing, especially since many developing countries including LLDCs are subject to high debt servicing costs and an already unsustainable debt burden.
- The creation of a UN Framework Convention on Debt that facilitates debt sustainability, fairness and transparency of debt resolution mechanisms and democratizes the global debt architecture.
- Effective implementation of the platform for borrower countries to address debt challenges, increase access to technical assistance and capacity-building in debt management, coordinate restructuring approaches, and strengthen borrower countries' voices in the global debt architecture as agreed in the FFD4 Conference in Sevilla.
- More favorable terms, and accessible, predictable and long-term financing to LLDCs from international financial institutions and development partners to support infrastructure, social services, and climate resilience, as well as direct access to these financial mechanisms for Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, youth groups and other rightsholders.
- Tax justice at the global, regional and national levels and an inclusive and progressive UN Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation, one which addresses the gnawing issue of tax evasion, tax avoidance, and illicit financial flows.
- The lifting of the WTO moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions.
- Progressive tax regimes at both national and international levels to halt the unjust transfer of wealth from developing countries to wealthy nations, and from working people to the rich and their corporations, through national and sub-national solidarity contributions or wealth tax laws.
- Systemic drivers of inequalities affecting LLDCs, including the international currency hierarchy and scaffolding of unequal economic exchange, deregulated capital flows, market-based exchange rates, financial speculation and dependency, debt crises, and a trade architecture defined by extractive, value-chain-dependent and low-value-added production structures that are the legacy of colonialism.

### **4. Strengthening Multilateralism, Partnerships and Collaboration**

- Robust and democratic multilateralism and the redesign of the global economic governance where inclusive partnerships can play an active role. We call on governments, international organizations, financial institutions, the private sector, and all stakeholders to work with us in addressing LLDC-specific challenges.

- Dialogue and cooperation through multi-stakeholder platforms, ensuring that the voices of marginalized and underrepresented groups are heard and incorporated into policy and implementation. We reaffirm the centrality of UN Member States to fulfill their state obligations and responsibilities under international law.
- Ensured effective, free, meaningful and continuous participation of civil society organizations and rightsholders traditionally excluded such as women, youth and people with disabilities in decision making processes. We reject policies and laws that shrink civil society space.
- The establishment of a voluntary, cross sector Civil Society Collaboration Platform for LLDCs, coordinated by NGOs with facilitative guidance from UN NGLS to enable peer-to-peer learning and information sharing, strengthen joint implementation and provide a buffer against disruptions caused by shifting policies, funding changes, or legal barriers affecting NGO operations.
- Equitable trading rules and regional integration, avoiding unilateral trade and trade-related environmental measures such as tariffs that violate the agreed structure of tariffs at the World Trade Organization, CBAM, URDR and carbon border adjustment measures impact disproportionately on many LLDCs that are dependent on resource extraction, can exacerbate the structural obstacles faced by LLDCs.

#### **5. Monitoring and Accountability**

- Establishment of CSO-led observatories, monitoring mechanisms, harmonized frameworks and platforms to track progress on the Awaza Programme of Action, Doha Programme of Action, the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs and other relevant international agreements. We also commit to engage in monitoring and assessment processes at all levels.
- Active engagement of civil society in monitoring and assessment processes, ensuring our perspectives contribute to effective governance, policy coherence, and impactful implementation.
- Monitoring systems must reflect how policies and programs impact people's everyday lives, beyond formal indicators and taking into account such factors as job quality, respect for labor rights, and access to effective social protection. Genuine sustainable development is only possible when grounded in social justice and the right to development of all individuals and peoples.

We, as CSOs, stand united in our efforts to support LLDCs in overcoming structural and emerging challenges to achieve sustainable development. Together, let us forge a transformative agenda for LLDCs, one that leaves no country and no community behind, and builds a resilient, just, and inclusive future for all.