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Ministerial Declaration of the group of landlocked developing countries to the sixteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

We, the Ministers of landlocked developing countries (LLDCs),

Having met in Geneva, Switzerland on the occasion of the sixteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XVI) held from 20 to 23 October 2025 in Geneva, Switzerland,

Recalling the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals; the Sevilla Commitment adopted at the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development; the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Paris Agreement,

Reaffirming the unique vulnerabilities of LLDCs, noting their lack of territorial access to the sea, isolation and remoteness from world markets, inadequate transit infrastructure, cumbersome customs and border processing procedures and prohibitive transit costs that impose serious socio-economic consequences,

Reiterating our concern that despite the efforts of LLDCs in advancing sustainable development, the LLDCs share of world merchandise trade¹ and services trade² has fallen over the last decade, and they remain at the margins of world trade with limited participation in global and regional value chains, unable to fully take advantage of trade as a driver of economic growth,

Further reiterating our concern that the composition of exports from LLDCs continues to be uncondusive to job creation, value addition and sustainable development, as 83 per cent of LLDCs' exports are concentrated in primary commodities and the extractive sectors with 26 of the 32 LLDCs classified as commodity dependent,

Recognizing the persistent digital divide faced by LLDCs, with just 39 per cent of individuals using the Internet, while also acknowledging the transformative potential of e-commerce and digital technologies as vital tools to overcome barriers to trade and

¹ Awaza Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2024–2034, paragraph 106: LLDCs' share in global merchandise exports was only 1.1 per cent of the global trade in 2022, despite the LLDCs representing 7 per cent of the world population.

² Awaza Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2024–2034, paragraph 108: LLDCs' share in global exports of services reached only 0.7 per cent in 2022, while their share of digitally deliverable services reached only 0.3 per cent in 2022.



development, thereby offering LLDCs new avenues for economic diversification, inclusive growth, and integration into regional and global value chains,

Recognizing the especial importance of trade facilitation measures in reducing the barriers faced by LLDCs in accessing international markets, and emphasizing that efficient, transparent, and harmonized trade procedures are essential for lowering transaction costs, enhancing connectivity, and enabling LLDCs to participate more fully in global and regional trade,

Welcoming the Awaza Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2024–2034 adopted by the General Assembly on 24 December 2024, which builds on the progress achieved under the Almaty Programme of Action and the Vienna Programme of Action, and provides a renewed and action-oriented framework to support the efforts of landlocked developing countries in achieving sustainable development through its five mutually reinforcing priority areas,

Taking note of the Ministerial Declaration adopted at the Twenty-fourth Annual Ministerial Meeting of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, held on 26 September 2025 in New York, on the margins of the high-level week of the eightieth session of the United Nations General Assembly, under the theme “From aspiration to action: Advancing sustainable development in LLDCs through the Awaza Programme of Action”,

Recalling the Ministerial Communiqué of the landlocked developing countries adopted within the framework of UNCTAD XV,

Taking note of the Roadmap and Results Framework for the implementation of the Awaza Programme of Action, which supports coordination of activities being undertaken for the achievement of the Awaza Programme of Action,

Recognizing that the empowerment of all women and girls is essential to ensure their full participation in and benefit from trade, and is a prerequisite for achieving equitable economic growth and sustainable development,

Underscoring the fundamental role of competition in accordance with the United Nations Set of Multilaterally Agreed Equitable Principles and Rules for the Control of Restrictive Business Practices, in promoting open, dynamic and fair markets, and the importance of consumer protection following the United Nations guidelines for consumer protection, thereby contributing to the inclusive and sustainable economic development of LLDCs,

Recognizing the need to address LLDCs’ systemic vulnerabilities, including exposure to disasters, many of which are exacerbated by climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and recurrent droughts, while at the same time fostering productive capacities, supporting structural economic transformation, with both external and public sector debt sustainability and enhancing economic resilience,

Acknowledging that strengthening productive capacities through investment and evidence-based solutions based in-depth studies in climate-resilient infrastructure, technology, and skills development is essential to unlocking new economic opportunities and fostering industrialization,

Reaffirming our commitment to multilateralism, a rules-based, non-discriminatory open, fair, inclusive, equitable and transparent multilateral trading system, with the World Trade Organization at its core, and enhanced regional and South–South cooperation,

1. *Call on* UNCTAD, in coordination with the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLS) and other relevant United Nations agencies and international organizations as well as partners to provide enhanced development assistance to LLDCs for developing evidence-based policies, solutions, and proposals and support them in overcoming their specific finance, debt, trade and transport-related challenges, in addressing their vulnerabilities, including in the face of disruptions and shocks, and take better advantage of the opportunities of international trade.

2. *Call on* UNCTAD to continue to provide support towards developing and expanding the productive capacities of LLDCs, including through investments in digital transformation, e-commerce, technology transfer, and adaptation, sustainable and resilient transport and logistics systems, and call on UNCTAD to undertake national productive capacities gap assessments and implementing holistic productive capacities development programmes.

3. *Call on* UNCTAD to support the establishment regional centres of excellence within national institutions in LLDCs to enhance productive capacities through knowledge exchange, South–South cooperation, capacity-building and policy implementation for economic diversification and structural transformation. These regional centres of excellence should, with UNCTAD assistance, serve as knowledge hubs, supporting policy research, data collection and innovation, tailored to the needs of LLDCs.

4. *Request* UNCTAD, in collaboration with the relevant regional and international organizations, to support the formulation and implementation of national trade strategies, with a view to significantly increasing value addition and diversification in the exports of the LLDCs, with specific consideration to women, youth and people in vulnerable situations.

5. *Call on* UNCTAD to continue supporting LLDCs in strengthening national frameworks for sustainable finance, including long-term institutional investment, to address structural challenges related to connectivity, diversification and vulnerability to external shocks, and to channel resources towards sustainable infrastructure, renewable energy and productive sectors.

6. *Call on* the international partners to assist the efforts of LLDCs in attracting increased FDI, in line with LLDCs' national development priorities, including into new and diversified sectors, in particular those that have export potential and can raise their foreign exchange earnings, increase economic growth, expand low-emissions development opportunities and promote the growth of medium and high technology value sectors and their integration into global value chains.

7. *Call on* UNCTAD, the International Telecommunication Union and other relevant organizations to continue supporting LLDCs in building inclusive and resilient digital economies, including through enhanced access to digital infrastructure, the preparation and implementation of policy and legal frameworks, upon request, based on extensive research studies for electronic commerce (e-commerce) and digital trade development to improve their integration into the global economy.

8. *Call for* the continuing support for developing national systems of innovation to enhance the contribution of science, technology and innovation (STI) to national development and the Sustainable Development Goals and building capacity for policymakers in developing and implementing effective STI policies and policy instruments.

9. *Call on* UNCTAD to support LLDCs to harness the benefits of trade in services, including in developing exports of digitally delivered services.

10. *Encourage* UNCTAD and UN-OHRLLS to provide support to the LLDCs in having Dedicated Work Programme³ under the auspices of the World Trade Organization to address the special needs, unique challenges and vulnerabilities of LLDCs by enhancing their meaningful participation in the multilateral trading system and integration into global supply and value chains.

11. *Encourage* UNCTAD to continue its transparency in trade efforts including on non-tariff measures that are of particular importance to LLDCs that depend on transit and transparent multilateral trade rules.

12. *Call upon* international financial institutions, multilateral development banks and development partners to adopt innovative financial mechanisms and instruments,

³ Awaza Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2024–2034, paragraph 125.

including debt swaps, State contingent clauses and carbon markets, and concessional financing mechanisms tailored to LLDCs' unique circumstances.

13. *Call on* UNCTAD to continue supporting LLDCs in achieving structural development with external and public debt sustainability through the Debt Management and Financial Analysis System (DMFAS) programme, the preparation of country studies and strategies, including those based on the UNCTAD sustainable development finance assessment (SDFA) framework and other LLDC-specific research, analysis and technical assistance related to debt and development finance issues.

14. *Encourage* UNCTAD and relevant regional and international organizations to intensify their work to intensify its work in supporting LLDCs in transport and trade facilitation reforms, including by supporting LLDCs and transit developing countries to strengthen transport corridors and coordination, as well as improve sustainable and resilient transport and logistics systems, streamlined border procedures, implement supportive legal frameworks and transit rule policies, enhanced corridor institutional frameworks and coordination mechanisms, coordinate on the alignment of transport infrastructure with corridor routes, improve data collection and analysis and the share best practices between corridors.

15. *Request* UNCTAD and other relevant organizations to support LLDCs in the implementation of the Awaza Programme of Action priority area 4 on enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change and disasters.

16. *Request* development partners to substantially increase the allocation of Aid for Trade funds to LLDCs with a focus on sectors of significant potential for export diversification, value addition and job creation. We further call on the international community to support our countries and transit neighbours with the implementation of the World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade Facilitation.

17. *Call on* UNCTAD to strengthen technical assistance and research on sustainable export value chains, and their contribution to LLDCs efforts to promote economic diversification and climate resilience, as well as to increase the value added to exports.

18. *Call on* UNCTAD, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and other relevant organizations to scale research and technical assistance, upon request, in designing and implementing nationally determined contribution measures related to trade and investment policies that foster just transition to resilient, low-carbon economies.

19. *Call on* UNCTAD and other relevant organizations to conduct research on how to improve the design of the increasingly fragmented, uncoordinated and non-transparent environmental and climate standards and regulations to maximize their environmental and climate impacts while minimizing negative spillover effects on LLDCs.

20. *Further call on* UNCTAD, through the Intergovernmental Working Group of Experts on International Standards of Accounting and Reporting, to support LLDCs in advancing sustainability and climate-related reporting, improving transparency and comparability, and addressing challenges linked to their structural vulnerabilities.

21. *Call on* UNCTAD and other relevant regional and international organizations to support the strengthening and deepening of regional and subregional integration arrangements, including in the areas of trade, transport and transit facilitation.

22. *Encourage* UNCTAD, the International Trade Centre and other relevant organizations to scale up their support to LLDCs in promoting investment and enhancing the capacity of microenterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) to participate more effectively in regional and global value chains, including through targeted research and analysis, accounting tools and capacity-building.

23. *Call on* UNCTAD and other relevant organizations to continue support to capacity-building and peer learning, to enable LLDCs to fully benefit from competitive and

fair markets where consumers are better protected, enhancing their economic and social progress.

24. *Call on* UNCTAD and other relevant regional and international organizations to support the efforts of commodity-dependent LLDCs to address the factors behind structural barriers to international trade and impede diversification and support them benefit from primary commodities, including critical minerals.

25. *Call on* UNCTAD to support LLDCs to be able to comply with sanitary and phytosanitary measures and technical standards, including through capacity-building.

26. *Call on* UNCTAD to continue its leading role in advocating for addressing the unique challenges of LLDCs within the multilateral system and to support LLDCs in the implementation of the Awaza Programme of Action and other relevant frameworks for sustainable development and resilient prosperity. In particular, in advancing the implementation of four key deliverables of the programme that are pivotal for the LLDCs in alleviating structural impediments to their long-term development aspirations:

- (a) Regional agricultural research hubs for LLDCs;
- (b) Dedicated work programme on LLDCs under the auspices of the World Trade Organization;
- (c) United Nations Secretary-General's high-level panel on "freedom of transit".

27. *Call on* UNCTAD and other relevant regional and international organizations to mainstream the Awaza Programme of Action into its respective development strategies and plans for its effective implementation.

28. *Call on* UNCTAD and other relevant organizations to take necessary measures to contribute to and implement the Roadmap and Results Framework of the Awaza Programme of Action and beyond.

29. *Call on* UNCTAD and other relevant organizations to systematically include the category of LLDCs in its data collection and reporting frameworks, to ensure LLDCs specific development challenges are adequately reflected and addressed.

30. *Express* our sincere appreciation for the efforts undertaken by the Government of Botswana during its tenure as a Coordinator of the group of landlocked developing countries in Geneva and welcoming the Government of Mongolia as the new Coordinator, with confidence in its commitment to furthering the objectives of the group.

31. *Express* our sincere appreciation and gratitude to the people and Government of Switzerland for the excellent arrangements made to support the successful organization of UNCTAD XVI.

We, the Ministers of LLDCs, remain committed to working in partnership with United Nations system agencies and the international development community to advance our sustainable development priorities and ensure a resilient and prosperous future for all LLDCs.