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Landlocked Asia-Pacific countries pledge at UN meeting to build cooperation



ESCAP Executive Secretary Noeleen Heyzer

14 April 2011 – Landlocked developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region today pledged during a United Nations-backed meeting in Mongolia to promote greater cooperation and to reduce trade and transport barriers in an effort to achieve mutual sustainable development.

“Landlocked developing countries, made most vulnerable by their geographical isolation, are often the hardest hit by rapid global economic swings,” [said](#) Noeleen Heyzer, the Executive Secretary of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific ([ESCAP](#)).

“We need to deepen regional cooperation and invest in the people, institutions and ecosystems of these countries to support their journey to shared prosperity, reduce poverty and improve the quality of life of their people,” she said at the end of the three-day meeting of the region’s landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) in the Mongolian capital, Ulaanbaatar.

Ministers and senior government officials from Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bhutan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Mongolia, Nepal and Tajikistan met to review progress in implementing the Almaty Programme of Action and assess challenges arising from the severe socio-economic impact of the food, fuel and financial crises on the LLDCs.

The eight-year-old programme of action reaffirms the LLDCs’ right of access to and from the sea, urging cooperation between LLDCs and transit countries for that purpose. The high-level

meeting adopted an Ulaanbaatar Declaration and requested Dr. Heyzer to submit it to ESCAP Member States to recommend necessary measures for its speedy implementation.

The Declaration expressed concern at the widening disparities within LLDCs in achieving the Millennium Development Goals ([MDGs](#)), noting that even relatively better off countries have glaring urban-rural and gender-based disparities. It also highlighted the need for greater regional cooperation and continued international support to help the LLDCs progress towards the MDGs and other internationally agreed development goals.

Stressing that the interests of LLDCs should be taken fully into account to ensure that they have free access to international waters, delegates at the meeting resolved to work together to establish transit transport systems to benefit from the region's dynamism.

Expressing concern at rising food and energy prices and special vulnerabilities of LLDCs, the delegates noted that the greatest challenge for Asia-Pacific LLDCs is poverty reduction. They underscored the need for increased and reoriented public investment on social protection and health, education, water and sanitation services.

The Ulaanbaatar meeting welcomed Dr. Heyzer's launch of a young leadership programme to train young LLDC leaders to engage effectively in multilateral forums, negotiations and processes.

The declaration recognized that non-physical barriers such as customs clearance and border crossing procedures, as well as red tape, were major impediments to efforts by LLDCs to reach their full potential for growth and development.

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