

Forum: Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Issue: Measures to promote market activity and economic resilience of landlocked developing countries

Student Officer: Velissarios Velissariou

Position: Deputy President

INTRODUCTION

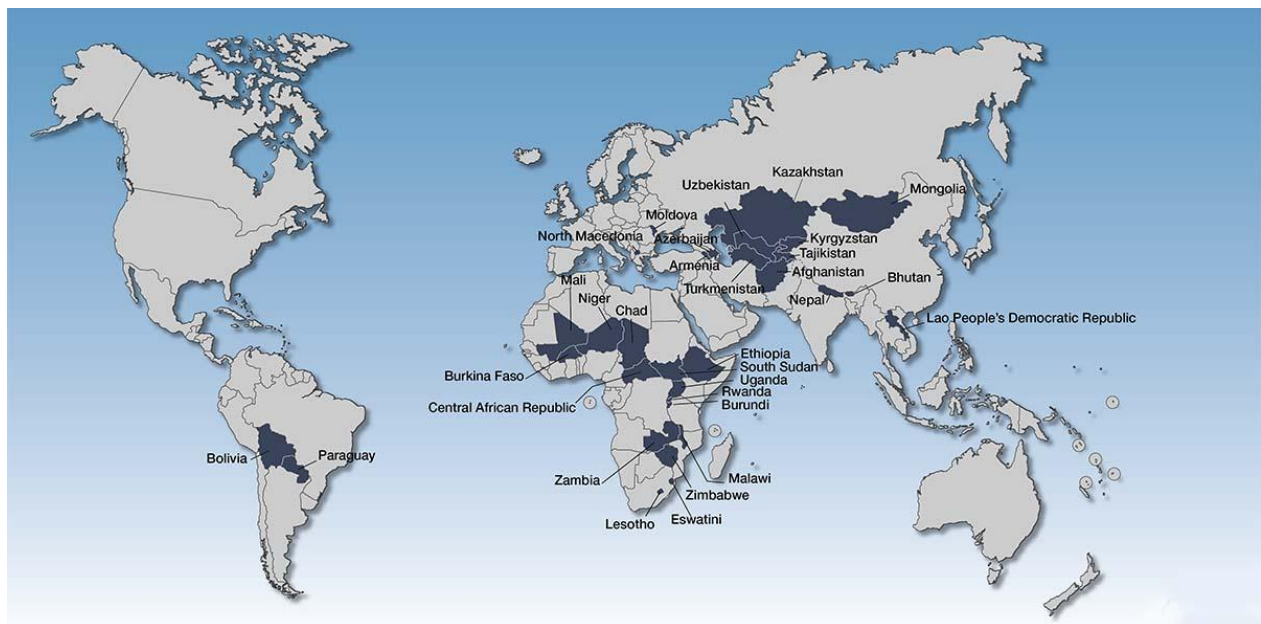
Ever since its creation, one of the fundamental priorities of the United Nations (UN) has been to promote equal and sustainable developments. Multiple efforts to achieve this purpose, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) have been made. The international community is constantly being encouraged to contribute to the development of Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs) and achieve a better future for all citizens of the world. However, taking into consideration that a series of physical and human factors play a major role in a country's development, it is only natural that some countries face multiple and more complicated challenges when it comes to sustainable development.

Landlocked Less Developed Countries (LLDCs), are several countries in the globe that share one common characteristic: the lack of territorial access to and from the sea; naturally, this situation affects their trade, economy, and societies in multiple ways, which are analytically outlined throughout this study guide. The geographical constraints faced by this group of countries call for immediate action to be taken, to prevent the eventual exploitation of the vulnerabilities caused by physical limitations in LLDCs. With some LLDCs having made highly important and valuable progress in the past few decades, and several organizations have already committed to resolving the issue, this year's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is bound to search for long-term solutions that will promote LLDCs' economic resilience and integration in global trade.

In the meanwhile, several other political and economic factors hinder efforts being made to promote the economic resilience of LLDCs. Political corruption and conflicts pose even greater challenges to development efforts, which call for the adaptation of measures to the different situations that LLDCs face. Regardless, cooperation, financial and material assistance appears to be essential for the solution of the issue. A series of guidelines, resolutions, treaties, and plans of action comprises a solid base for more, long-term solutions to be implemented, to contribute to the limitation of risks posed by the lack of access to marine routes and ports. Finally, unity in the international community is more essential than ever to promote knowledge-sharing and

achieve sustainable and adequate infrastructure, digital technologies, and energy independence for LLDCs.

This year's DSAMUN conference focuses on democracy; one of the main aspects of democracy is equal opportunities for everyone. Hence, on a larger, international scale, LLDCs need to be granted equal development opportunities, and market activity within them is to be promoted, in order to serve the UN values and goals. All delegates are challenged to resolve a crucial issue, which concerns not only the present but to a greater extent, the future. This study guide attempts to provide all necessary information for delegates to research their country's policy and familiarize themselves with the topic at hand, to be able to come up with feasible, creative,



and innovative solutions.

Figure 1: Map of landlocked developing countries¹

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Landlocked

A country is landlocked when it is surrounded only by the land of other countries exclusively and has no coast. Legally, a landlocked country does not access to the sea and cannot be reached from it except by crossing another country's territory.²

¹ "Map of Landlocked Developing Countries." UNCTAD, unctad.org/topic/landlocked-developing-countries/map-of-LLDCs.

Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs)

A total of 32 countries all share the common characteristic of being landlocked. Lack of territorial access to the sea, remoteness, and isolation from world markets, and high transit costs impose serious constraints on the overall socio-economic development of landlocked developing countries. Their seaborne trade unavoidably depends on transit through other countries.³

Market activity

Market activity is considered to be any action undertaken to boost sales, trade, and profit. It includes the production and distribution of goods and services; in general, it is considered to be the process through which the intermediate exchange from one transforming activity is transferred to another transforming activity that consumes this intermediate exchange as an input.⁴

Infrastructure⁵

The term infrastructure defines the basic physical systems of businesses, regions, and nations, and includes transportation systems, communication networks, sewage, water, and electric systems. Infrastructure is a key factor in the normal operation of societies and enterprises.

Corruption

Corruption is the abuse of entrusted power for private gain and can include blackmailing, misusing public money, and bribing. Corruption is the main reason why attempts to improve the development of LLDCs led to inadequate and unsatisfactory results.⁶

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs)

The Sustainable Development Goals are a blueprint that promotes better and sustainable development through a total of 17 goals adopted in 2015. The UNSDGs have been the main guide for LLDCs in their efforts for development.⁷

² "Landlocked." The Free Dictionary, Farlex, [legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/landlocked](https://www.thefreedictionary.com/landlocked).

³ "Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs)." ITU, www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/LDCs/Pages/Landlocked-Developing-Countries.aspx.

⁴ "FAQs." Ecoinvent, www.ecoinvent.org/support/faqs/methodology-of-ecoinvent-3/what-is-a-market-and-how-is-it-created.html.

⁵ Staff, Investopedia, and Michael J. Boyle. "Infrastructure Definition." Investopedia, Investopedia, 25 Mar. 2021, www.investopedia.com/terms/i/infrastructure.asp.

⁶ "What Is Corruption?" Transparency.org, www.transparency.org/en/what-is-corruption#.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Currently, there are 32 landlocked developing countries in the world, throughout Africa, Europe, Asia, and South America, with a total population of over 400 million people. Geographical restrictions and the lack of territorial access to the sea make up significant development challenges and could lead to the isolation of LLDCs from international markets. The geographical constraints posed by the reduced access to the sea and the lack of exclusive economic zones in seas or oceans greatly hinder LLDCs' efforts to advance economic development, develop adequate infrastructure and achieve human and social progress. Only 5 of the 32 landlocked developing countries have a high human development index rating. Therefore, LLDCs appear to be more vulnerable to several threats, which are analytically outlined below.

The 32 LLDCs are geographically distributed as follows:

Africa, 16 countries: Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Rwanda, South Sudan, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Asia, 10 countries: Afghanistan, Bhutan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Nepal, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan.

Europe, 4 countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Republic of Moldova, Republic of North Macedonia.

South America, 2 countries: Republic of Bolivia, Paraguay

Historical Background

It was Adam Smith who first took notice of the decreased development in inland regions of Africa and Asia, back in 1776. Trade has always been difficult for geographically remote areas. In fact, during the years of the two continents' colonization, European colonizers sought to gain control of coastal areas, to avoid colonizing or building inland cities. Back then, it was the economic logic of colonialism that led to the deprivation of landlocked countries. Nowadays,

⁷ "Take Action for the Sustainable Development Goals – United Nations Sustainable Development." United Nations, United Nations, www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/.

today's global economy dictates that to achieve and sustain high rates of economic growth the low-income countries need to export manufactured goods (or services) to large markets. As of 2002, nine out of twelve countries with the smallest Human Development Index were landlocked, while no European landlocked country was classified as "high human development". Hence, LLDCs have been facing the issues they face in the 21st century for quite a long time, due to a variety of reasons that changed as time went by.

Economic implications

Infrastructure issues

According to the UNOPS Director for Infrastructure and Project Management, Nick O'Regan, "Infrastructure plays a critical role in society. It is the foundation for development and, because it is built to last, can have positive or negative impacts far into the future"⁸. Some of the major challenges LLDCs face when it comes to infrastructure are the following: inexistent or unmaintained links between local roads and central railways, poor quality roads and streets, slow intermodal, and lack of sufficient and reliable energy resources. With the connection between infrastructure and economic resilience being more than clear, it is self-explanatory that LLDCs are prone to inadequate infrastructure and face infrastructure issues more often than any other group of countries. That is the reason why several UN bodies, member states, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have attempted to assist LLDCs, both financially and materially, to develop infrastructure; however, all these attempts did not manage to meet great success and were proven to be short-term instead of long-term



investments, mostly due to the high levels of corruption in the majority of LLDCs.

Figure 3: Infrastructure work in South Sudan⁹

Digital communications

⁸ "Better Infrastructure for Landlocked Developing Countries." UNOPS, 26 June 2019, www.unops.org/news-and-stories/news/better-infrastructure-for-landlocked-developing-countries.

⁹ O'Regan, Nicholas. "The Importance of Infrastructure for Landlocked Developing Countries." United Nations, UNOPS, 2019, content.unops.org/publications/The-importance-of-infrastructure-for-landlocked-developing-countries_EN.pdf?mtime=20190716123142&focal=none.

Digital communications are a key factor in order to achieve international integration, knowledge sharing, globalization, and promote business environments in LLDCs; hence, international efforts and investments are crucial for the development of digital communications infrastructure in LLDCs. The number of internet users in LLDCs is relatively low, with an average of 23% of people using the internet (compared to 39% in transit countries).¹⁰ The lack of appropriate infrastructures such as fiber-optics and transmission lines has led to higher prices for internet access, depriving people in LLDCs of all benefits from its use. Additionally, with brain drain being a common phenomenon in developing countries in general, specialized human resources often leave LLDCs in order to seek better opportunities abroad.

Provision of sustainable energy

Insufficient access to the sea can also have severe consequences due to the consequent unreliability of energy supplies. Only 9 LLDCs have achieved universal access to energy, while another 9 have energy access rates at 20% or below. The main reason for the reduced access is the urban-rural gap and the severe underdevelopment of rural areas in LLDCs and developing countries in general. Cost-effective solutions such as the promotion of sustainable energy sources have been found to be the main ways to combat the issue. The primary sources of renewable energy in LLDCs are solar and wind energy, bio-energy, and hydropower. Once again, a lack of expertise, institutional capacity, and coordination creates further problems and requires immediate action.

Impact on free trade

The income per capita in LLDCs is significantly lower in comparison to the one of other LEDCs, let alone the More Developed Countries. LLDCs' capabilities of exporting products and engaging in free trade without depending on their transit neighbors are limited. This is an issue that the Almaty Programme of Action attempted to resolve, by reducing their trade costs and promoting growth.

Social implications

Food insecurity

The most common threats LLDCs are faced with are volatile food prices and resource dependency, which can then cause major food insecurity. Food price volatility is a major problem in LLDCs due to the fact that larger sums of money than average are paid in

¹⁰ O'Regan, Nicholas. "The Importance of Infrastructure for Landlocked Developing Countries." United Nations, UNOPS, 2019, content.unops.org/publications/The-importance-of-infrastructure-for-landlocked-developing-countries_EN.pdf?mtime=20190716123142&focal=none.

order to import products; the reduced access to the sea requires transportation fees to be paid in order to have goods delivered through other countries. This, along with other political factors, such as economic systems, corruption, and cronyism, has caused food prices in LLDCs to be reaching record heights every three years. Additionally, resource dependence can lead to severe manipulation and major influence over LLDCs. Countries with sustainability issues obviously have more resource dependence than most. The more dependent a country is, the more challenges it faces when it comes to sustainable development.

Climate change

LLDCs are more severely affected by climate change, due to the fact that the majority of their agricultural land is located in arid and semi-arid areas, namely areas where available water lacks significantly. More than fifty percent of LLDCs available land is classified as dryland. Moreover, desertification, namely the natural process of turning fertile land to desert, through drought, inappropriate agriculture, or deforestation. Agricultural productivity and people's livelihoods are being impacted by the lack of abundant surface water and the prominent progressive deforestation. The severe consequences of climate change also include the destruction and deterioration of several infrastructure types such as roads, power plants, and public buildings, including hospitals and schools.

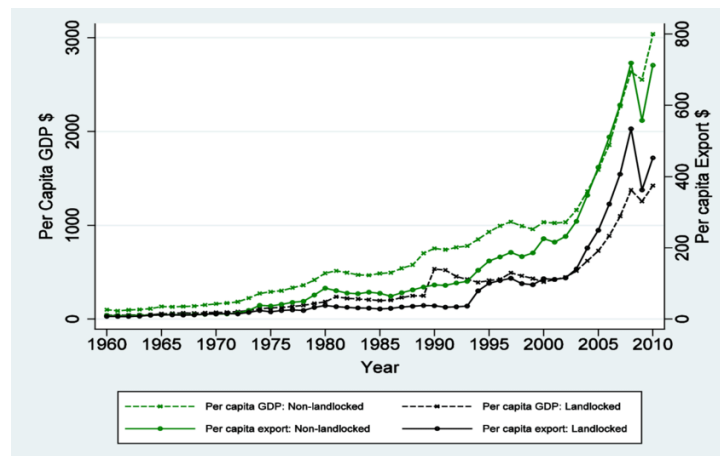


Figure 4: Per capita GDP and exports: developing countries¹¹

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic majorly affected the trade of goods and services in landlocked countries due to the restrictive measures taken with the aim of curtailing the spread of the

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virus. Hence, LLDCs are currently faced with bigger costs in order to import goods. Additionally, it should be taken into consideration that the main exports of LLDCs are primary commodities. The contraction of the demand for commodities caused by the pandemic led to major price drops, which consequently contributed to socio-economic implications regarding debt management. These impacts could have detrimental consequences to the post-COVID-19 recovery of landlocked developing countries.

Case studies

Several countries which face exceptionally major challenges and highlight the importance of a feasible solution to the issue are the following:

Nepal

Nepal is a state greatly affected by inadequate design, delays in project implementation, and significant underinvestment in baseload generating capacity caused by the significant under-exploitation of sustainable energy. In September 2015, Nepal was affected by a nationwide fuel crisis due to the mismanagement of resources and unstable relations with geographical neighbors; the crisis resulted in blackouts for long periods of time, lack of heating, and a loss of over 7 billion USD.

Central African Republic (CAR)

The Central African Republic is likely to be the LLDC that faces the most challenges when it comes to territorial access to the sea. With only two routes available in neighboring countries, high transport costs, a hot and dry climate, and constant political tension and civil war, the CAR has been unable to face the challenges imposed by its landlocked nature. Consecutive neighboring crises in the past two decades have imposed even greater challenges to the Central African Republic.

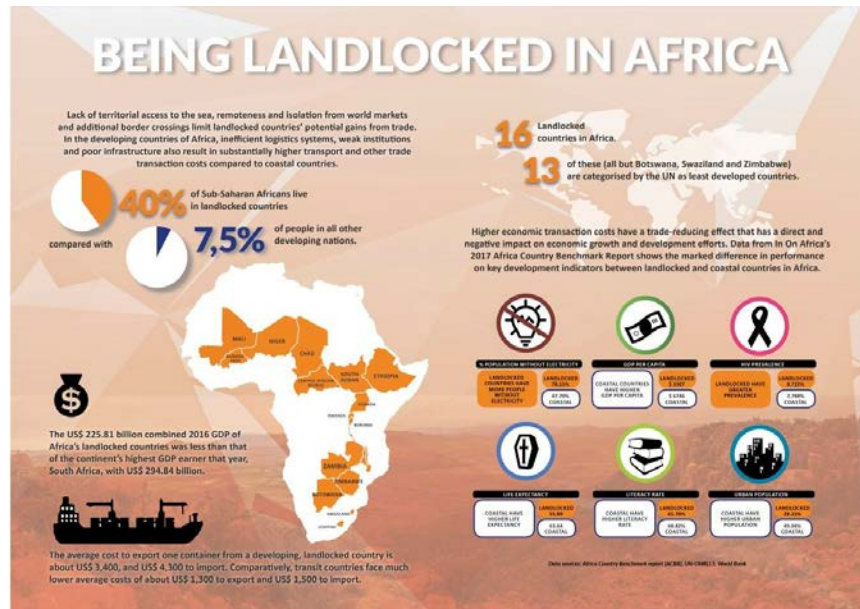


Figure 5: Being Landlocked in Africa¹²

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan is the current incumbent of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries' chairmanship. It is the largest LLDC geographically and is located over 3,750 kilometers away from the ocean, making it the most distant country from the sea in the world. Receiving the chairmanship in January 2020 from Paraguay, the Kazakh representatives have been actively promoting and protecting the group's interests. At the moment, Kazakhstan is considered to be the leader of negotiations regarding the economic resilience of LLDCs.

Rwanda

Rwanda's strategy regarding investing in digital communications has led to positive results and could likely be adopted by other LLDCs as well. The government invested in the establishment of more than 4,500 kilometers of fiber-optic broadband cabling and increased mobile penetration to 76%, significantly improving the business environment in the country. In 2017, making business in Rwanda was three times easier than in any East African nation.

¹² "Africa's Landlocked Countries' Perpetual Disadvantage." Polity.org.za, 19 Sept. 2017, www.polity.org.za/article/africas-landlocked-countries-perpetual-disadvantage-2017-09-19.

UN-OHRLLS

The United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States is an office of the United Nations Secretariat and has been majorly supporting LLDCs.¹³ The office has been enhancing synergies for between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries. Its main objectives are to promote international transit cooperation, report to the UN regarding the situation in LLDCs, assist governments and raise international awareness.

World Bank

The World Bank has been actively engaged in the agenda of improving the economic resilience of LLDCs. It has led the way of issuing multiple guidelines for all Member States to adopt and raising public awareness through physical and digital events. Additionally, the World Bank has spent more than 15 billion USD in the past 18 years in order to promote technical assistance or investment projects in LLDCs or their transit countries to improve their connectivity (transport, ICT).¹⁴ Finally, it is important to keep in mind that the World Bank is one of the most commonly referred to organizations when it comes to sustainable development efforts in Less Economically Developed Countries.

World Trade Organization (WTO)

The World Trade Organization (WTO) is the major organization involved when it comes to monitoring and reporting progress made in LLDCs. Especially in the past year, when COVID-19 significantly impacted market activity in landlocked states, the WTO committed to monitoring problems and solutions in LLDCs. An analytical report of the WTO regarding LLDCs can be found [here](#)¹⁵.

¹³ "Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States |." United Nations, United Nations, www.un.org/ohrlls/.

¹⁴ "Report: Improving Trade and Transport for Landlocked Countries." World Bank, www.worldbank.org/en/topic/trade/publication/landlocked-countries.

¹⁵ https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news21_e/devel_26apr21_e.pdf

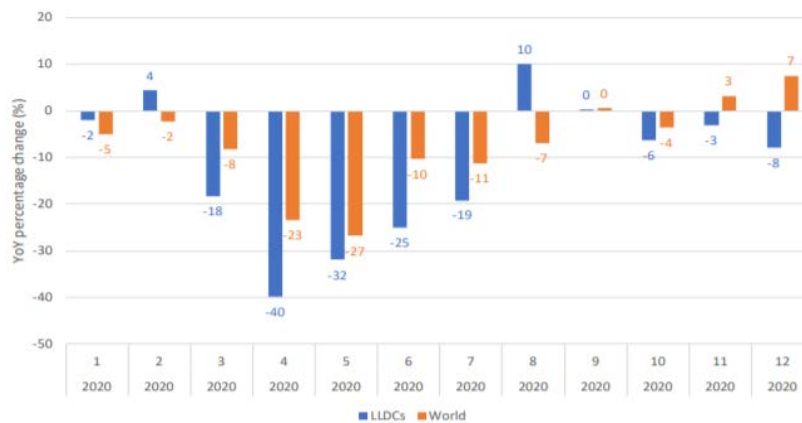


Figure 6: Monthly evolution of LLDC and World Exports in 2020¹⁶

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
1776	Adam Smith records and analyses the challenges faced by inland regions regarding free trade for the first time.
November 14 th , 1975	The only universal Customs transit system in existence is signed. The TIR Convention currently has 77 signatories, including the European Union, Northern Africa and the Middle East.
December 10 th , 1982	The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea is signed and ratified by 157 UN Member States, firstly acknowledging and

¹⁶ "WTO INPUT FOR UN-SG REPORT ON VPOA 2021." World Trade Organization, Apr. 2021, www.wto.org/english/news_e/news21_e/devel_26apr21_e.pdf.

	<p>establishing fundamental rights of access to the sea for landlocked regions.</p>
<p>August 25-29th, 2003</p>	<p>The Almaty Programme of Action is adopted in a ministerial conference in Kazakhstan, aiming to create a new global framework for transit cooperation with LLDCs.</p>
<p>November 2014</p>	<p>The Vienna Programme of Action is adopted in the Second United Nations Conference on LLDCs and includes an international approach to the challenges that LLDCs face. It sets six priorities aiming to improve market activity in all landlocked states.</p>
<p>January 1st, 2016</p>	<p>The United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development is adopted. It includes 17 goals, which aim to achieving universal development standards by 2030.</p>
<p>November 20th, 2019</p>	<p>UN-OHRLLS holds a meeting with representatives from all UN member states to discuss the issue of promoting economic resilience in LLDCs at the UN headquarters in New York.</p>
<p>January 7th, 2020</p>	<p>LLDCs chairmanship hand-over ceremony is held in the UN headquarters in New York. Kazakhstan takes over chairing duties.</p>

RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES, AND EVENTS

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea¹⁷

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is an international treaty that was adopted and signed in 1982. Its primary goal was to outline international norms that regard marine and maritime activity and territorial sea. Articles 124-132 of the Convention concern the right of “access of landlocked developing states to and from the sea and freedom of transit”. These articles not only acknowledge, but also promote measures to protect and encourage LLDCs to exercise their right of access to the sea, by establishing free zones, banning extra charges in customs, and combatting delays in traffic in transit. This convention is considered to be the first UN document promoting the economic resilience of LLDCs and achieving sustainable development through the establishment of equal treatment in maritime ports.

Almaty Declaration and Programme of Action¹⁸

In August of 2003, the first International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation was held in Kazakhstan in order to combat the constraints faced by landlocked developing countries. The successful negotiations led to the Almaty Programme of Action, which underlined the commitment of the international community to acknowledge and tackle the challenges faced by LLDCs, by setting several objectives which mainly included safe access to and from the sea for LLDCs, reduced costs, fewer delays, and adequate network systems.

A/RES/68/225¹⁹

This resolution was submitted by the delegation of Bolivia and was adopted in the 68th session of the United Nations General Assembly without a vote and includes specific actions to combat the needs and problems of LLDCs. More specifically, it reaffirms LLDCs’ right to territorial access to the sea, underlines several reports and guidelines issued that regard the topic, and encourages the international community to take action in order to reduce the vulnerability of LLDCs when it comes to economic and social well-being. However, its main purpose was to review, evaluate and promote the measures suggested by the Almaty Programme.

¹⁷United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

www.un.org/Depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf.

¹⁸Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs ...

www.unohrrls.org/UserFiles/File/LLDC%20Documents/almaty_programme.pdf.

¹⁹A/RES/68/225 - E - A/RES/68/225 -Desktop, undocs.org/en/A/RES/68/225.

A/RES/74/15²⁰

The specific resolution was adopted in December 10th, 2019, immediately after the election of Tijani Muhammad-Bande as the 75th President of the United Nations General Assembly. The resolution called upon governments to adopt and apply existing legal instruments and frameworks, such as The Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods (TIR Convention). The convention is the only universal customs transit system in existence and currently counts 77 signatory states. It allows goods to be shipped from countries of origin, passes through transit countries, and reaches destination countries in sealed load compartments that are controlled by customs via a multilateral, mutually recognized system.

Vienna Programme of Action²¹

The Vienna Programme of Action includes 6 priorities that the international community set in order to resolve the issue. It was signed during the Second United Nations Conference for Landlocked Developing Countries in November 2014. The priorities include the following: resolving fundamental transit policy issues, infrastructure development and maintenance, international trade and trade facilitation, regional integration and cooperation, structural economic transformation and finding means of implementation.²²

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

In general, very few attempts to target the needs and problems of LLDCs have taken place outside of the limits of the UN. However, some of the most notable efforts made by state actors and NGOs are the following:

International Road Transport Union

The IRU is one of the few intergovernmental organizations that are responsible for improving transport and roads worldwide. The TIR Convention, which is a result of efforts made within the IRU, establishes international border-crossing rights for operators all around the world. Currently, more than 34,000 good handlers are TIR operators; it is estimated that the computerization and digitalization brought by the IRU in the past years has improved market activity. Therefore, LLDCs can benefit from the TIR Convention.

²⁰ A/RES/74/15 - E - A/RES/74/15 -Desktop, undocs.org/en/A/RES/74/15.

²¹ Vienna Programme of Action - UN-OHRLLS. unohrlls.org/custom-content/uploads/2015/03/Vienna-Programme-of-Action.pdf.

²² "Vienna Programme of Action - UN-OHRLLS." UN, 27 Oct. 2017, unohrlls.org/about-llcds/programme-of-action/.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

International legislation

In general, international laws and agreements are the first steps towards resolving such an issue. The laws suggested could revolve around the rights and responsibilities of LLDCs and transit countries with regard to the issue. Legal measures could also revolve around sanctions and various consequences for states that violate international law concerning LLDCs. Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that no more than a few operative clauses should be devoted to legislation. The Economic and Social Council should briefly outline the laws that the Legal Committee has to draft.

Financial aid

Financial aid itself has been a much-used strategy when it comes to developing countries. Despite its obvious benefits of promoting sustainable development and improving infrastructure, the high levels of corruption in LLDCs constitute this possibility less effective than expected. Therefore, strict control and monitoring of the aid is essential. Moreover, promoting foreign investment in LLDCs could be a feasible solution. Delegates should keep in mind that the World Bank is the main investor in LLDCs, therefore could take up multiple infrastructure works such as road networks, digital communications systems, etc.

International cooperation

The main requirement for the challenges LLDCs face to be mitigated is a spirit of international cooperation. Given that most LLDCs are in constant tension with their geographical neighbors, social measuring the drafting of resolutions in the Economic and Social Council, various bilateral agreements could be suggested. These could either be between regional organizations such as the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU), etc., or between LLDCs and their neighbors. Agreements securing access to roads and airports, establishing rights for businesses, and open-border agreements could fall under this category. Measures to combat these differences, peace and ceasefire agreements, and promotion of trade can be a vital step towards preventing the isolation of landlocked regions. Additionally, MEDCs and transit countries could likely provide LLDCs with services and transport resources. These are the main axes around which the solutions should revolve; naturally, delegates are encouraged to include their own ideas as well.

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