

**Agenda item 3: Special Body on Least Developed, Landlocked Developing
and Small Island Developing States**

Leveraging Digitalization for Productivity and Decent Employment

ESCAP Hall, UNCC and online
1530-1730 hours (Bangkok Time UTC+7)
23 April 2024

Concept Note

In a rapidly digitalizing world, economic activities across countries in special situations (comprising least developed countries, LDCs, landlocked developing countries, LLDCs, and small island developing States, SIDS) are undergoing significant transformation. Digitalization offers a spectrum of opportunities, from global market access via digital platforms to cost-effective delivery of essential services, including mobile banking and remote learning. Technological advancements, such as satellite Internet and mini electricity grids, are revolutionizing connectivity in remote areas. However, these countries in special situations face challenges in fully leveraging digitalization due to digital divides, limited digital literacy and nascent startup ecosystems. The skill-bias nature of digitalization also raises concerns about widening pay gaps and deepening rural-urban divides.

In response, global programmes of action for countries in special situations, such as the Doha Programmes of Action for the LDCs for the Decade 2022-2031, emphasize enhancing access to modern technologies and building capacities to embrace the fourth industrial revolution. Upcoming programmes of action for LLDCs and SIDS are also expected to prioritize boosting digital transformation and capabilities and call for cooperation and coordination to enable them to harness the benefits of science, technology and innovation for structural transformation.

Deliberating on Document ESCAP/80/4, *Summary of the Asia-Pacific Countries with Special Needs Development Report 2024: Leveraging digitalization for productivity and decent employment*, this session seeks to explore the multifaceted potential and challenges of digital transformation in countries in special situations. It aims to facilitate discussions on experiences, opportunities and policy implications, with the goal of fostering regional cooperation and identifying roles of the international community. These are crucial for accelerating the implementation for the Doha Programme of Action for LDCs and for setting the stage for the upcoming international conferences on LLDCs and SIDS in May and June 2024, respectively.

Guiding Questions

- 1) **Success stories:** Can you share successful examples where digitalization has enhanced productivity or created decent jobs in your country? What policies contributed to these successes?
- 2) **Risks and challenges:** How has your country adopted digital technologies while addressing associated risks and challenges? What strategies, policy actions or capacity building would you recommend to fully leverage these technologies?
- 3) **Regional cooperation:** How can regional cooperation support digitalization efforts for productivity and employment in countries in special situations? What roles should international organizations including ESCAP play?

Tentative programme

- 1530-1545 **Opening and introduction**
- **Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana**, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP
 - **Ms. Rabab Fatima**, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations, High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS), and Secretary-General of the Third United Nations Conference on the Landlocked Developing Countries
- 1545-1610 **Keynote addresses:** Implementation of global programmes of action for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS; preparation for upcoming global conferences on LLDCs and SIDS; and/or leveraging digitalization for productivity and decent employment.
- **H.E. Mr. Ly Thuch**, Senior Minister, President of National Committee for ESCAP, and First Vice President of the Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority (CMAA), Cambodia
 - **H.E. Ms. Fekitamoeloa K. Utoikamanu**, Minister for Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change and Communications (MEIDECC), Tonga
 - **H.E. Mr. Yalakov Babanyaz**, Deputy Minister of Finance and Economy, Turkmenistan
- 1610-1620 **Video presentation** on the *Asia-Pacific Countries with Special Needs Development Report 2024: Leveraging digitalization for productivity and decent employment*.
- **Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana**, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP
- 1620-1730 **Country statements**