



**Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana  
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations  
and Executive Secretary of ESCAP**

**Welcome Remarks (as prepared for delivery)**

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

**Tuesday, 23 April 2024  
15:30-17:00 hrs.  
ESCAP Hall, UNCC**

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**Excellency, Ms. Battsetseg Batmunkh, Minister of Foreign Affairs of  
Mongolia and Chair of the eightieth session,**

**Excellency, Mr. Ly Thuch, Senior Minister, President of the National  
Committee for ESCAP and First Vice President of the Cambodian Mine  
Action and Victim Assistance Authority,**

**Excellency, Ms. Fekitamoeloa K. Utoikamanu, Minister for Meteorology,  
Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate  
Change and Communications of Tonga,**

**Excellency, Mr. Yalakov Babanyyaz, Deputy Minister of Finance and  
Economy of Turkmenistan,**

**Ms. Rabab Fatima, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations,  
High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, and Secretary-General  
of the Third United Nations Conference on LLDCs,**

**Distinguished participants and colleagues,**

Good afternoon. It is a pleasure to welcome you to the Special Body on Least Developed, Landlocked Developing and Small Island Developing States.

Digitalization is more than mere technological advancement; it can be a transformative force in sustainable development.

It can empower countries in special situations to overcome conventional infrastructural challenges, enable access to global markets, foster entrepreneurship and transform essential service delivery.

Moreover, these opportunities come at a time when traditional labour-intensive industrialization is becoming less viable due to a surge in labour automation.

As you know, one of the aims of the Summit of the Future later this year is to agree on a vision of digital technology as a motor for human progress that can deliver full benefits while minimizing potential harm.

Yet, transitioning towards a comprehensive digital economy presents its own set of challenges, ranging from establishing robust digital infrastructure to fostering a digitally literate workforce capable of navigating the complexities of a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

The skill-bias nature of digitalization further complicates the landscape, potentially widening pay gaps and exacerbating rural-urban divides.

Regional cooperation is pivotal, especially in harnessing digitalization to bolster trade and investment for countries in special situations. Despite a growing engagement in digital trade and investment among these countries, their presence, particularly that of LDCs, is still minimal.

The substantial benefits that can arise from service trade — with its extensive positive externalities — underscore the need for digital trade cooperation and coordination to establish a robust regulatory environment.

As the United Nations regional commission for the Asia-Pacific region, ESCAP is committed to supporting the efforts of our member States, especially those in special situations.

Initiatives such as the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway exemplify our dedication to fostering collaborative efforts in enhancing connectivity and digital integration.

Such endeavors reduce digital trade barriers, stimulate investment and contribute towards a more integrated and inclusive digital trade framework. This offers economic benefits and fosters long-term productivity and job creation across the region.

### **Excellencies, Distinguished participants and colleagues,**

The Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2022–2031 notably emphasizes the critical role of digitalization and digital technologies in the sustainable development of LDCs.

It highlights the necessity of enhancing digital infrastructure and literacy as foundational elements.

Similarly, the upcoming global conferences for LLDCs and SIDS present an invaluable opportunity to underscore the significance of digitalization in the development trajectories of these States.

These conferences are also crucial junctures for the international community to offer support to complement the digital transformation efforts of countries in special situations.

**Excellencies, distinguished participants and colleagues,**

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate the importance of regional cooperation and partnerships in capitalizing on digitalization for countries in special situations.

I look forward to hearing your insights on how we can intensify our collaborative efforts, particularly for harnessing the full potential of digitalization, bridging the digital divide and laying the foundations for a future where digital inclusivity drives prosperity for all.

Thank you.