



PRESS RELEASE



OFFICE OF THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES,
LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

UN Commission addresses transport, energy and migration issues for vulnerable countries

ALMATY, KAZAKHSTAN, 23 May 2007 – At the conclusion of its 63rd Session, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has adopted a resolution urging landlocked and transit developing countries to undertake thorough preparations for the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries, which will take place at the United Nations in New York next year.

The Almaty Programme of Action for addressing the special needs of Landlocked Developing Countries was adopted in Almaty in 2003. It provides a global framework for enabling Landlocked Developing Countries to overcome, through transit transport cooperation, the constraints imposed by lack of territorial access to the sea.

Lack of territorial access to the sea and the consequent remoteness from world markets result in high costs of international trade for Landlocked Developing Countries, adversely affecting their socio-economic development.

The resolution on the midterm review of the Almaty Programme requests the Executive Secretary of the Commission to further mainstream the Almaty Programme in the work of the secretariat; to assist landlocked and transit developing countries to create links with existing and future transport networks in the region and to assist them to simplify and standardize transit transport documents and procedures to reduce transaction costs.

It also requests the Executive Secretary to assist landlocked and transit developing countries in their process of joining the World Trade Organisation in order to enhance their participation in international trade. The Executive Secretary is further requested to assist these countries in negotiating and implementing trade agreements for enhancing market access.

In addition to Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), the historic session commemorating ESCAP's 60th anniversary also highlighted the needs of the other vulnerable groups, Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). There are 14 LDCs, 12 LLDCs and 14 SIDS in the Asia Pacific Region.

The Commission adopted a resolution on widening access to energy services in the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS. It expressed concern over the sustained, high and volatile energy prices and noted that regional cooperation initiatives could supplement national efforts in addressing energy security and access issues. It called for the establishment of a cooperation framework for energy security and access to energy services for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

In a resolution on international migration and development for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, the Commission urged the secretariat to focus more in the implications of trends and patterns of migration on the socio-economic development of these groups of countries. It requested the Executive Secretary to convene a high-level meeting on international migration and development in 2008

This was the first ESCAP session to be held in Kazakhstan, which lies at the heart of the landlocked region of Central Asia. The High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, Mr. Anwarul K. Chowdhury commended the continued commitment and ESCAP's leadership to address the challenges faced by the most vulnerable countries.

Earlier on Tuesday, Mr. Chowdhury told the ministerial roundtable on development of health systems in the Asia-Pacific Region that affordable access to drugs was essential to achieving health-related MDGs.

“Without ensuring that essential drugs are affordable and available to all segments of the population, it is unlikely we can reverse the incidence of key diseases,” he said.