

**Economic Commission for Africa  
Committee of Experts of the Conference of African  
Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development**

Forty-fourth meeting

Tangier, Morocco (hybrid), 28–30 March 2026

Item 6 of the provisional agenda\*

**Statutory issues****Report on the implementation of the Awaza  
Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing  
Countries for the Decade 2024–2034****I. Introduction**

1. On 24 December 2024, the General Assembly adopted the Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2024–2034.<sup>1,2</sup> This landmark framework, which succeeds the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024, was subsequently welcomed by participants in the third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries, held in Awaza, Turkmenistan, from 5 to 8 August 2025, who, in the Awaza Political Declaration, committed themselves to its full implementation.<sup>3</sup> In the Awaza Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2024–2034, the international community reaffirms its continued commitment to addressing the unique combination of persistent and structural development challenges faced by landlocked developing countries.

2. In the Awaza Programme of Action, a strategic agenda is set out, centred on the following five priority areas for action:

- (a) Priority area 1: Structural transformation and science, technology and innovation;
- (b) Priority area 2: Trade, trade facilitation and regional integration;
- (c) Priority area 3: Transit, transport and connectivity;
- (d) Priority area 4: Enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change and disasters;
- (e) Priority area 5: Means of implementation.

3. In the Awaza Programme of Action, the core objectives of the Vienna Programme of Action – sustained inclusive growth and poverty reduction – are retained. However, the Awaza Programme of Action includes greater emphasis on science, technology and innovation, on the enhancement of landlocked

---

\* E/ECA/COE/44/1.

<sup>1</sup> General Assembly resolution 79/233, annex.

<sup>2</sup> Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 79/279 of 11 April 2025, the Programme of Action was renamed the “Awaza Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2024–2034”.

<sup>3</sup> General Assembly resolution 80/3, annex.



developing countries' adaptive capacity and resilience, and on the reduction of their vulnerability to climate change.

4. Implementation of the Awaza Programme of Action is vital for Africa, home to 16 of the world's 32 landlocked developing countries, 13 of which are also least developed countries. Efforts to implement the Awaza Programme of Action build on the progress made in the fulfilment of the Vienna Programme of Action in such areas as enhanced competitiveness, increased trade, structural transformation, regional cooperation, inclusive growth and sustainable development.

5. Implementation of the Awaza Programme of Action remains in its early stages. Initial efforts have been focused on incorporating priorities under the Programme into national and regional frameworks and building strategic partnerships to strengthen technical and financial cooperation. Although, since the Programme's adoption in December 2024, progress has been made in many areas of social and economic development in some African landlocked developing countries, such progress cannot be directly attributed to the implementation of the Awaza Programme of Action. Rather, the progress reflects the continued momentum of initiatives launched under the Vienna Programme of Action and other complementary global, regional and national efforts that are aligned with objectives set out in the Awaza Programme of Action.

6. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in partnership with the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, has been at the forefront of facilitating the initial implementation of the Awaza Programme of Action. The Governments of African landlocked developing countries have been receiving help from ECA to align their national development plans with the Awaza Programme of Action and related regional and global development frameworks, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union. Such alignment is intended to enhance coordinated implementation, while also strengthening monitoring, evaluation and reporting capacities. The Commission's efforts in that connection are laying the groundwork for coherent implementation strategies, measurable progress and enhanced accountability, thus ensuring that the commitments made under the Awaza Programme of Action translate into tangible results for landlocked developing countries.

## **II. Overview of social and economic development in African landlocked developing countries**

7. The adoption of the Awaza Programme of Action comes at a critical juncture, with countries having faced, during the decade covered by the Vienna Programme of Action, overlapping global crises: the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and associated supply chain disruptions, rising inflation, mounting debt distress, climate shocks and heightened global geopolitical tensions. These challenges have compounded each other, slowing anticipated development gains and further exposing the structural fragilities of developing countries, in particular landlocked developing countries.

### **A. Economic growth**

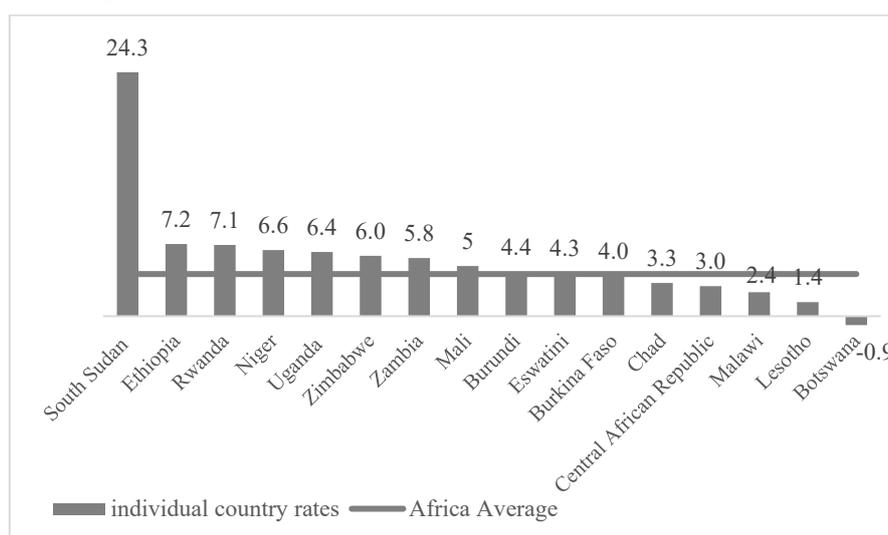
8. A strengthening growth outlook for African landlocked developing countries can be discerned from a comparison of projected growth rates for real gross domestic product (GDP) in 2025. As shown in figure I, several countries are expected to have growth rates above the projected continental average of 4.2 per cent in 2025.

9. South Sudan stands out, having moved from contraction to growth in the space of one year: the country's growth rate was -26.1 per cent in 2024 and increased to 24.3 per cent in 2025, driven by the recovery of oil production and exports after disruptions in 2023 and 2024. The economy of Ethiopia is projected to grow by 7.2 per cent in 2025, at a slightly slower rate than the 8.2 per cent recorded in 2024, driven by ongoing government reforms and increased investment in energy and infrastructure. The growth rate of Rwanda is projected to fall slightly to 7.1 per cent, down from 8.9 per cent in 2024, supported by the sustained expansion of the services, construction and agricultural sectors. The 6.6 per cent projected growth rate of the Niger is a reflection of resumed oil exports and a favourable growing season, following the country's estimated 10.3 per cent growth rate in 2024.<sup>4</sup>

10. Overall, the economies of all African landlocked developing countries are expected to continue growing, apart from that of Botswana, which is projected to contract less severely in 2025 than it did in 2024: the country's growth rate is expected to improve from -3.0 to -0.9 per cent. The contraction is largely due to declining mineral revenues, in particular from diamonds, one of the country's chief exports.<sup>5</sup>

Figure I

**Projected growth rate of real gross domestic product, 2025**  
(Percentage)



*Source:* International Monetary Fund (IMF), “Real GDP growth: annual percent change”, IMF DataMapper database. Available at [www.imf.org/external/datamapper/NGDP\\_RPCH@WEO/OEMDC/ADVEC/WEOWORLD/TCD](http://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/NGDP_RPCH@WEO/OEMDC/ADVEC/WEOWORLD/TCD) (accessed on 27 October 2025).

11. Despite the positive growth projections, addressing persistent structural vulnerabilities remains an urgent priority. Sustained growth will require accelerated implementation of the measures included in all five priority areas of the Awaza Programme of Action. By strengthening implementation and partnerships under the new framework, States will be able to build on the gains made by following the Vienna Programme of Action and advance their transition towards more resilient, diversified and inclusive economies.

<sup>4</sup> IMF, “Real GDP growth: annual percent change”, IMF DataMapper database. Available at [www.imf.org/external/datamapper/NGDP\\_RPCH@WEO/OEMDC/ADVEC/WEOWORLD/TCD](http://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/NGDP_RPCH@WEO/OEMDC/ADVEC/WEOWORLD/TCD) (accessed on 27 October 2025).

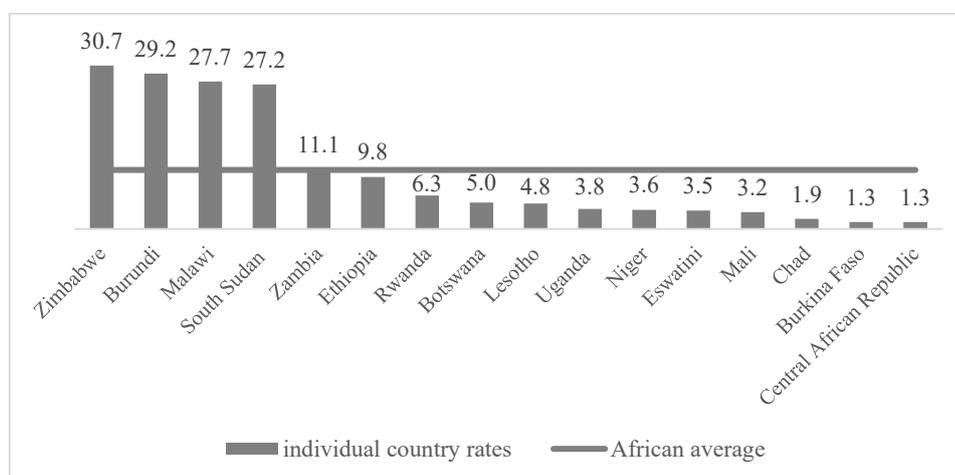
<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

## B. Inflation

12. Inflation remains a critical obstacle to economic growth in landlocked developing countries. Persistently high inflation rates continue to impede economic growth, by eroding purchasing power, weakening investor confidence and exacerbating long-standing structural challenges, such as high transport costs and vulnerability to supply chain disruptions.

13. As shown in figure II, in 2025, the inflation rate in Zimbabwe is projected to be 30.7 per cent, a significant decline from the rates exceeding 600 per cent recorded in 2024. Although the country has a history of high inflation rates, improved macroeconomic stability is expected to ease inflationary pressures. In 2025, the following African landlocked developing countries are also expected to have inflation rates equal to or greater than the regional average: Burundi (29.2 per cent), Malawi (27.7 per cent), South Sudan (27.2 per cent) and Zambia (11.1 per cent).

Figure II  
**Expected inflation rate, 2025**  
(Percentage)



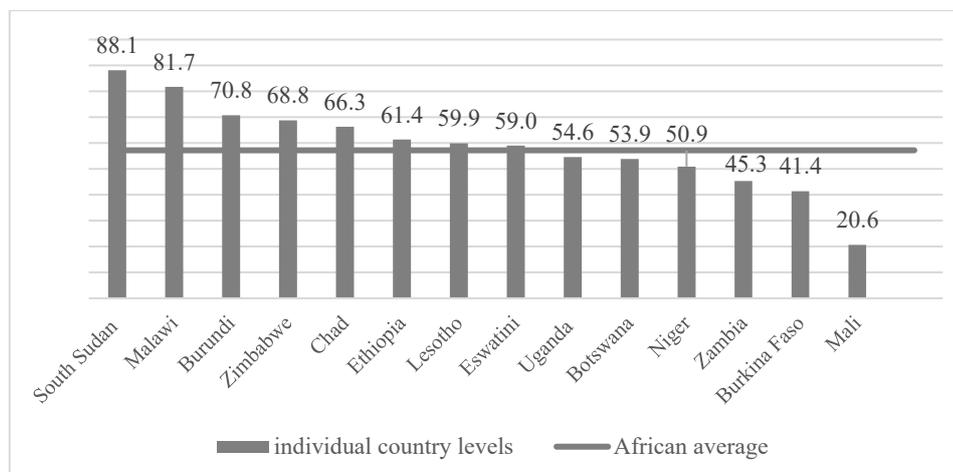
*Source:* IMF, “Inflation rate, end of period consumer prices: annual percent change”, IMF DataMapper database. Available at [www.imf.org/external/datamapper/PCPIEPCH@WEO/WEO\\_WORLD/VEN/ZWE](http://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/PCPIEPCH@WEO/WEO_WORLD/VEN/ZWE) (accessed on 27 October 2025).

## C. Food insecurity

14. In landlocked developing countries, the prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity remains a major concern, with rates in several countries significantly exceeding the regional average of 57.2 per cent for 2025, as shown in figure III.

15. The highest level was recorded in South Sudan: 88.1 per cent. The following countries all had rates above the regional average: Malawi (81.7 per cent), Burundi (70.8 per cent), Zimbabwe (68.8 per cent), Chad (66.3 per cent), Ethiopia (61.4 per cent), Lesotho (59.9 per cent) and Eswatini (59.0 per cent). From these figures, the scale of the food security crisis faced by landlocked developing countries is clear, as is the fact that many such countries are not on track for the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 2 (End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture) by 2030.

Figure III  
**Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the total population, three-year average, 2022–2024**  
 (Percentage)



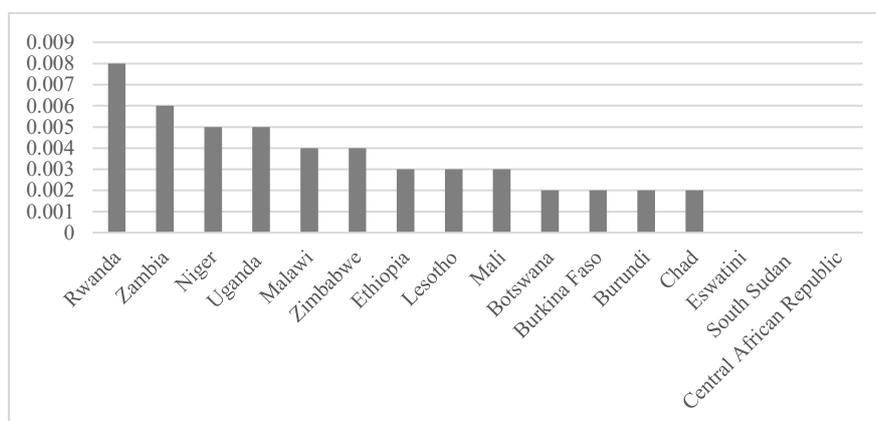
*Source:* Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, “Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the total population (percent) (3-year average)”, Hunger Map. Available at [www.fao.org/interactive/hunger-map/en/](http://www.fao.org/interactive/hunger-map/en/) (accessed on 27 October 2025).

*Note:* Data pertaining to the Central African Republic and Rwanda are either unavailable or unreported.

## D. Human capital

16. Strengthening human capital is fundamental to overcoming structural constraints, unlocking people’s full potential and supporting the development of resilient economies. As illustrated in figure IV, slight increases were recorded in the human development index scores of most African landlocked developing countries between 2022 and 2023. The only exceptions were Eswatini and South Sudan, the scores of which did not change.

Figure IV  
**Increases in human development index score, 2022–2023**



*Source:* ECA calculations, based on United Nations Development Programme, “Explore HDI”, Human Development Reports. Available at <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/human-development-index#/indicies/HDI> (accessed on 22 December 2025).

*Note:* Data pertaining to the Central African Republic are unavailable.

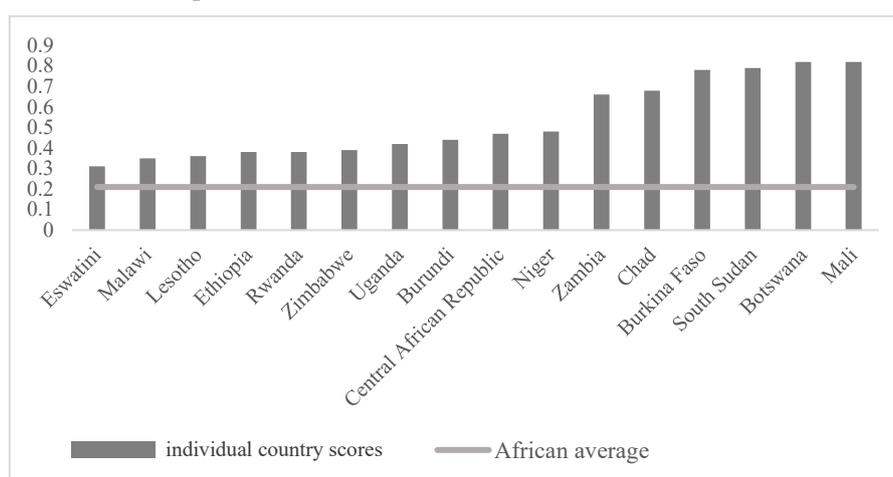
### III. From Vienna to Awaza: maintaining the focus on supporting the development of African landlocked developing countries

#### A. Structural transformation and science, technology and innovation

17. African landlocked developing countries face persistent structural constraints, including geographical isolation, high trade and transport costs, reliance on transit countries, infrastructure gaps and limited integration into global markets. To break free of those constraints, such countries urgently need economic diversification, strengthened productive capacity and investment in research and development aimed at accelerating innovation and technology adoption.

18. As shown in figure V, the export concentration index scores of all 16 African landlocked developing countries are above the continental average of 0.21. The Awaza Programme of Action represents an opportunity to support diversification by scaling up value added and manufactured exports and expanding services, thereby reducing vulnerability, strengthening resilience and driving sustainable regional integration.

Figure V  
Scores on the export concentration index, 2024



*Source:* United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), “Merchandise: product concentration and diversification indices of exports and imports, annual”, UNCTADStat database. Available at <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/datacentre/dataviewer/US.ConcentDiversIndices> (accessed on 28 October 2025).

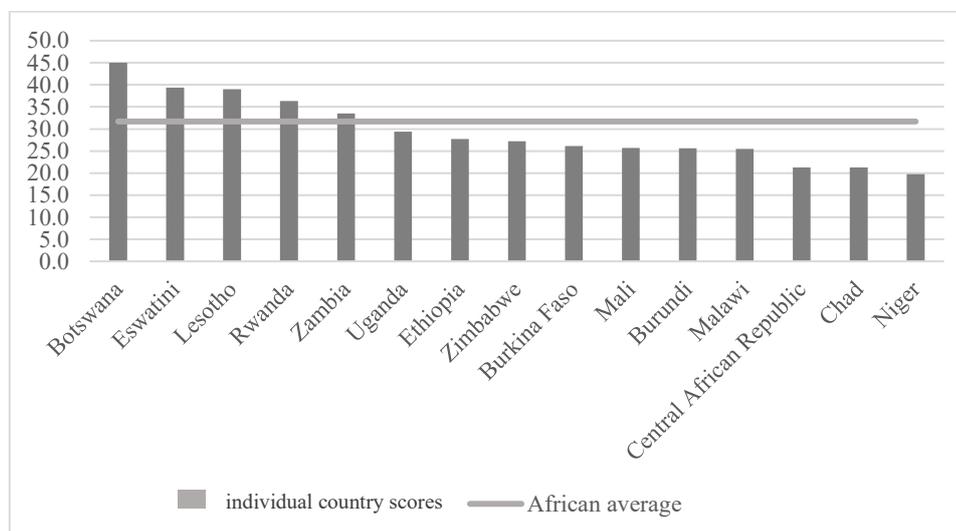
19. Productive capacity remains low in African landlocked developing countries, limiting their ability to attract investment and drive industrialization.<sup>6</sup> As shown in figure VI, in 2024, Botswana had the highest productive capacity index score of the African landlocked developing countries (45.0), followed by Eswatini (39.4) and Lesotho (39.0), while the Niger had the lowest (19.8), with most remaining countries scoring between 25.0 and 29.0.

20. Since more than half of African landlocked developing countries had scores below 30.0, it is clear that their productive capacity urgently needs to be strengthened through the measures outlined in the Awaza Programme of Action. Such measures include boosting labour productivity, improving access to high-

<sup>6</sup> UNCTAD, *Building and Utilizing Productive Capacities in Africa and the Least Developed Countries: A Holistic and Practical Guide* (Geneva, 2020).

quality education, supporting digital transformation and advancing industrialization. Interventions in these areas are critical to reducing structural vulnerabilities, diversifying economies and enhancing competitiveness in regional and global value chains.

Figure VI  
Scores on the productive capacities index, 2024



Source: UNCTAD, “Productive capacities index, annual, 2000–2024 (analytical)”, UNCTADStat database. Available at <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/datacentre/dataviewer/US.PCI> (accessed on 28 October 2025).

Note: Data pertaining to South Sudan are unavailable.

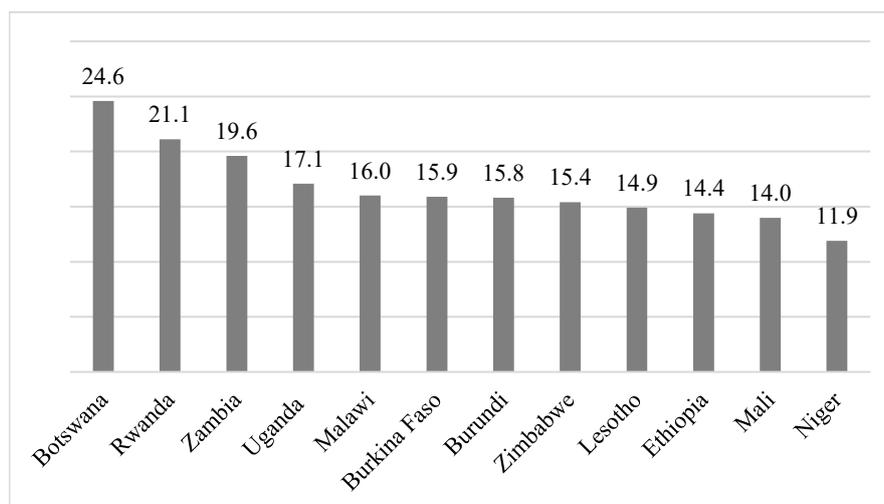
21. Many African landlocked developing countries lack national digital strategies, face data governance challenges and struggle with high broadband costs relative to income, further constraining digital inclusion and innovation. According to the International Telecommunication Union, landlocked developing countries score below the continental average in such areas as digital infrastructure, affordability and digital governance. Nonetheless, in Africa, such countries are emerging as leaders in selected areas of digital inclusion, notably related policy frameworks concerning persons with disabilities and women and girls.<sup>7</sup>

22. According to the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), of the 16 African landlocked developing countries, only Botswana is ranked in the top 100 of the Global Innovation Index: the country is in eighty-seventh place, with a score of 24.6 (see figure VII). Apart from Rwanda, which scored 21.1, all other African landlocked developing countries had scores of less than 20.0. By comparison, Switzerland, the world’s top-ranked economy, scored 66.0.<sup>8</sup> This stark gap serves to justify the emphasis placed in the Awaza Programme of Action on enhancing science, technology and innovation by 2034. Such an enhancement has the potential to unlock African landlocked developing countries’ demographic dividend and build their resilience to climate change and structural vulnerabilities.

<sup>7</sup> International Telecommunication Union, *Measuring Digital Development – State of Digital Development and Trends in the Africa Region: Challenges and Opportunities* (Geneva, 2025).

<sup>8</sup> WIPO, *Global Innovation Index, 2025: Innovation at a Crossroads* (Geneva, 2025).

Figure VII  
Global Innovation Index, 2025



Source: WIPO, *Global Innovation Index, 2025: Innovation at a Crossroads* (Geneva, 2025).

Note: Data pertaining to the Central African Republic, Chad, Eswatini and South Sudan are unavailable.

23. In 2025, ECA provided targeted technical assistance and capacity development to strengthen data governance, modernize public services, enhance regulatory systems and expand digital skills. Examples included supporting a national World Robotics Olympiad competition in Ethiopia, alongside a corporate sponsor and Camden Education; helping the Government of Malawi to develop digital performance monitoring platforms; and providing the Government of Burundi with guidance on formulating its first national data governance strategy.

24. These interventions helped the relevant States to lay the foundations for longer-term innovation, human capital development and the inclusive digital ecosystems that are needed in order to benefit from the fourth industrial revolution and contribute to the goal of an inclusive, open, sustainable, fair, safe and secure digital future for all, as set out in the Global Digital Compact.

## B. Trade, trade facilitation and regional integration

25. In the Awaza Programme of Action, targets are set for trade, trade facilitation and regional integration. Targets include helping landlocked developing countries to significantly increase participation in world trade, with a view to at least doubling their global merchandise exports by 2034; substantially diversifying trade by increasing the value added and manufactured component of exports; and substantially increasing the share of landlocked developing countries in intraregional trade.

### 1. International trade

26. Although some progress was made under the Vienna Programme of Action, persistent trade deficits remain in most landlocked developing countries. Accordingly, stronger trade capacity must be fostered under the Awaza Programme of Action. It is noteworthy, however, that some African landlocked developing countries are comparatively well integrated into the

wider region: in the cases of Eswatini and Malawi, for instance, 89 per cent and 52 per cent of their exports go to African markets, respectively.<sup>9</sup>

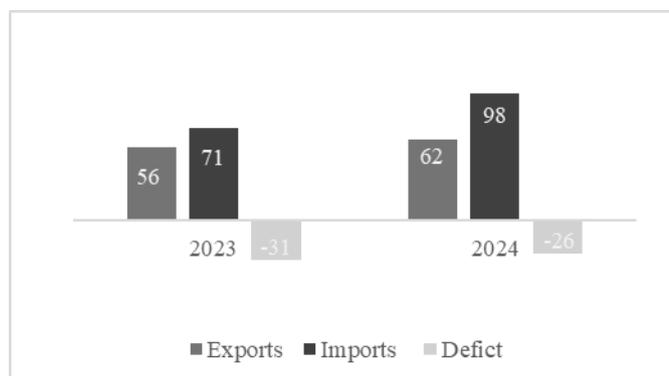
27. Heavy reliance on neighbouring countries' transit infrastructure reduces trade efficiency for African landlocked developing countries, making strong transit partnerships essential to overcoming structural disadvantages and avoiding marginalization in regional and global trade. Beyond such partnerships, regional integration is central to improving connectivity, expanding markets and enabling greater participation in regional value chains. The Commission continues to support regional integration and foster shared industrial development, for instance through the transboundary special economic zone between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia that is dedicated to the development of batteries and electric vehicles.

28. Improvement in the export and import performance of African landlocked developing countries has been slow. As shown in figure VIII, while total merchandise exports rose substantially from \$56 billion in 2023 to \$71 billion in 2024, total imports increased sharply, from \$71 billion to \$98 billion, widening the continental trade deficit from \$31 billion to \$26 billion. In the light of the widening deficit, it is evident that the implementation of the Awaza Programme of Action and the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area needs to be accelerated in order to increase landlocked developing countries' integration into regional and international markets.

Figure VIII

**Merchandise trade: exports, imports and deficit of African landlocked developing countries, 2023 and 2024**

(Billions of United States dollars)

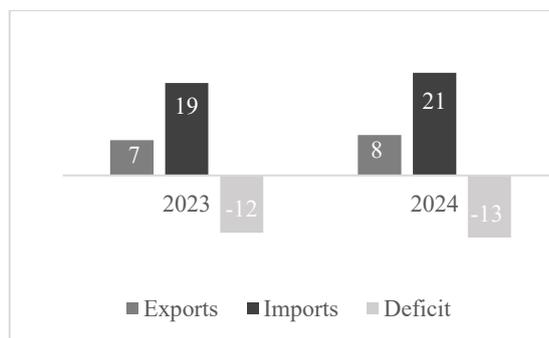


*Source:* ECA calculations, based on data from UNCTAD, “Merchandise: total trade and share, annual”, UNCTADStat database. Available at <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/datacentre/dataviewer/US.TradeMerchTotal> (accessed on 28 October 2025).

29. As shown in figure IX, although services exports and imports both grew from 2023 to 2024, the difference between them also expanded, causing the services trade deficit to widen slightly, from \$12 billion to \$13 billion. Such a deficit represents untapped potential to expand services exports. With the implementation of the Awaza Programme of Action, the trade in services of African landlocked developing countries can be scaled up, in particular digitally delivered services, tourism, transport and professional services.

<sup>9</sup> UNCTAD, “Merchandise trade matrix, annual (analytical)”, UNCTADstat database. Available at <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/datacentre/dataviewer/US.TradeMatrix> (accessed on 30 October 2025).

Figure IX  
**Services trade: exports, imports and deficit of African landlocked developing countries, 2023 and 2024**  
 (Billions of United States dollars)

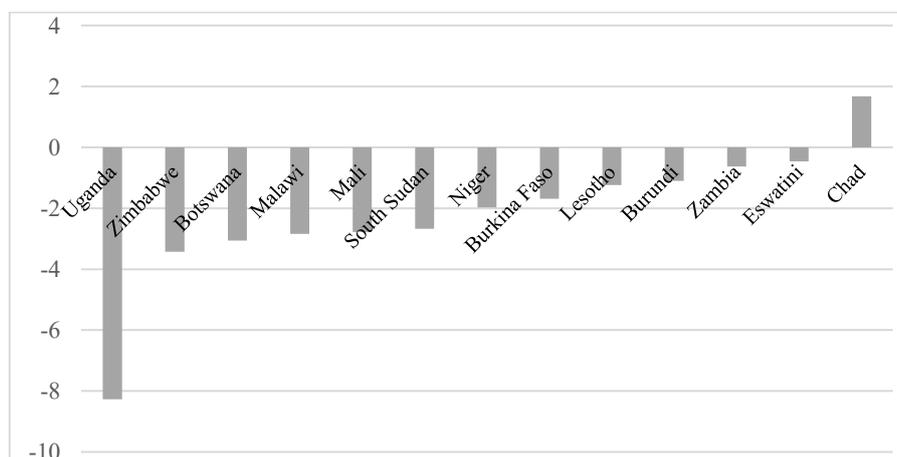


*Source:* ECA calculations, based on data from UNCTAD, “Services (BPM6): exports and imports by service category, trading partner world, annual”, UNCTADStat database. Available at <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/datacentre/dataviewer/US.TradeServCatTotal> (accessed on 6 November 2025).

*Note:* Since data pertaining to the Central African Republic, Ethiopia and Rwanda are unavailable for 2024, those countries have not been included in the analysis.

30. As shown in figure X, most African landlocked developing countries remained net importers of goods and services in 2024, with a trade surplus recorded in Chad only. Uganda had the largest trade deficit, at about \$8.27 billion. Botswana, Malawi, Mali, South Sudan and Zimbabwe also had large deficits.

Figure X  
**Trade balance of goods and services, 2024**  
 (Billions of United States dollars)



*Source:* ECA, based on data from UNCTAD, “Goods and services (BPM6): Exports and imports of goods and services, annual”, UNCTADStat database. Available at <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/datacentre/dataviewer/US.GoodsAndServicesBpm6> (accessed on 6 November 2025).

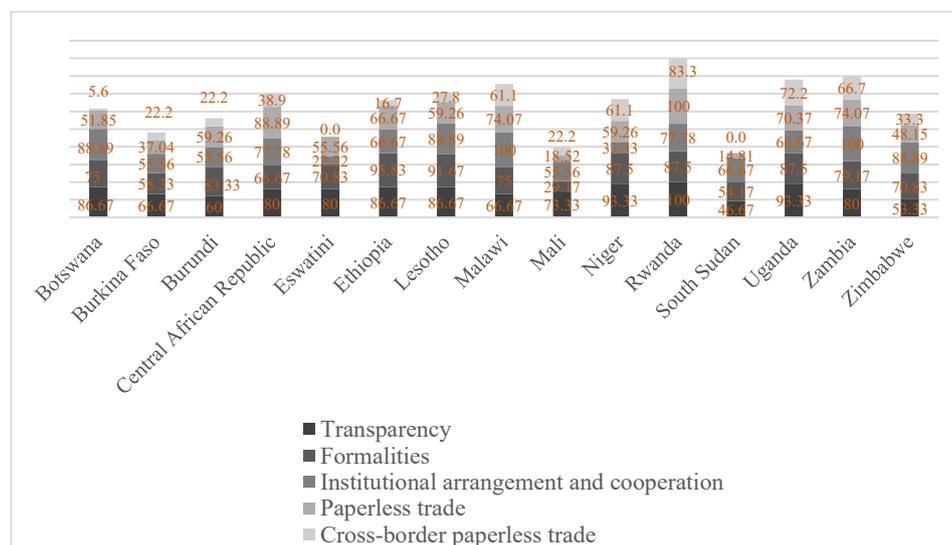
## 2. Trade facilitation

31. In the Awaza Programme of Action, trade facilitation, through efficiency improvements and reductions in high trade costs, is emphasized as a priority for landlocked developing countries. The average implementation rate of trade facilitation measures of the 15 African landlocked developing countries for which data are available – shown in figure XI – is 62.1 per cent. With 91.4 per cent, Rwanda had the highest score; with 32.3 per cent, South Sudan

had the lowest. Given the varying extent to which trade facilitation measures have been taken, national and regional efforts and targeted capacity-building will be needed, in order for uniform progress to be made.

Figure XI

### Implementation of trade facilitation and paperless trade measures, 2025 (Percentage)



Source: ECA and others, *Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation: Global Report, 2025* (New York, United Nations, 2025).

Note: Data pertaining to Chad are unavailable.

### 3. Regional integration and cooperation

32. For African landlocked developing countries already burdened by the high transport costs caused by their geography, integration is a means of expanding market access and improving connectivity. In addition to any existing memberships of regional economic communities, all African landlocked developing countries have, since the launch of the Vienna Programme of Action in 2014, increased their degree of integration with the rest of the region by becoming signatories to the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area. As the implementation of the Agreement progresses, increasing regional integration is expected to reduce the trade barriers that disproportionately affect landlocked developing countries, thereby enabling them to participate competitively in continental and global markets. The targets set in the Awaza Programme of Action to boost landlocked developing countries' trade in regional and international markets represent a contribution to further African integration.

33. Amid changing global trade patterns, in particular as a result of the expiration, in September 2025, of the African Growth and Opportunity Act of the United States of America, the African Continental Free Trade Area represents an alternative market. The Act's expiration is expected to reduce access to the United States market for the apparel and agrifood exports of Eswatini and Lesotho, among other countries.

34. In 2025, in line with the Awaza Programme of Action, ECA:

(a) Provided the Government of Lesotho with targeted support for the validation of its national strategy on the implementation of the Agreement;

(b) Gave the Governments of Ethiopia, the Niger and Zambia tailored assistance with bolstering trade facilitation, skilled labour mobility and regional value chain harmonization;

(c) Furnished the Governments of Burkina Faso and Burundi with capacity-building, value chain analysis and assistance in the development of national policy action plans for their countries' financial services sectors, with a view to improving data collection, deepening understanding of trade dynamics and strengthening policy reforms for enhanced participation in global financial value chains.

35. It is hoped that the integration of the African Continental Free Trade Area will be furthered through infrastructure projects, including the future single African air transport market. In addition, subregional initiatives, such as the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, East African Community and Southern African Development Community Tripartite, are helping to boost intra-African trade.

36. ECA takes steps to advance both regional integration and the implementation of Agenda 2063. The ECA integrated planning and reporting toolkit was used to incorporate the goals and aspirations of Agenda 2063 into the national development plans of Eswatini and Malawi. Another example is that ECA provided awareness-raising and capacity-building for the representatives of landlocked developing countries during the fourth session of the Committee on Private Sector Development, Regional Integration, Trade, Infrastructure, Industry and Technology, held in Addis Ababa on 18 and 19 November 2025.

37. The steps that ECA takes to advance regional integration and the implementation of Agenda 2063 will make the Governments of African landlocked developing countries better able to take the steps included in the other priority areas of the Awaza Programme of Action, for instance through harmonized policies and partnerships that improve trade facilitation, transit and connectivity. As such countries remain reliant on commodity exports, deeper integration of trade in goods and services, in particular via regional value chains, offers a vital means of diversification and structural transformation.

### **C. Transit, transport and connectivity**

38. Infrastructure development is a means of transforming landlocked countries into land-linked countries, for better regional and global trade integration and prospects. In the Awaza Programme of Action, it is recognized that Governments must develop and maintain efficient and resilient transport systems in landlocked developing countries, including by filling in the missing links in corridors. Strengthening transport networks is essential for lowering trade and transport costs, enhancing competitiveness and improving access to regional and international markets.

39. Currently, continental initiatives, such as the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa, in which ECA participates, are driving the development of infrastructure in critical sectors, including transport, energy, water and information and communications technology. For instance, Botswana and Zambia – both landlocked developing countries – have been linked by the Kazungula Bridge; built under the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa, the bridge has one-stop border facilities and has reduced border crossing times by up to 70 per cent, thus boosting trade.<sup>10</sup>

40. Digital transformation and Internet connectivity are pivotal targets of the Awaza Programme of Action. Rates of Internet access in African landlocked developing countries remain well below the continental average of 35.7 per cent, although some countries, including Botswana and Burkina Faso,

---

<sup>10</sup> Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa, "Overview of the transport sector" (accessed on 17 November 2025).

have rates exceeding 50.0 per cent.<sup>11</sup> The ECA Digital Centre of Excellence helps African Governments, including those of landlocked developing countries, to build the capacity to design and implement technology-driven initiatives and promotes the adoption of principles for good digital identity, as foundations for digital transformation.

41. At the third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries, an infrastructure investment finance facility for landlocked developing countries was established to drive the mobilization of resources, thereby addressing the serious funding gaps. Alongside global frameworks, the establishment of regional financing mechanisms and continued progress on improving cross-border infrastructure remain priorities.

42. In addition, in October 2025, the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States established a high-level panel of experts to make recommendations aimed at addressing challenges of coordination between landlocked and transit countries.

## **D. Enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change and disasters**

43. The inclusion in the Awaza Programme of Action of this priority area reflects the heightened exposure of African landlocked developing countries to natural disasters driven by non-resilient infrastructure and by their constrained fiscal, response and adaptive capacities. The geographical situation, structural problems and development status of such countries further increase their exposure to the adverse effects of climate change.

### **1. Climate finance**

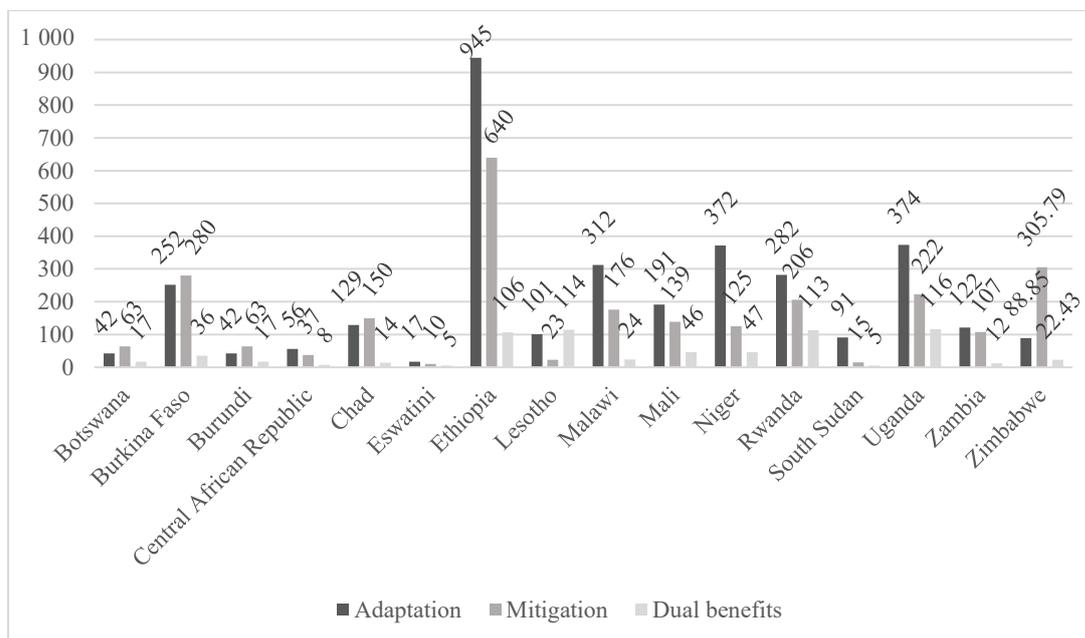
44. Overall, climate finance flows to Africa surged by 48 per cent, from about \$29.5 billion in 2019 to about \$43.7 billion in 2022.<sup>12</sup> In the period 2019–2020, 49 per cent of such finance was channelled into mitigation, with 39 per cent going to adaptation, 11 per cent to dual benefit actions and 1 per cent to unspecified uses. In the period 2021–2022, however, only about 23 per cent of the resources needed to achieve the 2030 targets under the continent’s nationally determined contributions were being mobilized.

45. As shown in figure XII, of the African landlocked developing countries, Ethiopia received the most climate finance in the period 2019–2020, followed by Uganda and then Rwanda. Ethiopia alone attracted nearly \$1 billion for adaptation and \$640 million for mitigation. Inequities persist in the distribution of such finance, however: in the same period, Eswatini received the least, followed by Botswana and then the Central African Republic.

<sup>11</sup> International Telecommunication Union, “Individuals using the Internet”, DataHub database. Available at <https://datahub.itu.int/data/?c=1&i=11624> (accessed on 3 December 2025).

<sup>12</sup> Chavi Meattle and others, *Landscape of Climate Finance in Africa, 2024* (San Francisco, Climate Policy Initiative, 2024).

Figure XII  
**Climate finance received by African landlocked developing countries, 2019–2020**  
 (Millions of United States dollars)



Source: Climate Policy Initiative, “Data”, Landscape of Climate Finance in Africa 2024. Available at [www.climatepolicyinitiative.org/dataviz/landscape-of-climate-finance-in-africa-2024-interactive-data-tools/?utm](http://www.climatepolicyinitiative.org/dataviz/landscape-of-climate-finance-in-africa-2024-interactive-data-tools/?utm) (accessed on 2 December 2025).

## 2. Loss and damage

46. In the period 2024–2025, ECA support for the Governments of African countries, including landlocked developing countries, was centred on strengthening climate intelligence, enhancing policy alignment and accelerating implementation. Examples included knowledge generation and transfer, through such tools as the crop capability and yield prediction model initially deployed in Malawi and Zimbabwe, which was later expanded to Eswatini. ECA also enhanced capacity to address loss and damage by producing and validating risk assessment guidelines, assessment tools and methods of incorporating loss and damage into nationally determined contributions. Such efforts helped States to address the escalating adverse effects of climate change, despite persistent data scarcity and uneven uptake of the above-mentioned materials for addressing loss and damage.

47. ECA, the African Development Bank, the African Union Commission and the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance jointly convened the thirteenth Conference on Climate Change and Development in Africa, held in Addis Ababa in September 2025 and attended by representatives of some African landlocked developing countries. Participants coordinated unified messages on science, finance and a just transition, ahead of the thirtieth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Belém, Brazil, in November 2025.

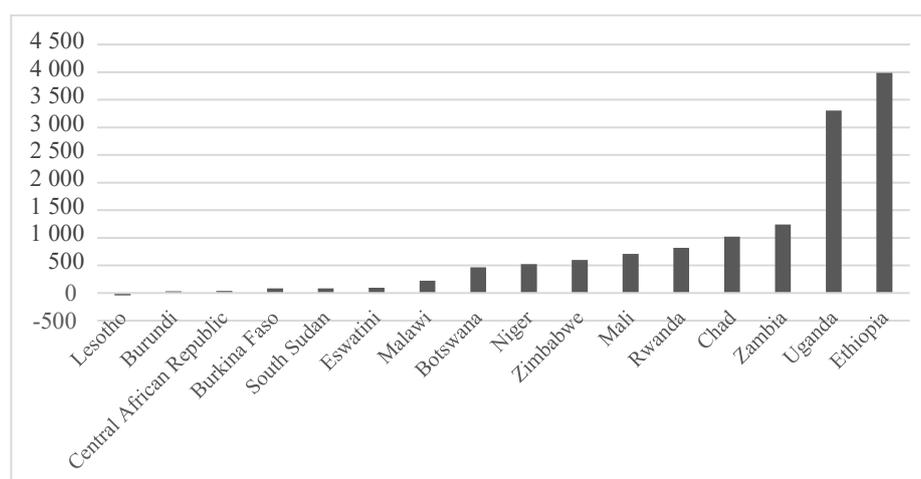
48. In addition, during the reporting period, ECA supported the establishment of a Southern African alliance on carbon markets. The Commission also helped Governments to implement their nationally determined contributions, for instance through support for the Government of Zimbabwe in the development of its third set of such contributions.

## E. Means of implementation

49. The Governments of African landlocked developing countries continue to urgently need access to adequate concessional resources from both international and domestic sources, since current resources are insufficient to meet the growing demands for investment in trade, infrastructure, structural transformation and adaptive capacity. In the Awaza Programme of Action, it is identified that resources can be substantially increased from the following sources: domestic resource mobilization; official development assistance and other sources of external finance; foreign direct investment (FDI); remittances; and debt relief and concessional financing.

50. In 2024, FDI flows into African landlocked developing countries remained concentrated in a few economies. As shown in figure XIII, Ethiopia and Uganda alone accounted for about 55 per cent of total inflows, at \$3.98 billion and \$3.31 billion, respectively. Such uneven investment distribution hinders the diversification, productive capacity and inclusive growth of some African landlocked developing countries. In 2023–2024, FDI flows into Zambia increased significantly, driven by the Government’s debt restructuring and reforms to restore macroeconomic stability.<sup>13</sup>

Figure XIII  
**Foreign direct investment inflows, 2024**  
(Millions of United States dollars)



*Source:* UNCTAD, “Foreign direct investment: inward and outward flows and stock, annual”, UNCTADStat database. Available at <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/datacentre/dataviewer/US.FdiFlowsStock> (accessed on 18 November 2025).

51. Remittances can also serve as an important source of private resources that can spur the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises. Remittances play an especially significant role in Lesotho, Zimbabwe and Burundi, where they accounted for 20.9, 8.4 and 7.7 per cent of GDP, respectively, in 2024.<sup>14</sup>

52. Tax revenue is the primary source of financing for public services. Of the 11 African landlocked developing countries for which 2023 data are available, however, only the Governments of Lesotho (22.7 per cent), Burkina Faso (19.5 per cent), Mali (18.7 per cent), Eswatini (17.2 per cent) and Zambia (16.7 per cent) recorded tax-to-GDP ratios above the African average of

<sup>13</sup> World Bank, *Zambia: Country Private Sector Diagnostic* (Washington, D.C., 2024).

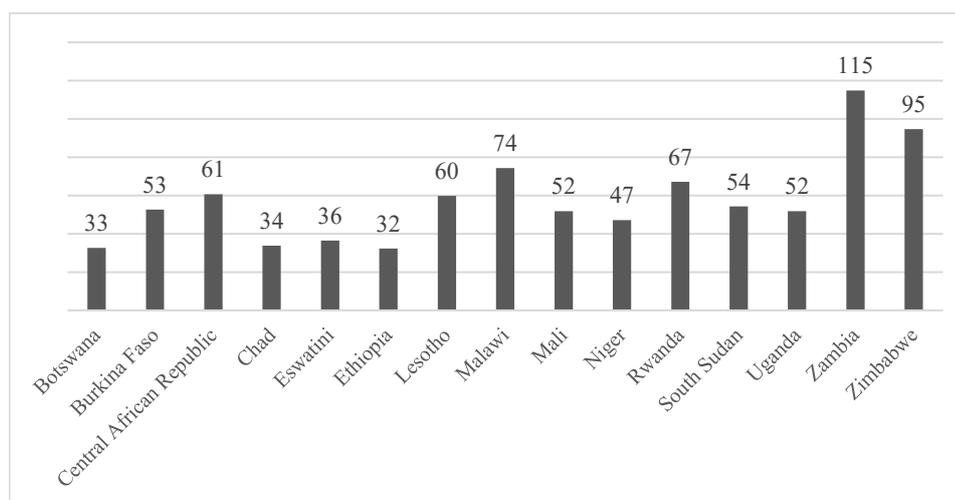
<sup>14</sup> World Bank, “Personal remittances, received (% of GDP)”, World Development Indicators. Available at <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TR.F.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS> (accessed on 18 December 2025).

16.1 per cent.<sup>15</sup> It is clear, therefore, that the Governments of African landlocked developing countries must strengthen domestic resource mobilization.

53. Well-managed public debt can support development, as a source of financing for critical investment, including in infrastructure. High debt levels continue to constrain many African landlocked developing countries, however, limiting investment and long-term economic transformation. Although public debt levels have fallen in some countries, several continue to bear debt burdens that are heavier than they were before the COVID-19 pandemic and are at high risk of financial distress. In the Awaza Programme of Action, these challenges are addressed through the encouragement of concessional financing, debt relief, international cooperation and sound debt management to support sustainable development in landlocked developing countries.

54. The 2024 debt-to-GDP ratios of 15 African landlocked developing countries are shown in figure XIV. Zambia and Zimbabwe had the highest ratios, exceeding 90 per cent; States with such high ratios are at significant risk of debt distress. By contrast, Botswana, Chad, Eswatini and Ethiopia all had ratios of below 37 per cent. Prudent debt management is pivotal to States' ability to implement the Awaza Programme of Action, as the result of high debt levels can be that resources are diverted away from investment in research and innovation, education and infrastructure development.

Figure XIV  
**Public debt as a share of gross domestic product, 2024**  
(Percentage)



Source: UNCTAD, “Debt at a glance”, A World of Debt. Available at <https://unctad.org/publication/world-of-debt/dashboard> (accessed on 30 November 2025).

Note: Data pertaining to Burundi are unavailable.

<sup>15</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, “Revenue Statistics in Africa – comparative tax and non-tax revenues”, OECD Data Explorer database. Available at: [https://data-explorer.oecd.org/vis?lc=en&fs\[0\]=Topic%2C1%7CTaxation%23TAX%23%7CGlobal%20tax%20revenues%23TAX\\_GTR%23&pg=0&fc=Topic&bp=true&snb=150&df\[ds\]=dsDisseminateFinalDMZ&df\[id\]=DSD\\_REV\\_COMP\\_AFRICA%40DF\\_RSAFRICA&df\[ag\]=OECD.CTP.TPS&dq=..S13..T..PT..B1GQ..A&lom=LASTNPERIODS&lo=10&to\[TIME\\_PERIOD\]=false](https://data-explorer.oecd.org/vis?lc=en&fs[0]=Topic%2C1%7CTaxation%23TAX%23%7CGlobal%20tax%20revenues%23TAX_GTR%23&pg=0&fc=Topic&bp=true&snb=150&df[ds]=dsDisseminateFinalDMZ&df[id]=DSD_REV_COMP_AFRICA%40DF_RSAFRICA&df[ag]=OECD.CTP.TPS&dq=..S13..T..PT..B1GQ..A&lom=LASTNPERIODS&lo=10&to[TIME_PERIOD]=false) (accessed on 22 November 2025).

## IV. Conclusion and recommendations

55. Built on the achievements made under the previous programmes to address the needs of landlocked developing countries, the Awaza Programme of Action is a vital blueprint that the Governments of landlocked developing countries can use to accelerate their development and advance inclusive and sustainable growth. African landlocked developing countries, however, continue to face daunting geographical challenges that will need to be overcome before sustained economic growth can be achieved.

56. Just one year after the adoption of the Awaza Programme of Action, implementation is in its early stages and, therefore, the progress made in the attainment of its targets remains minimal. Stronger support from the international community and development partners is urgently needed, however, along with firm commitment from the Governments of African landlocked developing countries and enhanced regional cooperation.

57. Firm commitments, collaboration and partnerships among the African landlocked developing countries, transit countries and development partners, including ECA, in relation to critical priorities are essential. Such priorities include strengthening infrastructure, enhancing trade facilitation, building productive capacity, promoting climate resilience, mobilizing financial support and deepening regional cooperation.

58. The Governments of African landlocked developing countries are encouraged:

(a) To strengthen national research and development capacities, while promoting innovative domestic resource mobilization mechanisms to sustain long-term innovation and growth;

(b) To work with international partners on implementing science, technology and innovation training initiatives targeted at young people and women, such as coding camps to build capacity in emerging technologies and foster a generation of innovators;

(c) To accelerate the implementation of trade facilitation measures, including the digitalization of customs procedures and the modernization of logistics systems, in order to reduce trade costs, facilitate the efficient cross-border movement of goods, enhance corridor efficiency and boost competitiveness in regional and global markets.

59. The Governments of transit countries are encouraged to enhance cooperation by harmonizing national regulations with their obligation to allow transit from landlocked developing countries, derived from the fundamental right to freedom of transit that is enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. By respecting that right, the Governments of transit countries will increase corridor efficiency and promote regional trade integration.

60. ECA is encouraged:

(a) To work with the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and with development partners to continue to support the work of the high-level panel of experts pertaining to identifying constraints and making recommendations on the freedom of transit for landlocked developing countries;

(b) To continue to help the Governments of landlocked developing countries to accelerate implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area.

61. Development partners are encouraged to continue to help the Governments of landlocked developing countries to increase access to international climate finance, in particular the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage, in order to strengthen their mitigation and adaptation efforts, in view of their greater vulnerability to the adverse effects of climate change.

-----