

**Statement delivered by H.E. Mr. Osman Saleh,  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea  
During the LLDCs' 24<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Annual Meeting of Foreign Ministers  
26 September 2025, New York**



Chair,

Distinguished delegates,

I wish to thank Bolivia for organizing the ministerial meeting. Once again, my delegation wishes to congratulate the Government of Turkmenistan for successfully organizing the Third UN Conference on LLDCs in Awaza, Turkmenistan.

The Awaza Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries is more than a policy document. It is an important framework for overcoming the challenges of accessing global markets, and achieving sustainable development.

It is clear, no country can prosper in isolation. Cooperation is not a choice; it is a necessity. And the Awaza Programme emphasizes this. It calls for practical, results-driven partnerships between LLDCs, their transit neighbors, and development partners. But for the program of action to succeed, such cooperation must be grounded in the principles of international law: sovereign equality, mutual respect, and non-interference.

We must underscore that we cannot expect effective transit systems to emerge where sovereignty is undermined or where legal commitments are not upheld. True collaboration begins not with threat but trust. Trust is built when nations honor each other's independence, territorial integrity, and shared obligations.

In this regard, Eritrea wishes to reaffirm that it is a sovereign coastal state, and its ports are national assets. Any arrangements for their use, whether commercial or logistical, are matters to be negotiated directly and bilaterally between Eritrea and the partner of its choosing. Its ports are not open for foreign military or naval use, and that mediation by external powers is neither legally required nor politically acceptable. Access by a landlocked state is not automatic, nor does it require mediation by third parties. International law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and customary norms, recognizes the principle of sovereign control over ports.

Chair,

Eritrea believes what we need is a paradigm shift, from transactional arrangements to strategic partnerships. A future where LLDCs and transit countries no longer operate in silos but move forward in unison, united by common interests, shared benefits, and a joint commitment to peace and progress. In this regard, the promotion of regional cooperation becomes vital. By doing that we can reduce both the time and cost of trade. This is not just about economics, it is also about fostering regional stability and cooperation and about unlocking human potential, enabling opportunity, and lifting entire regions toward sustainable development.

In closing, Eritrea rejects any external interference that undermines its sovereignty.

Eritrea emphasizes that port access is a commercial matter rather than political or military issue. Eritrea remains open to commercial partnerships on fair and equal terms, and its ports continue to be available for legitimate trade.

Thank you

**On Sep 27, 2025**