

International support measures for LDCs – Special and differential treatment in WTO provisions and preferential market access

Trade-related Survey for Least Developed Countries – Responses and Workshops

BRIEFING NOTE

Trade-related surveys

Trade-related international support measures for LDCs are a complex and broad subject. These measures can range from special provisions for LDCs in the WTO agreements to preferential market access arrangements.

As part of its work on improving the capacity of LDCs in making use of the special support measures available to them, the Development Policy and Analysis Division (DPAD) of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) developed a set of surveys addressed to LDCs and their trading partners.

In February this year an expert group meeting was organized by DPAD and hosted by the WTO, in Geneva, to discuss the content and implementation process of the surveys. Experts from LDCs, trading partners and international organizations all agreed on the usefulness of these surveys.

LDCs and trading partners are now being approached to collaborate with DESA and to respond to the surveys. The trade-related surveys will focus on existing trade-related international support measures currently available to LDCs.

Background information

The Committee for Development Policy (CDP) is a subsidiary body of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and responsible for, among other things, the identification of Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

Information on the CDP, its terms of reference, membership and activities are available at <http://www.un.org/esa/policy/devplan>

Over the years, the Secretariat of the CDP in the Development Policy and Analysis Division (DPAD) of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) has become increasingly involved in providing background information on the identification of LDCs and in documenting the special support measures from the international community for these countries.

Recently, the CDP Secretariat has developed a project on capacity-building for graduation strategies for LDCs in Asia and Africa. The project aims to strengthen the capacity of LDCs to draw on the advantages associated with LDC status by improving these countries' ability to access information on existing support measures and to take advantage of such measures.

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The other objectives of the project are assessing the likely impact of graduation on countries and building capacity in graduating countries in preparing strategies for a smooth transition from the category. The project has counted on the generous collaboration from ECA, ESCAP, OECD/DAC, OHRLLS, UNDP, UNCTAD and the WTO Secretariat.

Further details about the project are available at <http://www.un.org/esa/policy/devplan/lcd-project.html>

Information on the availability of international support measures for LDCs is spread over a wide range of sources and often not visible or easy to locate. Surveys are therefore designed to collect the relevant information.^a Additionally, the surveys will be used as a tool to gather information about the use of such measures by LDCs and the extent to which the international community assists LDCs in accessing these measures.

The responses to the surveys will be made available as an input to the internet information portal being developed under the project.

Among the available features, the portal will give LDCs easy access to information about special and differential treatment provisions and preferential market access for LDCs as well as other countries' experience in taking advantage of these international support measures. Other features include an interactive online networking forum to discuss questions related to the special support measures, country case-studies related to specific

Objective

The objective of the trade-related survey addressed to LDCs is to gain a better understanding of the international support measures and their use by the LDCs. The information gathered from the surveys will be used as an input to the information portal developed under the project implemented by DPAD (see background information box).

The implementation process of the LDC surveys

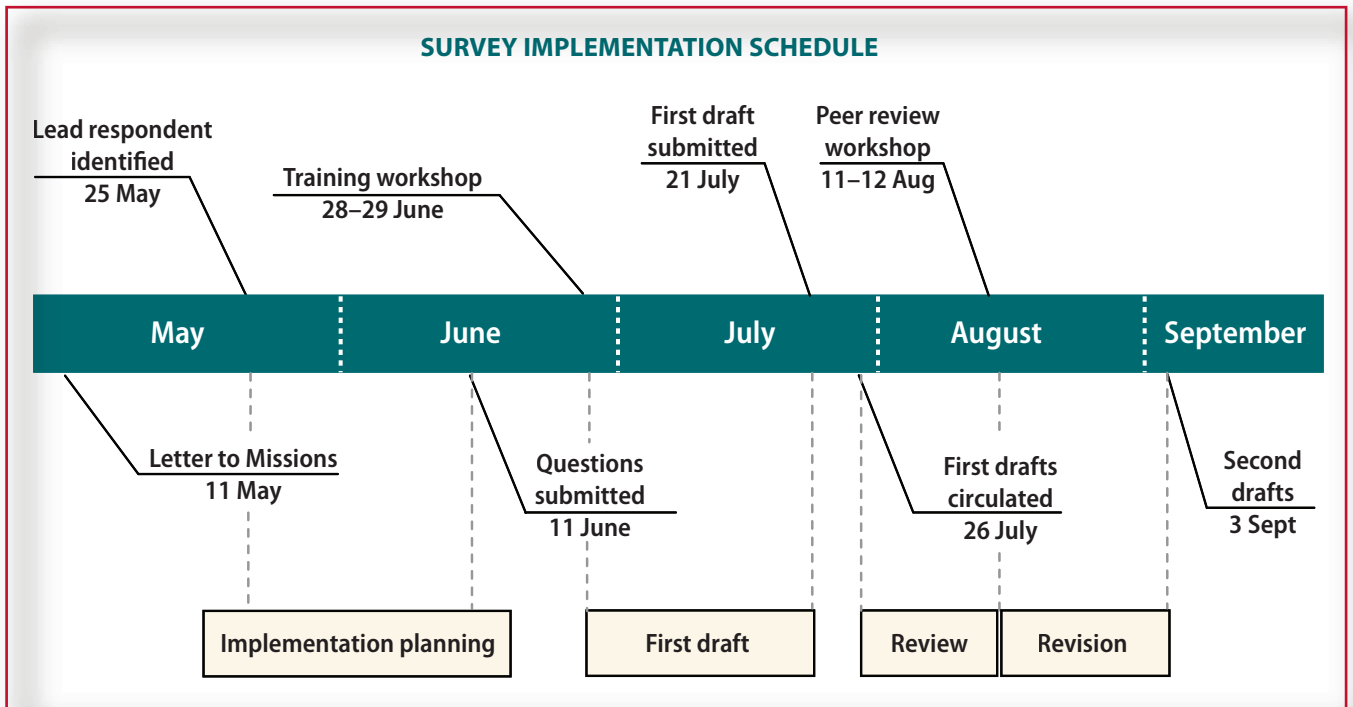
The aforementioned expert group meeting at the WTO recommended that DESA request the LDCs to respond to the surveys in a staggered approach, i.e. implementing the surveys in sub-groups of LDCs. This should enhance collaboration and the learning experience amongst LDCs by inviting those LDCs that gained experience in responding to the survey early on in the implementation process to participate in assisting with the implementation of the survey for the next sub-group of LDCs.

In the beginning of May 2010 a first group of about 15 LDC governments will be approached by DESA and requested to participate in the project. Governments will receive a copy of the LDC survey and be asked to identify a government official by 25 May as the lead respondent from the Ministry, assigned by the Government to participate in the implementation of the survey (see implementation schedule below).

Subsequently, the lead respondent will be requested by DPAD to review the survey and draw up a list of questions for which the respondent requires clarification to facilitate responding to the survey. The questions should be returned to DPAD by 11 June, 2 weeks prior to a training workshop organized in Geneva (28-29 June).

In order to facilitate the work, a copy of a training manual (developed in cooperation with the WTO) will be provided to respondents with relevant background information by the beginning of June.

The training workshop will discuss the implementation plan of all lead respondents of the 15 participating LDCs and focus on specific capacity building activities related to the surveys to enhance the participants' ability to provide meaningful responses. Three pilot



survey responses—from Bangladesh, Nepal and Uganda—will be presented and used as a tool to contribute to building capacity for answering the survey questions.

After the workshop, respondents are requested to fill out the survey and prepare a first draft, which should be returned to DPAD by 21 July. Subsequently, on 26 July, respondents will receive the first drafts of the other participants and be requested to review the material and prepare short written comments to be submitted prior to a peer review workshop organized on 11-12 August, in Geneva.

During the peer review workshop respondents will discuss each other’s responses, raise questions and discuss suggestions for improvements. The workshop will be a learning opportunity for all participants by sharing experience and approaches taken in collecting the information and should assist participants in finalizing their survey and improve the quality of the responses.

A second draft of the survey should be returned to DPAD by 3 September.

topics of international support measures and country fact sheets based on inputs from the surveys, including those related to ODA.

The outputs of the project should assist LDCs in strengthening capacity to have access to the advantages associated with LDC status and translate the potential benefits into effective benefits. As such, the project will facilitate the LDCs’ efforts in identifying approaches to make the benefits an effective instrument for socio-economic transformation and convergence with other developing countries.

^a For instance, the CDP Secretariat, in close collaboration with the OECD DAC Secretariat, already sent out a survey addressed to DAC members related to official development assistance to LDCs.

In-country assistance

UNDP country offices in LDCs will be requested to provide in-country assistance with the travel arrangements for the workshops. Questions related to the survey should be addressed by e-mail to Roland Mollerus at mollerus@un.org.

Financial assistance

The lead respondent will be provided air tickets and per diem to attend the training and peer review workshops. In addition, a fixed budget of \$500 will be allocated for the participating Ministry to cover the costs for internal travel, communications, over-time, temporary recruitment and other expenditures related to conducting and completing the survey, to be released upon completion of the survey.

Profile of lead respondent

Due to the technical nature of the surveys, the Government official responsible for filling out the survey (lead respondent) should have working level knowledge of the WTO provisions and market access issues.

Documentation

- ◆ The *LDC survey* can be accessed at <http://www.un.org/esa/policy/devplan/ldcsurveys.html> by using the LDCs login "ldc" and password "ldcsurvey".
- ◆ The *training manual* will be made available on the CDP website at <http://www.un.org/esa/policy/devplan/> by 1 June 2010.
- ◆ The *agenda* for the training and peer review workshops will be posted on the CDP website in the coming weeks.
- ◆ Hardcopies and an electronic version (CD-rom) of the above listed documentation will be made available to the respondents. ■