

Presentation of the CDP Chair, José Antonio Ocampo, at the Joint meeting of the Bureau of ECOSOC and Chairs of subsidiary bodies, February 1, 2021

The Committee for Development Policy – CDP – and its secretariat have worked assiduously since the beginning of the pandemic to understand and monitor the **impacts of COVID-19 on least developed countries**.

Part of this work is reflected in the Comprehensive study on the impacts of Covid-19 on the LDC category, conducted at the request of ECOSOC, and now in its final stages.

On average, the spread of the pandemic in LDCs has been lower than in other developing as well as developed countries. But the socio-economic impacts have been severe. Poverty is increasing in many LDCs, employment falling, and inequalities worsening, with women particularly affected. In economic terms, tourist revenues are plunging, exports falling and debt problems rising. Moreover, most LDCs lack resources to adopt necessary responses. External support has been forthcoming and valuable but remains far below the scale that is necessary.

The CDP will conduct its triennial review of the least developed country in late February. We will take into account the conclusions of the comprehensive study as well as the analysis of each of the countries that are candidates for graduation. In preparation for the review, we held a virtual expert group meeting from January 8 to 15, during which we looked closely at the situation of the countries that may become eligible for graduation, as well as that of other countries in the graduation pipeline. I cannot specify the conclusions of the review, but I can anticipate that countries approaching graduation will require more support than ever from development partners in ensuring a smooth and sustainable transition out of the category, in line with multiple General Assembly resolutions. We will also make suggestions on the types of support needed.

Furthermore, the CDP is working to improve its monitoring of graduating and graduated countries, which will enable it to keep track of the impacts of the pandemic on these countries over the coming years.

Covid-19 and our analysis in the comprehensive study will also shape our substantive input to the 5th LDC Conference. Supporting health systems, providing effective debt relief and new efforts to bridge the digital divide will be essential to support LDCs in building back better from the pandemic. Our input will also focus on improving support to graduating countries.

The pandemic also underscores the need for a new framework for the next Programme of Action for the LDCs that enables integrated responses dealing with the key development constraint that these countries face. Hence, the CDP will reiterate its call to use expanding productive capacity for sustainable development as the organizing framework for the next Programme of Action.

Beyond the issues relating specifically to least developed countries, the CDP released a policy document last year addressing **development policy and multilateralism in the context of the pandemic**, which responds to multiple aspects of this year's ECOSOC theme. This document proposed solutions for the re-empowerment of governments for green, equitable and resilient development, inequality and leaving no one behind, and elements of a new multilateralism in the world that will emerge from the pandemic. Many of its central ideas had been addressed in CDP documents before, but have become even more urgent as COVID-19 has aggravated global development challenges, created new ones and made evident the limited effectiveness of national and international institutions in many respects.

Finally, the CDP has been analyzing the **voluntary national reviews since 2017**. This year it will be reflecting on how the reviews referred to pandemic preparedness, leaving no one behind, inequality, gender, and productive capacity, as well as on the SDG targets that are underreported.

The CDP will be addressing all of these issues in its Plenary session, to be held virtually from 22 to 26 February.