



# Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

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## Preparatory Committee for the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

### First session

New York, 24–28 May 2021

Agenda item 7

### Adoption of the report of the Preparatory Committee at its first session

## Report of the Preparatory Committee for the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries on its first session

*Rapporteur:* Mr. Julio César Arriola Ramírez (Paraguay)

### I. Introduction

1. In accordance with General Assembly resolutions [73/242](#), [74/232](#) A and B and [75/227](#), the Preparatory Committee for the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries held its first session at United Nations Headquarters, in New York, from 24 to 28 May 2021.
2. Taking into account the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on the work of the Preparatory Committee, the Committee held its first session in the form of in-person meetings and virtual informal meetings (see annex II).

### II. Organization of the session

#### A. Organizational session

3. In accordance with General Assembly resolution [75/227](#), an organizational session was held on 8 February 2021 at United Nations Headquarters. An account of the proceedings of the organizational session is contained in annex I.
4. During the organizational session, the Co-Chairs of the Preparatory Committee invited participating States to contribute substantive inputs for the outcome of the Conference.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Available at [www.un.org/ldc5/content/organisational-session-statements](http://www.un.org/ldc5/content/organisational-session-statements).



## **B. Election of officers**

5. At the 1st plenary meeting of its organizational session, on 8 February 2021, the Preparatory Committee elected its officers as follows:

*Co-Chairs:*

Rabab Fatima (Bangladesh)  
Robert Keith Rae (Canada)

*Vice-Chairs:*

Marie Chatardová (Czechia)  
Taye Atskeselassie Amde (Ethiopia)  
Antonio Rodrigue (Haiti)  
Amrit Bahadur Rai (Nepal)  
Julio César Arriola Ramírez (Paraguay) (designated as Rapporteur of the Preparatory Committee)  
Feridun Hadi Sinirlioğlu (Turkey)  
Adonia Ayebare (Uganda)

*Ex officio:*

Perks Master Clemency Ligoya (Malawi)  
Alya Ahmed Saif Al-Thani (Qatar)

6. Pursuant to resolution [74/232 A](#), Qatar, as host country of the Conference, and Malawi, as the Chair of the Group of Least Developed Countries, serve as ex officio members.

## **C. Opening of the session**

7. The session was opened by the Co-Chairs of the Preparatory Committee, Rabab Fatima (Bangladesh) and Robert Keith Rae (Canada), who made statements.

8. At the 1st plenary meeting, on 24 May, opening statements were made by the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session, Volkan Bozkır (Turkey) (pre-recorded video statement), and the President of the Economic and Social Council at its 2021 session, Munir Akram (Pakistan).

9. At the same meeting, a keynote statement was made by the President and Minister of Defence of Malawi, Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera (pre-recorded video statement), in his capacity as Chair of the Group of Least Developed Countries.

10. Also at the same meeting, a keynote statement was made by the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Qatar, Soltan bin Saad Al-Muraikhi (pre-recorded video statement), in his capacity as representative of the host country of the Conference.

11. Also at the 1st meeting, a statement was made by the Chair of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Susanna Moorehead (pre-recorded video statement).

12. At the same meeting, a statement was made by the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and Secretary-General of the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

## D. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

13. At its 1st plenary meeting, on 24 May 2021, the Preparatory Committee adopted its agenda, as recommended by the Preparatory Committee at its organizational session, as follows (see [A/CONF.219/2021/IPC/2](#)):

1. Opening of the session.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
3. Preparations for the Conference:
  - (a) Organizational and procedural preparations;
  - (b) Substantive preparations.
4. Adoption of the provisional agenda for the second session of the Preparatory Committee.
5. Consideration of the draft outcome document of the Conference.
6. Other matters.
7. Adoption of the report of the Preparatory Committee at its first session.

14. At the same meeting, the Preparatory Committee approved its organization of work as contained in document [A/CONF.219/2021/IPC/2/Add.1/Rev.1](#), with the understanding that further adjustments would be made, as necessary, during the session.

## III. Preparations for the Conference: substantive preparations

15. At its 1st plenary meeting, on 24 May 2021, the Preparatory Committee considered agenda item 3 (b), Preparations for the Conference: substantive preparations, and heard statements by the representatives of Guinea (on behalf of the Group of 77 and China), the European Union, in its capacity as observer (on behalf of its member States), Australia (also on behalf of Canada and New Zealand), Timor-Leste, Nepal, Eritrea, Japan, Afghanistan, China, Cambodia, South Africa, the Russian Federation, the United States of America, Morocco, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Belgium, Bhutan, Yemen, Cyprus and Brazil.

16. At the same meeting, the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations addressed the Preparatory Committee.

17. Between 24 May and 28 May, the Preparatory Committee held six virtual informal meetings, during which it held six thematic panel discussions and a discussion on the draft outcome document of the Conference (for the proceedings, see annex II).

18. At its 2nd plenary meeting, on 28 May, the Preparatory Committee held thematic panel discussion 6: Mobilizing international solidarity, reinvigorated global partnerships and innovative tools for risk-informed sustainable development – a march towards sustainable graduation.

19. The thematic panel discussion was co-chaired by the Vice-Chair ex officio of the Preparatory Committee (Malawi) and the Deputy Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations, Serhad Varli (Turkey).

20. A keynote statement was made by the European Commissioner for International Partnerships, Jutta Urpilainen. During the panel discussion, statements were made by the following panellists: a member of the Committee for Development Policy and Senior Adviser to the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, Taffere Tesfachew; the

Executive Director of Development Initiatives, Harpinder Collacott; and the Manager of International Taxation at the African Tax Administration Forum, Thulani Shongwe. During the interactive debate, interventions were made by the representatives of Bangladesh and Eritrea (on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries), as well as the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Capital Development Fund.

21. The discussion covered areas related to the financing for development of a new Programme of Action, including enhancing domestic resource mobilization, addressing challenges of tax evasion and illicit financial flows, the quantity and quality of official development assistance, blended finance, new and reallocated special drawing rights, long-term solutions to unsustainable debt and the enhanced role of remittances for development. The need for increased support for graduating and graduated countries, including through smooth transition measures and additional incentives, was also discussed.

22. The deliberations included the following recommendations:

- Fair and equitable tax systems in least developed countries, as well as strengthened revenue administrations to enhance tax compliance and deal with complex cross-border transactions
- Increase in official development assistance, including for bolstering capacity and mitigating against the impacts of crises, and better targeting of aid to maximize impact
- Establishment of a dedicated financing mechanism that delivers catalytic investment capital for small and medium enterprises, and small investment projects in least developed countries to mobilize sustainable private investments
- Ensuring responsible lending and borrowing with instruments that take into account the vulnerabilities of least developed countries
- Mobilizing remittances by creating a conducive national macroeconomic, financial, business and regulatory environment and reducing costs of remittance transfers
- Extension of least developed country-specific support to graduated countries as well as capacity-building support, for example to access new sources of finance

## **IV. Action by the Preparatory Committee**

### **A. Decision of the Preparatory Committee**

23. At its 2nd plenary meeting, on 28 May 2021, the Preparatory Committee recommended the provisional agenda for its second session, as contained in document [A/CONF.219/2021/IPC/L.1](#), for adoption at its second session, taking into account any developments in the interim period.

### **B. Adoption of the report of the Preparatory Committee**

24. At the 2nd plenary meeting, the Preparatory Committee adopted its draft report ([A/CONF.219/2021/IPC/L.2](#)) and entrusted the Rapporteur to finalize it with the support of the Secretariat.

## **V. Attendance**

25. The list of Preparatory Committee participants will be issued in document [A/CONF.219/2021/IPC/INF/1](#).

## Annex I

### **Proceedings of the organizational session of the Preparatory Committee**

1. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution [75/227](#), an organizational session of the Preparatory Committee was held at United Nations Headquarters, in New York, on 8 February 2021.

2. The 1st plenary meeting of the organizational session was opened by the Secretary-General of the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, who made a statement.

#### **Election of officers**

3. At the same meeting, the Preparatory Committee elected its officers (see para. 5 of the report).

#### **Adoption of the agenda of the organizational session**

4. Also at the same meeting, the Preparatory Committee adopted the provisional agenda of its organizational session ([A/CONF.219/2021/IPC/1](#)).

#### **Introductory statements**

5. Also at the 1st meeting, introductory statements were made by the President of the General Assembly and by the Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council (Botswana).

#### **Adoption of the agenda of the Preparatory Committee and other organizational matters**

6. At the same meeting, the Preparatory Committee decided that the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council, as well as the supplementary arrangements established for the Commission on Sustainable Development by the Council in its decisions 1993/215 and 1995/201, will apply to its meetings, as applicable.

7. Also at the same meeting, the Preparatory Committee recommended the adoption of the provisional agenda of its first session ([A/CONF.219/2021/IPC/2](#)).

#### **Organizational preparations for the Conference**

8. At the same meeting, the Secretary-General of the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations, in her capacity as representative of the host country of the Conference, briefed the Preparatory Committee on the status of preparations for the Conference.

#### **General statements**

9. Also at the same meeting, the Preparatory Committee heard general statements by the representatives of Guinea (on behalf of the Group of 77 and China), Malawi (on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries), the European Union, in its capacity as observer, Kazakhstan (on behalf of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries), Guatemala (on behalf of the Like-Minded Group of Countries Supporters of Middle-Income Countries), Antigua and Barbuda (on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States), Turkey, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Nepal, Ethiopia, Yemen,

Romania, Brazil, Cambodia, the United States of America, Paraguay, Lesotho, Czechia, the Comoros and Mauritania.

10. At its 2nd plenary meeting, on 8 February, the Preparatory Committee heard statements by the representatives of Pakistan, Indonesia, Bhutan, Maldives, Morocco, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, China, Cuba, India, Uganda, Norway, Tuvalu and the Holy See.

11. At the same meeting, statements were made by the representatives of the Common Fund for Commodities, the International Renewable Energy Agency and the International Seabed Authority.

12. Also at the same meeting, statements were made by the representatives of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, the Office for Outer Space Affairs, the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries, the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the International Telecommunication Union, the executive secretariat of the Enhanced Integrated Framework, the World Trade Organization, the International Trade Centre, the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Capital Development Fund, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction.

## Annex II

### **Proceedings of the virtual informal meetings of the first session of the Preparatory Committee**

#### **24 May (afternoon) – first informal meeting: thematic panel discussion 1: Investing in people in least developed countries: eradicating poverty and building capacity to leave no one behind**

1. The thematic panel discussion was co-chaired by the Co-Chair (Canada) and the Vice-Chair (Haiti) of the Preparatory Committee.
2. A keynote statement was made by the Minister of International Development of Canada, Karina Gould (through video message). During the panel discussion, statements were made by the following panellists: the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme; the Director and Distinguished Professor of the Ramalingaswami Centre on Equity and Social Determinants of Health of the Public Health Foundation in India, Gita Sen; the Executive Director of Oxfam International, Gabriela Bucher; and the Chief Executive of Christian Aid, Amanda Khozi Mukwashi.
3. An interactive dialogue ensued, during which interventions were made by the representatives of Bangladesh, Brazil and Malawi (on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries). The Co-Chairs of the thematic panel discussion made closing remarks.
4. The discussion covered areas related to the reversal of human development indicators and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in least developed countries, access of least developed countries to vaccines, social safety nets and social protection, the multidimensional aspects of poverty, growing inequality and the need to increase fiscal space so that least developed countries can invest in their people, their infrastructure and their economies.
5. Deliberations included the following key points:
  - The new Programme of Action must address the increased vulnerability of the least developed countries and help them to become more resilient to shocks, especially those related to the climate crisis
  - Least developed countries need tangible support to take advantage of opportunities with a move to digital transformation
  - A multilateral waiver of intellectual property rules is required to overcome vaccine production and access issues in least developed countries
  - Cancelling unsustainable debt would help least developed countries to progress universal health and social protection coverage, supporting future resilience to economic and health shocks

#### **25 May (morning) – second informal meeting: thematic panel discussion 2: Leveraging the power of science, technology and innovation to fight multidimensional vulnerabilities and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals**

6. The thematic panel discussion was chaired by the Vice-Chair (Czechia) of the Preparatory Committee, who made a statement.
7. Keynote statements were made by the Information and Communication Technology Affairs Adviser to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sajeeb Wazed, and the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union, Houlin Zhao. During the panel discussion, statements were made by the following panellists: the

Head of Digital Infrastructure and Capacity-Building at the secretariat of Smart Africa, Thelma Quaye; the Chief Economist at the Growth Dialogue at the George Washington University School of Business and Adjunct Professor at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, Shahid Yusuf; and the Programme Officer at the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries, Moshe Kao. An interactive dialogue ensued, during which interventions were made by the representatives of Bangladesh and Turkey, as well as the representatives of the World Food Programme and the World Intellectual Property Organization. The keynote speakers and panellists responded to the comments made and the questions raised during the interactive dialogue.

8. The discussion covered areas related to access to modern technologies for sustainable development, building human capital, infrastructure and institutions to reap the benefits of the fourth industrial revolution, science, technology and innovation for recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and building resilience against emerging challenges and promoting private sector engagement, digitalization and broadband connectivity.

9. Deliberations included the following key points:

- The importance of public-private partnerships, given that government alone is not financially and physically able to invest in the entire broadband infrastructure
- The key to digitalization of least developed countries is the private sector because it has the technology
- The need to focus attention on the usage gap in Africa – 46 per cent of the population of Africa has broadband coverage, but cannot use it because it cannot afford the devices or the access
- Broadband access should be considered an essential service

**25 May (afternoon) – third informal meeting: thematic panel discussion 3:  
Structural transformation as a driver of prosperity**

10. The thematic panel discussion was chaired by the Vice-Chair (Ethiopia) of the Preparatory Committee, who opened the meeting and made a statement.

11. A keynote statement was made by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Director for European Union Affairs of Turkey, Faruk Kaymakci. During the panel discussion, statements were made by the following panellists: the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General to the 2021 Food Systems Summit; the Director of the Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development; and the International Coordinator of LDC Watch, Gauri Pradhan. An interactive dialogue ensued, during which interventions were made by the representatives of Malawi (on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries) and Bangladesh, as well as the representative of Finn Church Aid, Jussi Ojala. The Chair of the thematic panel discussion (Ethiopia) made closing remarks.

12. The discussion covered areas related to the structural and economic vulnerabilities of least developed countries, the potential to increase the value of commodities, especially in agriculture, the need for digital technologies and infrastructures to help to build productive capacities and how structural transformation is key to the sustainability of long-term growth and the development of the least developed countries.

13. The deliberations included the following key points:



- Nearly no country has had a successful transformation of its economy without investing in the agriculture sector
- Digital financial services have the potential to expand access to finance for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises
- Despite registering impressive growth in recent years, the pace and quality of economic transformation in most least developed countries have been limited by weak productive capacity
- By expanding their productive capacities, countries can diversify their economies, add value and produce a wide range of products and services, create well-paying and decent jobs, reduce dependence on production and export commodities, promote technological learning, improve labour productivity, tackle environment-related challenges, reduce vulnerabilities to external shocks and kick-start the process of structural transformation

**27 May (morning) – fourth informal meeting: thematic panel discussion 4:  
Enhancing international trade of least developed countries and regional integration**

14. The thematic panel discussion was co-chaired by the Vice-Chair (Paraguay) and the Vice-Chair (Nepal) of the Preparatory Committee. The Co-Chair of the thematic panel discussion (Paraguay) made opening remarks.

15. Keynote statements were delivered by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh, Abul Kalam Abdul Momen, and the Minister of Trade and Industry of Sierra Leone, Edward Hinga Sandy. During the panel discussion, statements were made by the following panellists: the Director of the Development Division at the World Trade Organization, Shishir Priyadarshi; an Associate Professor at the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth College, Emily Blanchard; and the former President of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, Rubana Haque. An interactive dialogue ensued, during which interventions were made by the representatives of Malawi (on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries), Lesotho and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, as well as the representative of the Enhanced Integrated Framework. The Co-Chair of the thematic panel discussion Chair (Nepal) made closing remarks.

16. The discussion covered areas related to trade, diversification of economies and exports, global value chains, market access, regional integration and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on all those areas for least developed countries.

17. Deliberations included the following key points:

- The next Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries should be focused on product diversification, value addition and the structural transformation and development of the knowledge- and technology-based manufacturing sector, and developed countries should provide duty-free, quota-free market access with simplified and transparent rules of origin for all products from all least developed countries
- Developed economies should provide incentives to their national enterprises and institutions for the purpose of promoting and encouraging technology transfer to least developed countries, in particular to promote affordable vaccine access to least developed countries
- A temporary waiver of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights is under discussion as a way to combat vaccine access issues, but the adoption of a waiver itself will not ensure availability – a waiver needs to be converted into a technology transfer or a license agreement so that vaccines can be produced more widely

- The next Programme of Action needs to encourage the scaling up of foreign direct investment, in particular in productive sectors

**27 May (afternoon) – fifth informal meeting: thematic panel discussion 5:  
Supporting our climate, recovery from the (COVID-19) pandemic and building  
a resilient society against future shocks**

18. The thematic panel discussion was co-chaired by the Co-Chair (Bangladesh) and the Vice-Chair (Qatar) of the Preparatory Committee. The Co-Chair of the thematic panel discussion made opening remarks.

19. Keynote statements were made by the Chair of the Least Developed Countries Group at the United Nations climate change negotiations, Sonam Phuntsho Wangdi (Bhutan) (through video message), and the Director at the Office of Global Change at the United States Department of State, Trigg Talley. During the panel discussion, statements were made by the following panellists: the Coordinator of the International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy (ENERGIA), Sheila Oparaocha; the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Climate Action; the Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; and the Chair of the Africa Youth Advisory Board on Disaster Risk Reduction, Sandra Delali Kemeh. An interactive dialogue ensued, during which interventions were made by the representatives of Bhutan (on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries), as well as by the representatives of the World Bank Group, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and the United Nations Environment Programme. The Co-Chairs of the thematic panel discussion (Bangladesh and Qatar) made closing remarks.

20. The discussion covered areas related to the vulnerability of least developed countries to climate change, the impact of and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and other health and economic shocks, adaptation needs and building resilience as a cross-cutting issue and the gendered dynamics of the climate crisis.

21. The deliberations included the following key points:

- Women must be part of the leadership and decision-making process following a crisis, including the climate crisis
- The only way to achieve successful resilience-building is through actual investment in adaptation resilience
- Governments and development partners should engage young people in the decision-making processes around disaster risk reduction

**28 May (afternoon) – sixth informal meeting: Consideration of the draft  
outcome document of the Conference (agenda item 5)**

22. The Preparatory Committee considered inputs to the draft outcome document of the Conference, including first elements and a road map for its finalization. The Committee heard statements by the representatives of New Zealand (also on behalf of Australia and Canada), Turkey, Brazil, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the European Union (on behalf of its member States), Uganda and Malawi (on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries).

23. The Co-Chairs stated that, during the six thematic panel discussions held during the meetings of the Preparatory Committee, as well as during the 14 side events held on the margins of the Committee's meetings, groups of countries and individual delegations had made their priorities known in terms of the issues of importance to them for the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. The

ideas discussed by the Preparatory Committee would provide critical inputs for the next 10-year Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries.

24. With regard to the nature of a new Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, it was mentioned that it should complete the unfinished business of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 and also reflect what has changed since its adoption in Istanbul, charting a course to better support least developed countries on their path to building back better and increasing resilience in view of achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In addition, it should include specific objectives of least developed countries for the next decade for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

25. Member States called for a focused, ambitious, forward-looking and compelling Programme of Action that would include commitments to concrete actions and solutions and that would be transformative for the billions of people in least developed countries. It should also be practical and realistic and adapted to the challenges of the twenty-first century.

26. The new Programme of Action should feature a renewed partnership between the least developed countries and their development partners and should involve all stakeholders, notably the private sector, civil society, parliamentarians, young people and academia. A strengthened follow-up and monitoring mechanism for the next Programme of Action was also called for.

27. The timeline for the negotiations on an outcome document for the new programme of action was outlined by the Co-Chairs. At the time of writing of the present report, the zero draft was expected to be submitted by least developed countries by mid-June 2021, with negotiations beginning in July, continuing throughout the month and resuming in September. The negotiations are to be finalized by September, before the high-level week of the General Assembly, so that the Doha conference can focus on the implementation strategy of the next Programme of Action.

## Annex III

### Documentation

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<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Title</i>
<a href="#">A/CONF.219/2021/IPC/2</a>	Annotated provisional agenda
<a href="#">A/CONF.219/2021/IPC/2/Add.1/Rev.1</a>	Revised proposed organization of work
<a href="#">A/CONF.219/2021/IPC/3</a>	Note by the Secretariat on the outcome of the Africa regional review meeting
<a href="#">A/CONF.219/2021/IPC/L.1</a>	Draft provisional agenda for the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, 26–30 July 2021
<a href="#">A/CONF.219/2021/IPC/L.2</a>	Draft report

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