

**Organizational session of the Preparatory Committee
of the 5th UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries, 8 February 2021.**

Statement by Norway

First, let me congratulate Bangladesh and Canada on their election as Co-Chairs for the Preparatory Committee.

Norway will continue to be a strong voice and advocate for the LDCs.

Especially now, with the COVID-19 crisis de-railing hard won development gains in all countries. But it is acutely felt by LDCs who are already vulnerable to disasters and shocks.

12 of the 16 countries selected as main partners for Norway in our development cooperation are LDCs. Around half of our country specific aid goes to the Least Developed Countries. We contribute to the UN Technology Bank for LDCs. And we have free access to the Norwegian market, without customs duty or quotas, for products from low income countries.

Norway is fortunate to be able to maintain the current level of development cooperation at 1 percent of GDP. The Sustainable Development Goals continue to be a policy framework nationally, as well as for our development cooperation, with Leave No One Behind as an overall principle.

We need targeted efforts, as well as more systemic approach, for inclusive policies at all levels.

We have read with great interest the preliminary report with lessons learned from implementing the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA). We have noted the progress made by all LDCs across the 8 priority areas. We have also noted the deficient progress when it comes to structural transformation, and the need for greater attention and resources to strategic areas in this regard.

Right now, access to vaccines must be on the top of our priority list. Norway is proud to co-chair the Facilitation Council of the ACT Accelerator together with South-Africa to mobilize political and financial support to develop, produce and make covid-19 vaccines, treatment, and tests available globally. It is urgent that the scientific progress made in development of new vaccines is followed by efforts to promote equitable access; reaching people and health systems all over the world.

The vaccine pillar COVAX has agreements in place to access two billion doses of several promising vaccine candidates. All countries must step up to finance the 27.2 billion USD missing to fund the ACT Accelerator. In the long run, that is a small number compared to the loss of 9 trillions USD the global economy could suffer if the world fails to distribute the Covid-19 vaccine to poor countries. Norway has contributed 500 million USD, not only for ethical reasons, but also because it is the smart thing to do.

Looking a bit further ahead, we are, together with our Nordic neighbors, and the development community at large, focusing on Building Back – or rather: Building Forward – Better and Greener. With technological progress there are more feasible options to work simultaneously for development, for the environment and against climate change. We should use the crisis as an opportunity for better, more resilient and more inclusive solutions.

Norway looks forward to contributing actively towards a successful LDC Conference.

Thank you.