

Draft Doha Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries

Introduction -- ‘From Istanbul Priorities to Doha Commitments’

1. Forty years ago in September 1981, the international community met in Paris, France for the First United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and launched the Substantial New Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (SNPA) for the 1980s with an ambitious objective of transforming the economies of the least developed countries (LDCs) toward self-sustained development and enabling them to provide at least internationally accepted minimum standards of nutrition, health, transport, communication, social infrastructure including drinking water and sanitation, housing and education as well as job opportunities to their citizens, particularly to the rural and urban poor.

2. Now, we are meeting for the fifth time, in the most unprecedented of circumstances, in which a health and socio-economic crisis has shaken everyone, individually and collectively. The world is plagued by growing poverty, hunger, and malnutrition, inequality, human rights violations, digital divides, vaccine divide, complex humanitarian emergencies and armed conflicts, insecurity, pandemics, environmental degradation, climate change and disasters. Of greatest concern is that one in every three people in LDCs still live in extreme poverty and the COVID-19 pandemic has caused this figure to rise further. We are determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.

3. We call for greater action and extraordinary measures by all countries and strengthened international and multilateral cooperation to address challenges affecting LDCs based on the concept of human security¹ and to ensure that no one is left behind.

4. We have entered the Decade of Action, the most critical time of our generation, to realize our collective ambitions of sustainable and inclusive recovery and more resilient from COVID-19 in a sustainable and equitable manner and leaving no one behind. We reaffirm our commitment to enhancing our efforts from COVID-19 to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the AAAA as well as the Paris Agreement. We commit to taking more tangible steps to support the LDCs in this endeavour and to reach the furthest behind first recognizing the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on those in vulnerable situations.

5. The LDCs saw their economies significantly shrink in 2020, amidst a severe global recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic; external debt burden and debt service obligations are rising significantly, gains made over the last decade in poverty reduction were wiped out; there

¹ Noting the GA decision to continue its discussion on human security in accordance with the provisions of resolution A/66/290, stresses that actions arising from this document should be in line with the provisions of OP3 of resolution A/66/290.

were increases in food insecurity and malnutrition and already fragile health systems saw resources shifted away from urgent health and life-saving treatments. Disrupted education is likely to have lasting negative impact on countries' recovery and development. Global inequalities are being exposed and growing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing risk of conflict and fragility with women and girls, youth, persons with disabilities, older persons, indigenous peoples, local communities, refugees, displaced persons and migrants disproportionately affected. While many advanced economies deployed massive fiscal stimulus to cushion the pandemic's impact, and have applied adjusted health measures, the policy response in LDCs was much more limited, due to weak fiscal conditions, major supply chain and logistic challenges, weak resilience capacity and static global support. For them, adequate access to vaccines remains many months, if not years away, casting shadow over their urgent and much-needed growth and development prospects.

6. The COVID-19 pandemic threatens to not only reverse some progress made during the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) but also exacerbate persistent challenges in LDCs. Global inequality has risen as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic, and the risk for conflict and fragility has increased particularly in relation to democratic governance and the rule of law. Due to pre-existing conditions, namely the chronic underinvestment in health systems, poorly functioning food systems, weak social protection systems, lack of institutional capacity, high levels of vulnerability to external shocks and dominant employment in the informal sectors, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused serious negative effects on all priority areas of the IPoA that will be felt for years to come. This might negatively impact the graduation process of some countries.

7. We recognize that the LDCs, currently consisting of 46 members and comprising about 14 per cent of the global population, are some of the poorest and most vulnerable in the world, accounting for only 1.3 per cent of global gross domestic product, 1.4 per cent of global foreign direct investment and just under 1 per cent of global merchandising exports.

8. We recognize that, despite many challenges and constraints, the LDCs represent an enormous human, cultural and natural resource potential for sustainable economic growth, welfare, peace, prosperity and food and energy security. Millions of young people and a growing working age population could become development leaders and the drivers of transformative change. It is imperative that actions for the LDC by all stakeholders aim at addressing the challenges in a sustainable manner and leverage the opportunities offered by new and emerging issues to catalyze the greatest multiplier effects on growth and development. Therefore, a strengthened and inclusive global partnership that effectively addresses the special needs of the LDCs, will contribute to the cause of people, planet, peace, prosperity, partnership, and sustainable development for all.

9. We also recognize that many LDCs continue to face multiple structural challenges and constraints, including narrow production and export bases, stagnant trade and investment flows, diminishing productivity growth, small size, isolation and remoteness from major markets and widespread poverty, hunger and malnutrition, lack of access to quality and inclusive education as well as lifelong learning opportunities, and underdeveloped human capital. Almost half of the LDCs are landlocked or small island countries, with weak land and natural resource base. These long-standing challenges are compounded by new and emerging challenges, brought about by climate change, increased incidences of disasters and public health emergencies,

conflicts, fluctuating commodity prices and rising capital outflows. Without a structural transformation that prioritises economic diversification and tackles institutional and capacity constraints, the least developed countries will remain vulnerable to various socio-economic, health and environmental shocks.

10. We recognize that progress has been made against the IPoA in areas such as access to electricity, access to mobile telephony and mobile internet, increased enrolment of girls and boys in primary education, increased access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, and reforms that have made it easier to start and register businesses.

11. We also recognize that progress has been made towards graduation from the LDC category. However, there are still significant challenges in meeting the graduation criteria and to ensure sustainable and irreversible graduation. The IPoA set the goal of half of the LDCs (24 at the time) meeting graduation criteria by 2020, and so far, four have graduated and 16 are at different stages of graduation.

12. We note with concern that progress fell short of the goals and targets set out in the IPoA, including achieving sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth at 7 per cent rate; poverty eradication, achieving structural transformation; doubling the share of trade, building productive capacity; securing full employment and decent work for all, reducing the share of children, in particular girls out of school in primary and secondary education, which is still at least double the world average; manufacturing and trade gains, which were minimal and concentrated in only a handful of countries; tax to gross domestic product ratios that increased very slowly and disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

13. We further note with concern that progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals in the LDCs has been uneven and is not on pace to achieve the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda. The number of people living in extreme poverty remained at around 32 percent and those suffering from hunger is on the rise in particular those in vulnerable situations; there is evidence of losses in jobs and incomes in LDCs; unemployment, in particular of youth, is rampant; the inequalities between LDCs and the rest of the world as well as within LDCs are rising; infant and maternal mortality is exorbitantly high; access to energy and broadband connectivity is moving at a slower pace; structural transformation is not taking hold; infrastructure investments and equitable access to infrastructure services is lagging far behind the actual needs; productive capacity and export competitiveness are weak; climate change is occurring much faster than anticipated, as evidenced by, inter alia, disproportionately high levels of economic losses, damage to critical infrastructure, disruption of basic services in the LDCs, the devastating impacts on oceans and seas, the loss of vulnerable ecosystems, land degradation, the retreat of mountain glaciers and continued rise in global temperature thereby threatening the lives of many people, in particular the poorest and people in vulnerable situations. Biodiversity loss, deforestation, water stress, as well as global pollution from chemicals and waste, remain major global challenges, while desertification, land degradation and coastal erosion continues to increase.

14. The Programme of Action for the decade 2022-2031 is a new generation of renewed and strengthened commitments by the LDCs and their development partners grounded on the overarching goals of achieving rapid, sustainable and inclusive recovery from the pandemic,

building resilience against future shocks, eradicating extreme poverty, strengthening labour markets by promoting the transition from informal to formal employment, enabling graduation from the LDC category, facilitating access to sustainable and innovative financing, addressing inequalities, within and among countries, leveraging the power of science, technology and innovation (STI), mainstreaming tech driven-entrepreneurship, bringing structural transformation and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), through a reinvigorated global partnerships for sustainable development based on scaled up and ambitious means of implementation and diverse support to the LDCs forging the widest possible coalition of multi-stakeholder partnerships.

15. Reaffirms that the least developed countries, as the most vulnerable group of countries, need enhanced global support to overcome the structural challenges and recent devastating impacts of COVID-19, that they face in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and calls upon the development partners, international organizations and other stakeholders to support LDCs in its implementation, and in this regard calls upon the international community to prioritize and strengthen support from all sources to facilitate the coordinated implementation and coherent follow-up and monitoring of the Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda in the least developed countries.

16. We underscore that the ownership, leadership and primary responsibility for development in least developed countries rests with the least developed countries themselves. Least developed countries should identify their own national priorities, formulate and execute coherent economic and development policies and strategies. Development partners commit to providing concrete and substantial support to these efforts, in a spirit of shared responsibility and mutual accountability through renewed and strengthened global partnership.

17. The Programme of Action will be guided by the principles of shared responsibility, ownership and leadership of the LDCs; an integrated and comprehensive approach; resilience building and risk reduction; genuine and reinvigorated partnerships; result orientation; peace, security, development and human rights; respect for cultural diversity [2030 Agenda, OP8], inclusion and equity; voice and representation and balance role of the state and market considerations as reflected in the IPoA. The Programme of Action for the decade 2022 to 2031 represents the enhanced commitments of the least developed countries, which have the ownership of and primary responsibility for their own development, and their development partners to a renewed and strengthened global partnership.

18. This partnership also includes the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, other multilateral institutions and regional development banks, within their respective mandates and international obligations.

19. Guided by the spirit of solidarity with LDCs, developing countries, consistent with their capabilities, will provide support for the effective implementation of the Programme of Action in mutually agreed areas of cooperation within the framework of South-South and Triangular cooperation, which is a complement to, but not a substitute for, North-South cooperation.

20. The private sector, civil society and foundations will be encouraged to contribute to the implementation of the Programme of Action in their respective areas of competence in line with LDCs national priorities and in collaboration with relevant national government institutions.

21. We also underscore that good governance and the rule of law, inclusiveness and transparency, as well as domestic resource mobilization, are crucial to the development process of the least developed countries. These efforts need to be given concrete and substantial international support in a spirit of shared responsibility and mutual accountability through renewed and strengthened global partnership.

22. We reaffirm that achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and the full realization of their human rights are essential to achieving sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth and sustainable development for all.

23. We recognize that investment in the care economy is needed to spur sustainable economies, restore and create jobs, recognize, reduce and redistribute women's disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work and close the gender gap in labour force participation.

24. The COVID-19 pandemic, the Ebola outbreaks, the financial crisis and climate change have demonstrated that we live in a highly globalized and interconnected world, where a crisis or a virus in a small part of a country can spread to the whole world in a short span of time and have devastating impacts globally. COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of holistic, all-hazard and One Health approaches that consider interdependencies between the health of humans, animals, and plants, and their shared environment. Looking beyond crises and bearing in mind the core principles of the 2030 Agenda, it is our shared responsibility to ensure that no one is left behind and reach the furthest behind first.

25. We will undertake actions to leverage the opportunities offered by the 226 million youth population in LDCs, who are a real agent of change for structural transformation through productive capacity development in agricultural, manufacturing, cultural and creative industries, and services sectors including tourism; building and maintaining quality, reliable, sustainable, and resilient infrastructure to improve movement of goods and services, promoting life-cycle approaches; expanding energy access and broadband connectivity; tapping into emerging technologies; mainstreaming technology-driven entrepreneurship and developing innovative digital ecosystems; delivering digital services and applications; harnessing the demographic dividend which will yield economic and health gains that come with ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all including persons with disabilities while combatting all forms of discrimination.

26. We are committed to building stronger, multifaceted and resilient systems in the LDCs. With the support of the international community, LDCs need to design systems, including infrastructure in transportation and communications, energy and ICT, supply chains, economic, financial, public health and food systems, and universal social protection that are resilient, sustainable, comprehensive, shock-responsive and gender-sensitive and risk-informed. Such actions have the potential to make the national economic system stronger and more resilient

against any future shocks and ensure sustainable and irreversible graduation from the LDC category as well as achievement of the SDGs.

27. We affirm that the integrated and indivisible nature of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction requires the involvement of all relevant stakeholders at all levels – local, national, international – with solutions that are context-appropriate, respond to the needs and rights of populations, in particular those furthest behind, and tap into the full diversity of existing knowledge and experience. It is, in fact, encouraging that national and local governments, civil society, academia, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders have engaged with the Sustainable Development Goals as well as the objectives of the Paris Agreement and are developing innovative approaches and practices. International financial institutions and several central and national development banks have started to better reflect the Goals as a whole in their strategies and policies.

28. We note with concern that the International Support Measures that have been put in place are not sufficient to contribute to addressing the full range of needs that exist in the LDCs including the new and emerging ones. We urge the international community to fulfil their existing commitments and push beyond ‘business as usual’ to agree on innovative and effective support measures for the LDCs that contribute to closing their funding gaps in meeting the SDGs.

29. We reaffirm our commitment to a comprehensive, result-oriented, enhanced, quantifiable, forward looking and coherent renewed and strengthened global partnership for LDCs based on the principles of leaving no one behind that is fully aligned with the SDGs and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA). We also reaffirm our respective commitments to support the LDCs through, inter alia, fulfilling all internationally agreed goals and targets related to respective official development assistance commitments, market access, debt relief when appropriate, technology transfer on mutually agreed terms, technical assistance and capacity-building. These commitments must be met, and action must be taken beyond existing commitments to bring about transformational change in LDCs. The United Nations system, including its specialized agencies, including the World Bank Group and IMF, as well as the OECD Development Assistance Committee and other relevant institutions to provide finance, technical support, assistance and policy advice to all priority areas for the LDCs, and this support will be improved including through additional concessional finance and the coordination between agencies and departments, using approaches such as the Integrated National Financing Frameworks.

30. We affirm that Governments play a very important role in articulating and implementing the policies and programmes that will support a sustainable future that leaves no one behind. National parliaments will have a great role to play in enacting legislation and allocating funds that serve all to leave no one behind, as well as holding governments to account for the commitments they have made.

31. The Programme of Action will have six key focus areas for Action as follows:

- I. Investing in people in LDCs: Eradicating poverty and building capacity to leave no one behind;

- II. Leveraging the power of science, technology, and innovation to fight against multidimensional vulnerabilities and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals;
- III. Supporting structural transformation as a driver of prosperity;
- IV. Enhancing International trade of least developed countries and regional integration;
- V. Addressing climate change, environmental degradation, recovering from COVID-19 pandemic, and building resilience against future shocks for risk-informed sustainable development, and
- VI. Mobilizing international solidarity, reinvigorated global partnerships and innovative tools and instruments- A march towards sustainable graduation.

**I. Investing in people in LDCs:
Eradicating poverty and building capacity to leave no one behind**

32. We recognize that people, especially the large youth and working age population of LDCs, are critical asset for their development. It is estimated that between 2020 and 2030, the population of the LDCs will increase by 256 million reaching it to 1.3 billion people.

33. We are concerned that poverty remains a key challenge for LDCs and even before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was estimated that nearly 30 per cent of the population in LDCs would remain in extreme poverty by 2030. Upward trends in extreme poverty and gender inequality in LDCs since the COVID-19 outbreak suggest compounding impacts of the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

34. In addition to having a low income, people living in poverty in LDCs experience higher mortality rates, food insecurity, and all forms of malnutrition, limited or no access to quality inclusive education and health-care services and lack of access to opportunities to gain income through decent employment. Poor people in the LDCs live in underserved areas with poor infrastructure and limited access to water and sanitation and have limited access to social protection. We respect and value the diversity of situations and conditions of women and girls and recognize that some women face particular barriers to their empowerment. We also stress that, while all women and girls have the same human rights, women and girls in different contexts have particular needs and priorities, requiring appropriate responses.

35. We reaffirm our commitment to diversity in cities and human settlements, to strengthening social cohesion, intercultural dialogue and understanding, tolerance, mutual respect, gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, inclusion, identity and safety and the dignity of all people, as well as taking steps to ensure that local institutions promote pluralism and peaceful coexistence within increasingly heterogenous and multicultural societies.

36. We are guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including full respect for international law. We are further guided by the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and international human rights treaties. We emphasize the importance of fundamental freedoms for all. We are also informed by other instruments such as the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, and core international human rights instruments. We recognize that good governance at all levels; strong institutions; democracy; the rule of law; transparency and accountability; along with affording individuals with access to health-care

services and education, knowledge and skills needed for productive capacity and full participation in the decision-making process are crucial to achieving sustainable development. LDCs still face challenges in ensuring universal access to inclusive, equitable and quality education, social protection and essential health-care services, and their vulnerabilities and limited capacities exacerbate the impact of external shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic, natural hazards and the adverse impacts of climate change and bio-diversity loss.

37. We aim to eradicate poverty, including extreme poverty, hunger and malnutrition in all its forms and dimensions, to advance human development in an inclusive and sustainable way for all in the LDCs by the end of the decade and to provide equal opportunities for all, with special attention to the poorest and most vulnerable, including women and girls in vulnerable situation, youth and children, older persons and persons with disabilities as well as those affected by violence and conflicts, to leave no one behind.

Universal social protection systems

38. Limited social protection exacerbates vulnerabilities across all dimensions of human development in LDCs, which constitute a major obstacle to economic, environmental and social development. Notwithstanding the commitment by many LDCs and their development partners, lack of capacities and limited resources in LDCs are major constraints to providing comprehensive and sustainable social protection.

39. *Target:*

- i. Achieve a sustainable increase in coverage of nationally appropriate comprehensive and universal social protection systems and measures, including floors, for all in the LDCs.
- ii. End hunger and malnutrition and ensure access by all people in LDCs, in particular the poor, and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe and healthy diets through sustainable year-round food systems.
- iii. Provide food and emergency assistance everywhere to those in need.

We commit to take the following actions:

41. We will reinforce social protection policies and programmes that are risk informed, take into account the specific needs of women and girls, age and persons with disabilities and contribute to strengthening the ability of communities and people, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable, to withstand poverty and risks to their livelihoods and well-being, throughout their life course. We call upon governments to extend social protection for all, including workers in the informal economy. We will also to build social protection systems that are resilient and can respond to shocks, including by integrating disaster risk reduction into social protection strategies.

42. We recognize that significant additional domestic public resources, supplemented by international assistance as appropriate, will be critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. In this regard we commit to providing fiscally sustainable and nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all. We commit to supporting predictable finance, including

official development assistance, domestic resources, trade and private sector financing and tax and public transfer reforms, where appropriate.

43. We commit to increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the public sector at national, sub-national and local levels in delivering inclusive social protection programmes, including by expanding the digital infrastructure and information and communication technology capabilities of the public administration, by establishing national social registry systems, enhancing and digitalizing cash transfers and payment of entitlements, and by increasing transparency and access to information.

44. We recognize the need for dealing with severe food insecurities. In this regard, we request the Secretary-General to explore the feasibility, effectiveness and administrative modalities of a system of stockholding for the LDCs on a regional and sub-regional basis, or alternative means, such as cash transfer, taking into account possible economic implications, and risks and report to the General Assembly at its 77th session for its consideration.

Achieving universal access to quality education, skills and lifelong learning

45. Despite progress in increasing enrolment rates for primary education, 16.2 per cent of children in primary school age were out of school in LDCs in 2019 and almost half of children out of school in the world are in LDCs, with girls, children with disabilities and other children in vulnerable situations being disproportionately affected.

46. Enrolment and completion rates for tertiary education remain low, which has far-reaching implications for the structural transformation agenda of the LDCs. Most of them depend on aid for their education budgets. At the secondary and tertiary levels, gender disparities as well as disparities for the poorest and most vulnerable exist. Lack of economic opportunities along with poor basic facilities and infrastructure, such as the lack of access to digital technologies, internet and electricity as well as safe drinking water and sanitation facilities especially for girls, and public transport along with insufficient trained teachers and the limited or lack of adequate learning and teaching materials, seriously affect the quality of education in LDCs.

47. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on schooling is a generational catastrophe. School closures brought by the pandemic have had devastating consequences for children's learning and wellbeing. Millions of children and youth are falling behind in their learning, making it even more difficult to successfully transition from education and training to employment, which will have long-term impacts on human capital, including reduced earnings and career advancements. More than a year and a half into the COVID-19 crisis, almost all learners in LDCs have faced full school closures, which also deprived them from childcare, school meals and other vital school health services noting in particular that the crisis poses a series of mental health challenges to young people and may aggravate the state of youth with pre-existing mental health conditions. Unable to access quality remote learning, and facing economic hardship, these children, especially girls, are at an increased risk of never returning to school, and even experiencing harmful practices including child labour and child, early and forced marriage. The situation of young girls is particularly alarming because they are more vulnerable and exposed to the risk of exploitation including the risk of early pregnancies. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic

threatens to undo many of the global gains of the last two decades in girls' education and employment.

48. Target:

- i. Ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable, inclusive and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes and inclusive, sustainable economic growth.
- ii. By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable, inclusive and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.
- iii. Achieve universal access to inclusive and quality education at all levels, eliminate the gender gap in enrolment and completion and increase the quality of education for all in LDCs.
- iv. Substantially expand globally the number of places and scholarships for students and trainees from least developed countries, in particular in the fields of science, education technology, business management and economics and encourage full take-up of scholarships available to students of LDCs.
- v. Substantially increase access to internet, electricity school meals that support healthy diets, water and other vital school health services adequate hygiene and sanitation facilities in all primary, secondary and tertiary schools in LDCs by 2030.
- vi. Undertake the feasibility studies to explore the possibility of establishing an online university or other equivalent platforms for LDCs.
- vii. Expand professional training and quality apprenticeship and promote other active labour market policies to facilitate a smooth school to work transition for young people, especially young women.
- viii. Urge international community to join forces to get children back to school in the wake of COVID-19 and ensure 12 years of safe and quality education for all children, and specifically girls.

We commit to take the following actions:

49. We commit to supporting LDCs and providing financing to strengthen national inclusive and efficient education systems in order to harness the demographic dividend, for both remote and on-site classes, including through better curricula that respond to the dynamic nature of education, training and the job market; local contexts, including country specific challenges and local cultural contents; teacher development, retention and deployment, especially in rural areas; and improvement in basic infrastructure and providing adequate supplies which suit the learning requirements of all children.

50. We also commit to supporting LDCs in increasing enrolment and decreasing dropout rates through measures such as abolishing school fees, providing school feeding programs, that support healthy diets, water and sanitation facilities, vaccinations, various school health services and improving the quality of education and especially foundational learning. We commit to supporting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in and through education and ensuring equal access to all levels of education including vocational and technical education for people in vulnerable situations.

51. We will strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet, substantially increase access to electricity and achieving access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all in all academic institutions in LDCs and providing digital literacy skills, technology-enabled lifelong and dynamic learning systems and human capital development by 2030.

52. We further commit to supporting the LDCs to access and effectively utilize digital tools and technologies to improve education outcomes for all learners, including through educational radio and television programmes to meet learning and educational requirements according to local context. We also commit to distributing equipment and teaching material, such as radios and textbooks, both in physical and digital formats, including to the poorest and vulnerable households, especially for girls. We further commit to supporting large-scale national efforts to utilize all forms of distance learning technology, including low- cost technology, in support of remote learning and online education including through digital technologies for better resilience in national equitable and efficient education systems as well as training to develop the digital skills of students and educators.

53. We recognize the importance of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and global citizenship education (GCED) in helping countries to sustainable and inclusive recovery after COVID-19, we will strengthen ESD and GCED in the period 2021-2030.

54. We will encourage interaction, collaboration and exchange programmes of students as well as the sharing of scientific studies and research papers between academic institutions of LDCs and the rest of the world. We commit to substantially expanding globally the number of scholarships, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and we will encourage higher education institutes to allocate places and scholarships for students and trainees from LDCs, especially for young women and in particular in the fields of science, technology, engineering, medicines and business administration in developed countries and other developing countries and encourage full take-up of scholarships offered by higher education institutes to LDCs.

55. We commit to undertaking feasibility studies to explore the possibility of establishing an online university or other equivalent platforms to support online graduate and post graduate university level STEM education in LDCs and recently graduated countries with a view to, inter alia, providing policy support to promote distance education and open learning for graduate and post-graduate STEM studies, ensuring 50-50 gender balance at all levels while guaranteeing special access for the poorest and people in vulnerable situations; creating a virtual network of educational institutions within and beyond LDCs; assisting in course design and curriculum development; and leading to scale and sustainability of the education system, taking into account all pre-existing initiatives developed by the relevant partners in a comprehensive manner. In this regard, we request the Secretary-General to submit a report to the General-Assembly for its consideration at its 78th Session outlining, inter alia, mapping of existing initiatives, possible new modalities, resource requirements, accreditation, and sustainable funding sources.

Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and youth to address inequality and drive economic growth

56. Women and girls continue to face barriers such as lack of access to inclusive and quality education and digital skills, particularly at secondary and tertiary levels, and access to health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health-care services, and lack of access to social protection, decent work and opportunities in the labour market, and are subjected to harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage; gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, sexual harassment and harmful practices. Women were disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic including in terms of loss of jobs, income and livelihoods while continuing to bear the disproportionate brunt of unpaid care and domestic work. Investments and a focus on the rights of women and girls are required to provide and enable access to inclusive and quality education, social protection, online services to health, including sexual and reproductive health-care services, to property and capital and productive assets throughout the life-course, to ensure financial inclusion through expanding access to financial services such as credit; and to eliminate harmful practices and all forms of violence. Together, these actions will help to address barriers to women's full, equal, effective and meaningful participation in all spheres of society, including in decision making, and leadership, in order to achieve gender equality and empower women and girls and further enhance the contribution of women to economic and social development. The disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the social and economic situations of women and girls, along with the gender-based violence also pose challenges to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the LDCs.

57. *Targets:*

- i. Achieve women's full, equal and meaningful participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life.
- ii. Support women's equal opportunities in education, training, businesses, entrepreneurship and decent jobs.
- iii. Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.
- iv. Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.
- v. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- vi. Support the transition from informal to formal work in all sectors.
- vii. Achieve the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and girls online.
- viii. Achieve equitable access to social protection for women and girls.

We commit to take the following actions:

58. We commit to establishing policies and programmes to improve the enabling environment for the enjoyment of human rights by women and girls, expand women's access to inclusive and quality education and training, online services, health services, entrepreneurship, job opportunities

and economic opportunities, expand access to gender-sensitive social protection and ensuring women's full, equal, meaningful and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, cultural, economic, and public life, including through institutional reforms and policies against multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. We commit to supporting mechanisms that provide access to finance for women for both personal and business use.

59. We commit to eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including sexual and gender-based violence, trafficking, sexual and other types of exploitation as well as all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation through the development, implementation and enforcement of appropriate policies and laws.

60. We commit to establishing inclusive and gender responsive support programmes to prevent and respond to sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict LDCs, and to assist victims and survivors of sexual violence including through long-term health-care services, psychosocial support, access to justice and safe accommodation and shelter and inclusion in peace-building initiatives.

61. We commit to providing access to family planning to all women in LDCs and ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.

Population and health

62. We note that the LDCs have the fastest growing populations globally rising at an annual rate of 2.3 per cent and many are projected to double in population between 2019 and 2050. Appropriate policies and measures need to be put in place to leverage the potentials offered by the demographic dividends.

63. We will work together to support acceleration of demographic transition, where relevant, and champion the importance of increased investments in human development, including universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, and public services, infrastructure and job creation that keep pace with population growth and create healthier, better educated citizens and drives economic growth.

64. LDCs face major challenges in improving the health of their population due to lack of adequate healthcare facilities and services, investment, and a trained health workforce, adequate commodities and supplies and weaknesses across other systems, in particular food systems. Newborn, child and maternal mortality remains unacceptably high in LDCs. Prevailing high rates of undernutrition continue to be a major cause of disease, child mortality and lifelong losses in productivity and income, with many people unable to afford or access nutritious food and, healthy diets. They also experience an increase in obesity and non-communicable diseases, and other preventable or treatable conditions.

65. Target:

- i. Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and nutrition, access to safe, effective, quality, and affordable essential medicines, diagnostics, vaccines and other health technologies for all.
- ii. Reduce maternal deaths and eliminate preventable maternal, infant and child deaths and improve access to affordable quality health-care services.
- iii. Ensure birth registration to all newborns in LDCs and provide a national legal identity to them.

We commit to take the following actions:

66. We commit to providing financial and technical support and investment in promoting and empowering education and training, in tandem with job creation, for the burgeoning young people in LDCs to leverage the opportunities presented by the demographic dividend but also to enable children and youths, especially girls and young women to develop their personalities, talents and abilities and to participate fully into society. LDCs, with the support of their development partners, will upgrade science and technology-based education system that leads to dynamic and emerging critical thinking skills of the young generation and ensure their successful integration into national and international labour markets, with full and productive employment and decent work for all.

67. We commit to providing necessary financial and technical support for LDCs to strengthen integrated and inclusive national health systems, and the design, implementation of and access to modern health infrastructure and systems, which is accessible to all members of the population, develop adequate skilled professionals and medical facilities and supplies, strengthen health-care information systems and use of disaggregated data for decision making, improve essential integrated health-care services including sexual and reproductive health, and provide incentives to retain the national health workers in order to achieve the universal health coverage in LDCs with a special emphasis on primary health care as a cornerstone of a sustainable health system for all in LDCs.

68. We also commit to supporting the strengthening of food systems in LDCs, including using holistic, all-hazard and One Health approaches, so they deliver better outcomes for people's health and nutrition, alongside the health of animals, plants and ecosystems, while also being more resilient and sustainable in the face of climate change and biodiversity loss. This includes making safe, sufficient and nutritious foods more available, affordable and accessible and creating more enabling food environments. We welcome The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) voluntary guidelines on food systems and nutrition.

69. We reaffirm the decision of the Council for TRIPS on the Extension of the Transition Period Under Article 66.1 of the TRIPS Agreement for LDCs Members for Certain Obligations With Respect to Pharmaceutical Products until 1 January 2033 and the decision of the Council for TRIPS on the Transition Period Under Article 66.1 of the TRIPS Agreement until 1 July 2034, and developed country Members' commitment to provide incentives to enterprises and institutions in their territories for the purposes of promoting and encouraging technology transfer to LDCs as obliged under Article 66.2 of the TRIPS Agreement, and encourage the voluntary transfer of

technology on mutually agreed terms with a view to enabling LDCs to produce life-saving medicines including the vaccines for COVID-19.

70. We commit to providing necessary support to LDCs to help birth registration for all newborns in LDCs and the provision of a national legal identity to them.

Investing in youth

71. In 2020, 66.9 per cent of the population was below 30 years old. By 2030 one in five of the youth in the world will be born in the LDCs. In 2019, more than one in five of the world's youth were not in employment, education or training (NEET), almost unchanged since 2005. Since young women were already twice as likely to be unemployed and not in education nor training than young men, and as women have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, the COVID-19 crisis is likely to worsen the NEET gaps among youth.

72. *Targets:*

- i. Ensure, by 2030, that all youth achieve literacy and numeracy
- ii. Ensure access to lifelong digital learning opportunities for skills development.
- iii. Increase youth participation and inclusion in decision making processes.
- iv. Increase access to safe and healthy working conditions, decent work opportunities, knowledge and skills for all youth in the LDCs'
- v. Promote entrepreneurial training to youth including through financial and technical assistance.

We commit to taking the following actions:

73. We commit to strengthen youth participation mechanisms to facilitate young people's meaningful engagement, especially young women and youth in vulnerable situations, in policies and activities that enhance sustainable development efforts. We will increase youth involvement in national sustainable development coordination councils, working with national youth councils, expanding the United Nations Youth Delegate Programme and other opportunities for youth representation, as appropriate, and ensuring that young people contribute to the implementation and review of the Programme of Action.

74. We commit to adopting an inclusive results-based and employment-generating approach to development planning and implementation in accordance with national priorities. We commit to ensuring fluency, including digital fluency, life-long learning opportunities, appropriate training including vocational training, creativity, entrepreneurship skills, and best opportunities for full employment and decent work for all people, especially young women and men in the LDCs. We commit to supporting the LDCs to reform and strengthen equitable and efficient education systems to allow for the development of skills and talents that are consistent with the demands of the national and global job markets, which include preparing young people for frontier technologies and the new digital age. We also commit to strengthen national legislative frameworks, in accordance with international labor standards.

Water, sanitation and hygiene

75. The proportion of the population with access to safe drinking water services was 64.6 per cent in 2018, with 84.1 per cent access in urban areas compared to 55 per cent of the population with access in rural areas. Access to basic sanitation services remains very low in the LDCs at an average 34% of the population, in particular in rural areas.

76. Target:

- i. Achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water, and access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all in LDCs by 2030.

We commit to taking the following actions:

76. Reaffirming the importance of regional and international cooperation for safe drinking water and sanitation, we commit to expanding international cooperation and capacity-building support, for accelerating access to inclusive, affordable and climate- resilient water and sanitation services and improving institutional capacity and increasing access to technology to develop water and sanitation infrastructure in the LDCs and develop water- and sanitation-related activities and programmes, including development and implementation of integrated water resources management interventions and wastewater treatment solutions. We also commit to providing access to safe and affordable drinking water, adequate sanitation and hygiene facilities for all with particular attention to women and girls in terms of the provision of safe and affordable drinking water, adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene services, which include menstrual hygiene and services for schools, health facilities and other public spaces.

Urbanization and shelter

77. On average, almost 60 percent of the urban population in LDCs live in slums, where conditions carry especially high risks, due to overcrowding, limited access to water and sanitation, insufficient waste management, inadequate rainwater drainage system, poor health-care systems and a lack of other basic services. Financing sustainable urbanization remains a challenge in LDCs. Sustainability of funding at the municipal level through additional resources is key to supporting the investment needs of growing cities in LDCs.

78. Targets:

- i. By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services.
- ii. By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport system for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport.

We commit to take the following actions:

79. We reaffirm our commitment to provide financial and technical support to LDCs to strengthen government housing agencies, including at the local level, and to ensure improved access to land, as per national legislation; affordable housing and basic services; and upgraded

slums; and sustainable transport and communication systems for all. In this regard, we further reaffirm the need to take account of the special needs of LDCs devastated by natural and man-made hazards and conflict.

80. We commit to supporting LDCs, including through financial and technical assistance, in building sustainable, culturally sensitive and resilient housing utilizing local materials and increasing affordable housing, including by leveraging public-private partnerships and sharing good practices among LDCs.

Migration and mobility

81. We recognize that migrants make positive contributions to inclusive growth and sustainable development in their countries of origin, transit, and destination, and to the response and recovery to the crisis caused by COVID-19. We duly acknowledge that migrants face significant barriers to safe and secure movement and livelihoods, which in turn expose them to additional risks and vulnerabilities.

82. *Targets:*

- i. Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.
- ii. Enhance the positive contribution of migrants for inclusive growth and sustainable development.
- iii. Invest in skills development of migrants and facilitate mutual recognition of skills, qualification and competences.
- iv. Ensure inclusive access to basic social (education, nutrition, health-care) and protection services particularly for migrants in vulnerable situations, in line with national policies and legislation and international obligations.

We commit to take the following actions:

83. We recommit to cooperating internationally to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration involving full respect for human rights and the humane treatment of migrants regardless of migration status, and to supporting countries of origin, transit and destination in the spirit of international cooperation, taking into account national circumstances. In this regard, we recognize the positive contributions of migrants to inclusive growth and sustainable development in their countries of origin, transit and destination, and in the response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. We take note of national policy measures and good practices to facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration, and we note the decision to convene the first official meeting of the International Migration Review Forum under the auspices of the General Assembly in 2022.

84. We commit to promoting inclusive access to basic social and protection services particularly for migrants and refugee children and youth, in line with national policies and legislations and international obligations. We intend to coordinate and cooperate at all levels, as appropriate, to provide vital services, especially equal access to education, which is a human right,

and is critical to equipping them with the necessary life-saving and -enhancing knowledge and skills.

85. We encourage investing in innovative solutions that facilitate mutual recognition of skills, qualifications and competences of migrant workers at all skills levels, and promote demand-driven skills development to optimize the employability of migrants in formal labour markets in countries of destination and in countries of origin upon return, as well as to ensure decent work in labour migration.

86. We encourage appropriate steps to ensure full, equal and meaningful participation of migrants in the development of local solutions and opportunities, as well as efforts to improve public perceptions of migrants and migration and to address the special situation and vulnerability of migrant women and girls, particularly migrant women employed in the informal economy and in less skilled work, to abuse and exploitation, underlining in this regard the obligation of States to protect, respect and fulfil the human rights of all migrants.

87. We invite the international community and all relevant stakeholders, without prejudice to ongoing support, to cooperate and mobilize resources and expertise, including through financial and in-kind assistance, as well as direct aid to host countries, refugee populations, and countries of origin of refugees, including LDCs, with a view to enhancing the capacity of and reducing the heavy burden borne by countries and communities hosting refugees and displaced persons in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations while fully respecting the humanitarian principles of humanity, independence, neutrality and impartiality for humanitarian action.

88. We commit to designing and implementing policies and measures supporting the outward and inward mobility of artists and cultural professionals from/to LDCs, where no suitable pathway exists, including South-South mobility, as a key enabler for vibrant and dynamic cultural and creative industries.

Good and effective governance at all levels

89. Many LDCs have made progress in governance in the past decade. However, more needs to be done. Sustainable development cannot be realized without peace and security; and peace and security will be at risk without sustainable development. Three out of four LDCs are in situations affected by conflict and post-conflict situations. Conflict affected LDCs require context specific approaches to address poverty, security and governance in an integrated manner. In 2018, 33 million forcibly displaced people originated from LDCs, which is a growing problem negatively affecting the governance situation in their respective countries of origin. The average e-government development index developed by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs for the delivery of public services in LDCs increased from 0.23 in 2010 to 0.34 in 2020 but remains below the world average of 0.6.

90. We recognize the importance of enhancing good governance at all levels, by strengthening democratic processes, institutions and the rule of law; increasing efficiency, coherence, transparency and participation; protecting and promoting human rights; and reducing corruption

and strengthen least developed country Governments' capacity to play an effective role in their economic and social development.

91. We reaffirm the importance of the principle of sovereign equality enshrined in Article 2.1 of the United Nations Charter. Broadening and strengthening the voice and participation of LDCs in international economic decision-making, norm-setting and global economic governance is related to SDG Target 10.6.

92. We reaffirm our continued support for strengthened and effective participation of LDCs in the global decision-making processes in the economic, social, and environmental fields.

93. **Targets:**

- i. Strengthen good governance and the rule of law at all levels.
- ii. Provide continued support for strengthened and effective voice and participation of LDCs in relevant international forums.
- iii. Step up the fight against corruption and illicit financial flows.
- iv. Build up efficient institutions of public administration.
- v. Strengthen justice institutions and the rule of law.

We commit to taking the following actions:

94. We commit to strengthening good governance, democratic processes, and the rule of law by ensuring transparent and accountable governance, equal access to justice and independent judicial institutions, based on respect for human rights, gender equality and the empowerment of those experiencing poverty, marginalization or vulnerability, especially women and girls. We also commit to increased democratic participation, enhancing institutional capacity at all levels and strengthening civil society. We will also strengthen efforts to fight corruption, bribery and money-laundering, the illegal transfer of funds and other illicit activities by strengthening anti-corruption and other laws and regulations and their effective enforcement.

95. We commit to supporting LDCs in the establishment of e-government services, digital government solutions, services and applications to facilitate access to public sector offices and services, while providing for an encompassing protection of personal data and disseminate key information about laws, regulations and Government activities to citizens.

96. We commit to ensuring that the LDCs are well represented in the decision-making and governance structures of international organizations, as appropriate. We also commit to providing continued support for strengthened and effective voice and participation of LDCs in international dialogue and action on development, as well as in decision- and rulemaking and standard- and norm-setting processes in all areas affecting their development, and in relevant international forums.

97. We commit to promoting policy coherence and coordination of international financial, trade and development institutions, processes and mechanisms, taking into account the diversified and special development needs and challenges of LDCs.

Building and sustaining peace for sustainable development

98. Twenty-four of the 46 LDCs had active conflicts in 2019. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development emphasizes the link between peace, security, stability, and sustainable development. Peace, security, development, human rights, and humanitarian efforts are complementary and need to reinforce one another. Greater cooperation, coherence, coordination and complementarity among development, disaster risk reduction, humanitarian action and sustaining peace, is fundamental to most efficiently and effectively addressing needs and attaining the Sustainable Development Goals. We recognize the positive role that sustainable development can play in mitigating drivers of conflicts, disaster risks, humanitarian crises and complex emergencies, and also recognizes that a comprehensive whole-of-system response, including promoting respect for cultural diversity contributes to preventing violent extremism, as and when conducive to terrorism, while the significance of culture in the lives of communities makes its continuity essential for recovery and resilience in the wake of disasters. Also supporting and building partnerships with and between conflict-affected LDCs, through sustained and predictable resources, remains a critical for achieving peaceful and inclusive societies.

99. Targets:

- i. Build durable peace and ensure stability, security, and sustainable, inclusive and resilient development in LDCs.
- ii. Foster peaceful, just, and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence.
- iii. Strengthen multilateral dialogue and cooperation to prevent conflicts and ensure peaceful solutions to existing conflicts.
- iv. Promote increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and in mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict.

100. We commit to ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation of women at all levels and stages of decision-making, and in all areas related to peace and security, including peace processes and mediation efforts, conflict prevention and resolution, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and relief and recovery and to recognize women's leadership therein, noting that women's participation in peace negotiations is likely to increase the durability and quality of peace and that mainstreaming women's meaningful participation and leadership in conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding is essential.

We commit to take the following actions:

101. We must redouble our efforts to resolve and or prevent conflict and commit to strengthening support for LDCs affected by fragility and conflict to address root causes of conflict, country-specific needs and situations, including broad-based, inclusive and rapid socio-economic development with a special focus on rebuilding better national institutions and capacity, rebuilding critical infrastructure and generating productive employment and decent work for all.

102. We commit to building peaceful, just and inclusive societies that provide equal access to justice and that are based on respect for human rights (including the right to development), cultural diversity and pluralism, public access to information on effective rule of law and good governance

at all levels and on transparent, effective and accountable institutions. We will ensure that women effectively and meaningfully participate, on equal terms with men, in the design, implementation, follow-up and evaluation of policies and activities related to conflict prevention, peace mediation, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction.

103. We commit to increasing the predictability of aid and making more effective use of global and country level funds for peacebuilding and state building to achieve sustainable development. We also encourage bilateral donors and multilateral institutions to scale up access to instruments supporting investment in fragile contexts. We shall work on providing humanitarian aid in coordination with a long-term sustainable framework, contributing to sustainable development, productive investment and therefore contributing to building and consolidating peace.

II. Leveraging the power of science, technology, and innovation to fight against multidimensional vulnerabilities and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals

104. We acknowledge the critical importance that science, technology, and innovation, including inclusive and enabling innovation eco-system, environmentally sound technologies and information and communications technologies can have in the pursuit of achieving the SDGs. They can also play a key role in accelerating the pace of economic diversification and transformation, and improving productivity and competitiveness, in a way that maximizes benefits for people, planet and prosperity as well as enabling the full participation of LDCs in the global economy. We underscore the urgent need to accelerate investment in the development and scaling of innovation and technology solutions for the most pressing problems that LDCs face across economic, social and environmental fields that supports LDCs' digital transition and strengthen efforts to bridge digital divides, including between rural and urban, and between women and men and build an open, free and secure digital world. We call for strengthened international cooperation to support least developed countries in strengthening science, technology and innovation, including by providing financial contributions for investment in information and communications technology infrastructure. We also urge the strengthening of digital literacy and skills, as part of efforts to bridge digital and knowledge divides, as a prerequisite for inclusive participation in the digital economy. We also acknowledge the potential of the Fourth Industrial Revolution to raise global income levels and improve the quality of life for populations around the world, while at the same time, presenting the risk of accelerating inequality within and between societies should gains be inequitably distributed.

105. We express concern that despite advances in science, technology, and innovation, significant gaps remain in STI deployment between LDCs and the rest of the world. We are also concerned that there are serious gaps, especially in access to and capacities to adopt technologies by LDCs. LDCs still face substantial structural challenges in building human and institutional capacities in the field of digital innovation.

106. During the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action over the period 2011-2020, LDCs faced significant and persistent lags in major indicators related to science, technology, and innovation. According to the Global Innovation Index (GII) rankings of 2020, nine of the 21 LDC economies improved their rankings, while eleven of the LDCs covered in the GII went down the ranks. The ratio of research and development expenditure in LDCs as a share of gross domestic

product was 0.6 per cent or less between 2011-2017, compared with around 2 per cent of developed countries' much larger gross domestic product. According to the data compiled by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), from 2010 to 2018, the number of patent applications filed by LDCs residents has doubled, from 835 to 1,634. But, as a share of patents globally, the figure is almost zero. The LDCs published only 11 journal articles for every 1 million people in 2018.

Key Action Areas

Access to modern technologies for sustainable development. Building human capital, infrastructure, and institutions to reap the benefits of the Fourth Industrial Revolution

107. We express concern that LDCs with limited infrastructure, human and institutional capacities and limited internet access are unable to participate and benefit from the modern technologies, including financial technologies, and the ICT revolution. During the period of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action, internet access in LDCs increased to 19 per cent in 2019 from about 5 per cent in 2011. Despite this progress, there are growing digital divides both within and among countries including gender digital divides, and rural-urban divides, among others. These divides result from low internet and broadband coverage especially in rural and remote areas, the costs of using the internet, lack of locally relevant content and lack of relevant digital skills in LDCs. Approximately 800 million people in LDCs do not have access to Internet and have no possibility of participating economic, political, social or cultural activities online. Without expansion in national digital infrastructure, the risk of LDCs being locked into the low-equilibrium trap is likely to be accentuated.

108. LDCs often lack sufficient technical resources, organizational infrastructure, and expertise to reap the benefits of digital growth or address related challenges. They lack effective cybersecurity strategies or best practices, incident response functions, cybersecurity education or training for cybersecurity professionals, and related research and development activities.

109. *Targets:*

- i. Substantially increase investment from all sources in research and development, as well as human, and institutional capacity for LDCs building within an international enabling environment.
- ii. Increase investments for adequate digital infrastructure to support sustainable and inclusive digital development including for e-learning, e-governance, and e-commerce.
- iii. Promote transfer of technology on mutually agreed terms including digital and environmentally sound technologies to LDCs.
- iv. Promote the development of effective, balanced, inclusive and enabling ecosystems for innovation and creativity in LDCs.
- v. Each LDC will establish and strengthen a national science institute to promote local innovations, research, design, and development, including in emerging technologies.
- vi. Move away from low value-added natural resources and low-technology products to higher value-added manufactures, and higher-technology products.

- vii. Build human capital through skills development, including digital skills and literacy, and expand professional competencies.
- viii. Mitigate negative impacts of emerging, new and disruptive technologies.

We commit to take the following actions:

110. We commit to supporting LDCs in formulating comprehensive national regulatory frameworks, quality, reliable sustainable and resilient physical infrastructure and inclusive digital ecosystems and formulating effective policies on STI, trade, investment, industry, employment and education that accelerates the implementation of SDGs, reduce all types of inequalities, and build resilience against shocks.

111. We commit to providing universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries, addressing the challenges associated with affordability in internet access to ensure benefits of new technologies are available to all, and promoting an enabling environment for digital development, access, and productive usage for LDCs through international support, as well as transparent, predictable, independent and non-discriminatory regulations and promotion of competitive market so that operators compete for low-use customers through a variety of internet plans that cater to different income levels and improve rural coverage through universal service funds.

112. We commit to identifying underserved communities, and support LDCs to integrate a strategic approach to inclusive and sustainable models of last-mile connectivity and national broadband plans in order to promote digital access for the poor, excluded and those in vulnerable situations including women and girls. We commit to helping LDCs build their digital innovation capacity in order to navigate future technological changes and to ensure sustainable capacity and leverage the workforce, promote access to technological knowledge, and nurture competitive industries power.

113. We commit to supporting LDCs to build capacity and a framework to scale up development, deployment, and sustainable utilization of emerging technologies for the SDGs and incorporate them into agriculture, manufacturing and services sectors.

114. We commit to strengthening the science-policy interface and expanding LDCs knowledge and understanding of and access to new technology by building stronger partnerships with academies of science, universities, labs, innovation incubators, and private sector entities at the forefront of this technological change including those located in developed countries. We underline the need to consider the current and potential impacts of new and emerging technologies on the environment, the labour market, livelihoods and society.

115. We commit to enhancing LDCs' cybersecurity capabilities to mitigate against cyberthreats and ensure enhanced protection of their national critical infrastructure, including the critical ICT infrastructure, thereby increasing cyber resilience and making the cyber ecosystem more secure, including for women and children, to serve national priorities and maximize socio-

economic benefits, and underline that the same human rights that people have offline must be protected online.

116. We commit to enhancing LDCs' cybersecurity awareness to better protect all people, including inclusion of those in vulnerable situations, such as children, youth, elderly, women, and persons with disabilities. We also commit to supporting LDCs to develop their cybersecurity capacity development programs, including primary, secondary, and tertiary education and industry professional training on technical and managerial skills, with the inclusion of women and youth in the cybersecurity field.

117. We commit to providing necessary financial and technical support to LDCs to establish and strengthen national and regional science institutes to increase their capacity for research and development in science, technology and innovations and promote adaptation and application of modern technologies for domestic uses. We also commit to promote local innovation capabilities of LDCs for inclusive and sustainable economic development by providing enhanced technical support and assistance to enable stakeholders in the LDCs to leverage intellectual property successfully for growth, competitiveness and development, and bringing together local scientific, vocational and engineering knowledge. We commit to addressing gender inequality by enhancing participation and leadership of women and girls in the design, development and deployment of science, technology and innovation activities.

118. We commit to supporting LDCs to move away from low value-added natural resources and low-technology products to higher value-added and higher-technology products; and more effective integration into Global Value Chains (GVCs) to build productive capacities, diversify their export matrix and gain a greater share in the emerging digital economy.

119. We call upon Member States and the United Nations development system, and encourage other stakeholders to facilitate improved level of participation of scientists and engineers from LDCs in international collaborative research, STI projects; and to strengthen their support for the different science, technology and innovation partnerships with LDCs in primary, secondary and higher education, vocational education and continuing education; and to promote business opportunities for the private sector; science, technology and innovation infrastructure.

Science, Technology, and Innovation for development and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and building resilience against emerging challenges

120. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance of strong data and science systems in tackling major threats. We acknowledge that STI offers an opportunity for LDCs to recover sustainably and inclusively from the COVID-19 pandemic, reduce risks and strengthen resilience to future systemic shocks and crises and emerging challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the pressing need for LDCs to elevate the application of science, technology, innovation and digital solutions at both policy and operational levels.

121. *Targets:*

- i. Support LDC efforts to significantly improve STI infrastructure and innovation capacities in LDCs by 2031.

- ii. Ensure universal and affordable access to, and meaningful use of, internet by all in the LDCs by 2030.
- iii. Facilitate expansion of broadband connectivity in LDCs to bridge the digital divide.
- iv. Encourage investment in MSMEs that facilitate access to the internet and digital services.
- v. Promote productive capacity and competitiveness in the LDCs through technology-driven entrepreneurship.
- vi. Develop competitive digital innovation ecosystems resilient to future pandemic and fit for purpose of LDCs.

We commit to take the following actions:

122. We commit to bridging the STI divide and providing financial and technical support and technology transfer on mutually agreed terms to LDCs including through South-South and triangular cooperation to help ensure that all LDCs can engage effectively in sustainable and resilient development that will also protect the economies, systems and populations, in particular the poor and those in vulnerable situations.

123. We will strive to increase investment in education, including digital literacy, skills and e- learning, and to improving education and training, including lifelong learning endeavors in LDCs, especially in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics to close the digital divides, including ‘rural-urban, youth-older persons and gender digital divides’. We will enhance collaboration in research, data and knowledge sharing to cope with the immediate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and strengthen resilience. We will provide enhanced support to the relevant stakeholders in LDCs in increasing their knowledge and understanding on intellectual property, know-how and technology transfer.

124. We will provide enhanced funding for developing innovative solutions relevant to the local context and in response to specific LDCs problems, aiming at benefitting those in vulnerable situations, leaving no one behind, including in the areas of agriculture and food production, renewable energy and development, infrastructure development, disaster risk reduction, environmental protection and climate resilience.

125. We support the UN Technology Bank as a focal point for LDCs to strengthen their science, technology and innovation capacity towards building sustainable productive capacities and promoting structural economic transformation. We support the UN Technology Bank for LDCs to strengthen their STI capacity for structural transformation and productive capacity development. We invite Member States, as well as international organizations, foundations and the private sector to provide voluntary financial and in-kind resources to, the United Nations Technology Bank to enhance its capacity and effectiveness. We also decide to strengthen collaboration among Governments, the private sector and academia to advance STI research and development, build inclusive digital economies and bridge the digital divides including by facilitating technology transfer on mutually agreed terms.

126. We express our appreciation to the host country, Turkey for the full support given to the Bank since its establishment in June 2018.

Promoting private sector engagement, digitalization and broadband connectivity

127. We aim to achieve sufficient level of digital skills and literacy to ensure digital inclusion, enables digital development that support both basic infrastructure development and human capital accumulation. We take note of the Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation and acknowledge its vision of a more inclusive, equitable and safe digital future for all.

128. *Targets:*

- i. By 2030, all people in LDCs should have safe, affordable and meaningful digital connectivity.
- ii. By 2025 broadband-internet user penetration should reach 35 per cent in LDCs for both men and women.
- iii. By 2031 double the broadband-internet user penetration in LDCs to reach 70 per cent mark for both men and women.
- iv. Increase finance from all sources to LDCs to support the development of domestic digital, data, and AI infrastructure.

We commit to taking the following actions:

129. We commit to enhancing multi-stakeholder support to strengthen digital capacity-building for LDCs to fully harness open, accessible, and secure digital technologies, while especially encouraging Governments to develop robust and effective regulatory framework and policies including to promote cyber security, accessible digital infrastructure, products and services, and digital capacity-building.

130. We commit to promoting partnerships with the private sector to leverage fully their capacity for innovation and encourage greater investment in STI for development, including sustainable network infrastructure and practical digital capacity-building initiatives in LDCs. We encourage and support the private sector, particularly major technology companies, to work closely with public, educational, research-focused, and development agencies to facilitate technology transfer on mutually agreed terms, leverage research and innovation that meets LDCs needs and build the necessary capacities and technical competencies of LDCs.

131. We call upon the development partners to enhance their support to LDCs to build their broadband infrastructure, connectivity, access and use of digital technologies; incentivize investors to invest in broadband infrastructure in LDCs to meet their investment gaps including through leveraging existing investment guarantee arrangements, such as MIGA; and support capacity building programmes for LDCs to access to existing facilities.

132. We recognize the untapped potential of LDCs' creative industries to create full and productive employment and decent work, support entrepreneurship and innovation, encourage the formalisation and growth of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, promote social inclusion and eradicate poverty. We commit to protect and promote the status of the artists and cultural professionals through policies and measures, and encourage artists' inclusion in the digital ecosystem, including through appropriate intellectual property frameworks.

III. Structural transformation as a driver of prosperity

133. The initiation of a sustained process of structural transformation remains a critical challenge for LDCs. Their economies are largely undiversified, highly dependent on commodities and external assistance and at the bottom of regional and global value chains. The high-productivity manufacturing and services have miniscule contribution to gross domestic product in LDCs. Thus country-specific industrial policy is necessary. While the agriculture sector employs more than half the population, it is characterized by subsistence practices with low levels of value addition per worker, and inadequate access to both national, regional and global markets.

134. The services sector directly contributes to structural transformation. However, it contributes less than half of GDP in many LDCs, the bulk of tertiary employment is concentrated in less knowledge-intensive services and participation in global export of commercial services is negligible. We underline the importance of country-specific policies supported by an international enabling environment to promote, establish and enhance a domestic services sector.

135. For LDCs to fully utilize their potential, we commit to promoting the achievement of inclusive and sustainable structural transformation capable of increasing productivity and growth, reducing their disaster risk, including exposure and vulnerabilities to existing and future external shocks. We will create decent full employment and decent jobs, eradicate poverty and ensure inclusive and sustainable development.

Key Action Areas

Productive capacity building

136. Many LDCs economies feature limited productive capacities, which constrains their ability to produce efficiently and effectively, to diversify their economies and to create sustainable and productive employment. This challenge translates into binding supply constraints and ultimately into weak export and economic potentials and limited productive employment generation and social development prospects. To build and enhance productive capacities at the country level, each LDC with the support of development partners is encouraged to undertake National Productive Capacities Gap Assessments to analyze the key constraints in building productive capacities and achieving SDGs.

137. *Targets:*

- i. Generate quality, employment opportunities for all and increase labour productivity by 50 per cent by 2031 with particular attention to the integration of women, young people, and those in vulnerable situations.
- ii. Substantially increase economic and export diversification with a view to reaching the level of other developing countries in export concentration by 2030.
- iii. Promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and, by 2030, double industry's share of employment and gross domestic product in LDCs.

We commit to taking the following actions:

138. We commit to promoting and supporting the formulation of national strategies aimed at increasing decent employment, diversification, economic transformation, value addition, efficiency, and competitiveness in the manufacturing, agriculture, and services sectors, as well as life-cycle approaches, with a cross-cutting focus on sustainability; and call for enhancing financial and technical support as well as policy space from all sources to facilitate the implementation of these strategies.

139. LDCs commit to create a conducive policy environment for industrial diversification and value addition, including strengthening efforts to accelerate capital accumulation, building institutional and human capacities and knowledge development. We support improved data collection to better understand productivity levels and trends and better inform policies to drive productivity shifts.

140. We encourage innovative solutions, entrepreneurship, and the use of modern, sustainable, cost-effective, and locally adapted technologies and practices, with an emphasis on the manufacturing, agriculture, and services sectors, including tourism, information and communications, and finance, and call for sharing of scientific knowledge and innovative technologies on mutually agreed terms.

141. We take note of the call for enhancing support towards establishing or upgrading quality assurance and standards of products and services in LDCs to meet international standards.

142. We call on member states to increase financial and technical support to LDCs in promoting family farming as well as the development of small, medium and large agribusinesses and industries with sustainable value-addition along the agricultural value-chain. We commit to implementing science- and evidence-based and data-driven agricultural practices that increase resilience and sustainable productivity; help maintain ecosystems; strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding, and other disasters; improve food security and reduce malnutrition in all its forms. We decide to improve access to agricultural research, sustainable innovation and practices, including agroecological and other innovative approaches and sustainable technologies to support adaptation and, where possible, mitigation.

143. We commit to promote micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises, including those run and owned by women entrepreneurs, by supporting full and equal access to financial services and products strengthening the legal framework, especially for Micro-enterprises, supporting them to enter into national, regional and global value chains and support them for digitalization and tapping the potentials of e-commerce for enhanced competitiveness in the global digital economy. We intend to devise a rural agri-commodity based value chain upgrade through affordable finance, with participation of private enterprises, and thereby unleash entrepreneurship at the farm level.

144. We will promote increased market opportunities and full and equal access to financial services and products for micro, small and medium sized enterprises and entrepreneurs from LDCs in order to create sustainable growth and decent jobs, particularly for women and youth through their beneficial integration in national, regional and global value chains. Structural transformation

of LDCs requires a conducive business ecosystem with strong and well-equipped business support organizations and business friendly policies, regulatory frameworks and export strategies to facilitate MSMEs access to markets. We will support and empower MSMEs and entrepreneurs in LDCs with a view to bringing about inclusive growth and prosperity.

145. We reaffirm the importance of human capacity as a critical factor for the utilization of other productive capacities and call for increasing responsible public and private investment, including through international cooperation, in human capacity development and skills development to increase productive capacities and the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for full and productive employment and decent jobs, and entrepreneurship.

Infrastructure Development

146. LDCs continue to face huge quality infrastructure gaps in particular regarding access to energy, transport and information and communication technologies and lack the capacity to maintain existing infrastructure and fully address the gaps. The G20 Principles for Quality Infrastructure Investment promote enhanced efforts and support towards quality infrastructure development consistent with international standards, including through improved coordination between public and private investment, which is fundamental to close the infrastructure gap.

a) Transport

147. Despite efforts made, LDCs continue to face inefficient, unreliable physical transport infrastructure, due to high costs, lack of investment, poor maintenance, and lack of institutional capacity and stable policy and regulatory environments. The establishment of a safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport system including rail transport, road transport, seaports, and air transport as well as transport facilitation is critical for LDCs to reduce transport costs, facilitate trade, link to regional and international markets and enhance competitiveness.

148. Target:

- i. Significantly expand, upgrade, and maintain and get access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport infrastructure and national and cross-boundary connectivity and ensure that all forms of transport infrastructure are maintained through closing the missing links, and strengthening the institutional capacities to manage transport services.

We commit to take the following actions:

149. We commit to develop and implement comprehensive national and local policies for safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport infrastructure development and maintenance, encompassing all modes of transportation. We intend to ensure sustainable, climate-resilient transport infrastructure that can withstand the impacts of disasters, climate change and rising sea levels, and intend to increase electrification, and access to public transport. In this regard, we will be mobilizing domestic and international resources and share experiences on transport

infrastructure development and financing, thereby building institutional capacities and strengthening transport services.

150. We call on development partners, international organizations, regional development banks and the private sector through public-private partnerships and direct investment to provide financial and technical support to the efforts of LDCs in transport infrastructure development and maintenance. In this regard, we stress the importance of developing necessary policies and regulatory frameworks and strengthening enabling environments to promote private sector involvement in infrastructure development including enhancing technical assistance and capacity building. We also intend to leverage new and innovative financing sources and new funding mechanisms, including blended finance and green bonds.

b) Energy

151. Despite the importance of access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy to achieve structural transformation, LDCs face challenges at three levels in particular, generation, transmission, and utilization of energy. In addition, they lack the capacity to mobilize the large amounts of financing that are required to invest in major power generation projects. Only about 53 per cent of the population in LDCs has access to energy, with rates of access in rural areas of only around 10 per cent in some countries. We recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the importance of affordable, reliable sustainable and modern energy access, from health services to the use of information and communication technologies. Resources deployed for COVID-19 responses and immediate health priorities have further constrained the already limited fiscal capacity and increase the risk of energy insecurity in these countries.

152. The LDCs committed to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 in the context of resources being available to do so. The pathway to net-zero emissions requires a substantial increase in the share of renewable energy and in clean energy technologies in all three main end-use categories: electricity, transport, and heating/cooling. Despite immense potential of the renewable energy sector in LDCs, these countries rarely benefit from larger financing schemes to the same extent as more prosperous developing countries. We are concerned that 15 LDCs are at the top 20 access-deficit countries in the world and in 2019, the LDCs attracted only 20 per cent of international commitments in support of clean energy to developing countries.

153. We welcome the call of Parties² to accelerate the development, deployment and dissemination of technologies, and the adoption of policies, to transition towards low-emission energy systems, including by rapidly scaling up the deployment of clean power generation and energy efficiency measures, including accelerating efforts towards the phasedown of unabated coal power and phase-out of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies, while providing targeted support to the poorest and most vulnerable in line with national circumstances and recognizing the need for support towards a just transition.

154. Access to clean cooking also remains a major concern in LDCs, although it increased to 17% in 2019, up from 11% in 2010. The majority of the people in LDCs are living in rural areas,

² UNFCCC and/or Paris Agreement

with access to clean fuel for cooking as low as 7% and several LDCs have overall access to clean cooking equal to or less than 5%.

155. *Targets:*

- i. By 2030, ensure universal access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy services
- ii. Double the generation of electricity per capita in LDCs by 2030
- iii. Increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the energy mix [SDG 7.2]
- iv. Double finance from all sources in support of clean and renewable energy; and enhance capacities in energy production, trade, and distribution in LDCs in line with SDG7
- v. By 2030, expand infrastructure and upgrade technology for supplying modern and sustainable energy services for all
- vi. Enhance technology transfer on mutually agreed terms to LDCs to accelerate transition to clean and renewable energy
- vii. By 2030, enhance international cooperation to facilitate access and promote investment in clean energy research and technology, and infrastructure, in accordance with Goal 7 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- viii. 50% of the annual financing flows to clean cooking and electricity access should be directed to the Least Developed Countries.

We commit to take the following actions:

156. We encourage doubling international public finance and the mobilization of resources from all sources to meet the urgent need for investments in power generation and transmission, including grid reinforcement and upgrading of technology, in order to provide affordable, modern, reliable and sustainable energy to all through improved generation, transmission and distribution facilities and enhanced energy efficiency in LDCs. We also commit to promoting scaled up and targeted support to LDCs in the implementation of the United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All, including the global plan of action for the Decade.

157. We aim to provide financial and technical support to LDCs on a priority basis to double generation of electricity per capita in LDCs by 2030 and increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the energy mix.

158. We commit to strengthening cooperation at the regional level to promote innovation and facilitate financing, support regional cross-border power grid connectivity to advance economic integration and sustainable development and share best practices and in this regard invites Governments to reinforce their energy interconnections, connecting regional energy markets and increasing energy security at the regional and global levels.

159. We commit to promoting women's full, equal and effective participation and leadership in the design and implementation of energy policies and programmes, mainstream a gender perspective in such policies and programmes and ensure women's full and equal access to and use of sustainable energy to enhance their economic and social empowerment, including employment and other income-generating opportunities.

160. We commit to promoting public and private investments to transition households to cleaner, more efficient, and sustainable cooking technologies and fuels, including through publicly supported technology innovation accelerators, with a focus on remote, poor and vulnerable households.

161. We commit to increasing the deployment of least-cost decentralized solutions, policy support, new business models and the sharing of best practices, including mini and micro-grids, stand-alone renewable energy systems, rooftop solar photovoltaic and storage, digitally enabled and fintech solutions and other technologies that can be directly linked to livelihood improvement and economic activities, especially in remote low-demand areas, can help to close the access gap and bridge the last mile.

162. We call upon LDCs to create enabling environment including appropriate regulatory frameworks and policy reforms to facilitate private sector investment as well as promoting attractive project pipelines. We also invite development partners; MDBs; and other international and regional organizations, including IRENA, International Solar Alliance and other relevant stakeholders to substantially increase their investments in LDCs, through simplified access process, in developing sustainable, reliable, modern, inclusive and equitable energy systems, including, inter alia, by strengthening energy systems through cross-border grid connections, as appropriate, and to consider incorporating decentralized renewable energy solutions in energy planning, as appropriate, and recognize that energy transition will take different paths in different parts of the world.

163. We commit to the development, dissemination, diffusion, transfer on mutually agreed terms, and application of environmentally sound technologies to tackle the energy access challenges of LDCs by identifying the specific needs of each country by mobilizing technical and financial assistance and tools to deploy affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy solutions. We emphasize in this context the urgent need to enhance international cooperation to facilitate access to clean energy research and technology, including renewable energy, energy efficiency and advanced and cleaner fossil-fuel technologies, and improved infrastructures for supplying affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

164. We commit to supporting the implementation of the Least Developed Countries Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Initiative for Sustainable Development (LDC REEEI) aiming at harnessing the renewable energy potentials across LDCs and promoting energy efficiency. We call upon development partners to provide resource allocations for LDC REEEI aligned efforts and activities across all LDCs.

Connecting to global and regional value chains, strengthening their services economy and trade

165. LDCs are faced with numerous challenges in their efforts to integrate into the regional and global value chains including limited industrial development; low level of productivity and diversification; lack of technology and structural transformation; limited access to trade finance; rules of origin and non-tariff barriers such as various quality standards.

166. **Target:**
- i. Significantly increase the value added and manufactured component of the LDCs exports, with the objective of integrating into the regional and global value chains.

We commit to take the following actions:

167. We call for greater integration of LDCs into the regional and global value chains to increase diversification and accelerate their structural economic transformation and sustainable development.

168. We commit to supporting LDCs to significantly increase their integration into the regional and global value chains with a view to enhancing their competitiveness, leap-frogging their development process and driving their productivity growth. In this regard, we will support LDCs to strengthen their productive capacity, export competitiveness, access to trade finance, skills transfer and connectivity, market access, trade facilitation and technology transfer on mutually agreed terms.

Support private sector development

169. A dynamic, broad-based, well-functioning and socially responsible private sector is a valuable instrument to sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth, access to goods and services, a source of tax revenues and to sustainable structural transformation. Structural constraints, such as infrastructural bottlenecks, limited access to finance, high operating and trading costs, limited human capital, limited ICT capacities and institutional constraints have limited the growth of the private sector in LDCs.

170. **Targets:**

- i. Create an enabling environment for private sector development supporting its further alignment with the SDGs.
- ii. Ensure full and equal access to financial services and products for MSMEs, including insurance, especially for women and improve financial and digital literacy.

We commit to take the following actions:

171. We commit to promoting an enabling business environment conducive to growth and development, the absence of corruption, a transparent and rules-based regulatory framework, simplifying business regulations and processes, reducing and streamlining administrative formalities, creating efficient national MSMEs support mechanisms, improving supply chain, facilitating access to market, reinforcing cooperation and building capacities to implement effective competition policies, and adopting open, transparent and clear regulatory frameworks for business and investment, with protection for property rights, land rights as appropriate and as per national circumstances and consistent with international legal frameworks. Where appropriate, we aim to strengthen regulatory frameworks to better align private sector incentives with public goals, foster long-term quality investment and ensure that private sector adopts sustainable practices.

172. We commit to fostering economic activity and ease of doing business for private companies by promoting domestic market and capital formation, economic clusters hubs/industry parks/export processing zones that remove obstacles to investments and infrastructure usage and enable simpler facilitation of business operations and trade and support LDCs in the implementation of such measures. We will also support MSMEs to enter into national, regional and global value chains by taking steps to close digital divides through financial support and access to appropriate digital tools and platforms connecting markets.

173. We commit to strengthening cooperation for cross-fertilization of experiences and dissemination of best practices that foster entrepreneurship, promote dialogue and contacts, and stimulate transfer of skills and technology, on mutually agreed terms.

174. We support provision of finance, including grant, technical assistance, seed funding, as well as concessional financing, from donor countries, UN entities, World Bank Group and IMF and the private sector, in order to leverage additional sources of finance for MSMEs to facilitate their growth and development. In this regard, we commit to promoting regular public-private sector dialogues.

IV. Enhancing international trade of least developed countries and regional integration

175. We recognize that LDCs can derive significant benefit from a universal, rules-based, open, transparent, predictable, inclusive, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization. Notwithstanding, the massive expansion of trade and investment in the last decades, LDCs face considerable challenges in effective integration into global trading system and benefitting from the opportunities afforded by international trade and global value chains.

176. We are concerned that the LDCs share in global merchandise exports stagnated over the past decade, remaining at 1 per cent. The Sustainable Development Goals target of doubling the LDCs' share of global exports by 2020 from 2011 - 2 per cent target, has not been met.

177. We are concerned that due to COVID-19, merchandise exports of LDCs fell by further 9.1 per cent compared to the global average decline of 7.7 per cent in 2020³. In 2020, the value of global services trade was down 35% year-on-year. Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) have been adversely impacted by the pandemic. Limited export diversification has heightened the vulnerability of LDCs to the impact of the pandemic on global trade. The crisis also highlighted the fundamental importance of trade in making essential goods and services available to countries and people in need.

178. We acknowledge that the share of total global exports of cultural goods from LDCs only accounted for a 0.5% share of total global exports both in 2005 and 2014. The potential of the cultural and creative sector to enhance LDCs participation in and benefit from new opportunities for dynamic growth in world trade remains largely untapped.

³ [WT/COMTD/LDC/W/69- OP 3.9

179. We are concerned that the rising protectionist tendencies are threatening to further weaken efforts on expansion of international trade and emphasize that bilateral and regional trade agreements should complement but not substitute the role of the World Trade Organization as the central governing body for global trade. Otherwise, international trade landscape could become increasingly polarized and fragmented in the coming decades which would be harmful for the LDCs.

180. We call members of World Trade Organization to fully and expeditiously implement all the decisions of the World Trade Organization Ministerial Meetings taken in favor of LDCs.

Key Action Areas

Duty-free and quota-free market access

181. We note that there have been progressive improvements since the adoption of the Istanbul Programme of Action on providing duty-free and quota-free market access to LDCs. WTO members adopted a DFQF decision at the Bali ministerial conference in 2013. Most of the developed country members grant either full or nearly full duty-free and quota-free market access, with gaps remaining in a limited number of markets and a few sectors. A number of developing country members have granted a significant degree of duty-free and quota-free market access to LDCs products, and a number of them have reached nearly full duty-free and quota-free coverage. LDCs need to be provided with increasingly greater market access in preference granting countries.

182. *Targets:*

- i. Facilitate market access for products of least developed countries, including by developing simple and transparent rules of origin applicable to imports from least developed countries, in accordance with the guidelines adopted by the WTO members at the Bali ministerial conference in 2013.
- ii. Significantly increase the exports of LDCs, in particular with a view to doubling⁴ the least developed countries' share of global exports by 2031.

We commit to take the following actions:

183. We call on all developed country WTO members and developing country WTO members declaring themselves in a position to do so to timely implement duty-free and quota-free market access on a lasting basis for all products originating from all LDCs, consistent with World Trade Organization decisions, which would facilitate the integration of LDCs producers in regional and Global Value Chains.

184. We reiterate our conviction that no country graduating from the least developed country category should have its development progress disrupted or reversed. [PP6, E/Res/2021/11] We welcome that the UN graduation process helps to ensure that no graduating country has its special

⁴ As per the review undertaken by the CDP in 2021 (E/2021/33), 16 LDCs are in different stages of graduation, thus a considerable number of LDCs are likely to graduate by 2031, which may lower the overall export figure of LDCs. This should be taken into account in assessments against the target.

and differential treatment measures and exemptions abruptly reduced. We invite development and trading partners to consider extending to the graduated country trade preferences previously made available as a result of least developed country status, or reducing them in a phased manner in order to avoid their abrupt reduction. We take note that the LDC group put forward various proposals at the WTO, pertaining to, among other things, trade-related challenges as well as those related to smooth transition of the countries graduating from the LDC category, and seek to further examine these issues.

185. We commit to fully meeting our transparency obligations on trade measures and meaningfully improving equitable access for all countries, especially LDCs, to safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines, including through facilitating technology transfer within the framework of multilateral rules and applicable international obligations, so as to encourage research and innovation while at the same time supporting licensing agreements and any other arrangements on mutually agreed terms in the short and medium-term, as well as any other long-term arrangements that help scale up manufacturing of vaccines and in a sustainable manner.

Preferential rules of origin

186. We note that considerable progress has been made towards ensuring that preferential rules of origin are simple and transparent and contribute to facilitating market access of imports from LDCs. World Trade Organization members adopted two decisions on preferential rules of origin for LDCs at the Ministerial Conferences in Bali in 2013 and in Nairobi in 2015. Almost all preference-granting members have submitted notifications of their preferential rules of origin requirements.

187. *Target:*

- i. Ensure preferential rules of origin applicable to imports from LDCs are transparent and simple and contribute to facilitating market access.

We commit to take the following actions:

188. We call on all developed country WTO members and developing country WTO members declaring themselves in a position to do so to facilitate market access for products of LDCs, including by applying simple and transparent preferential rules of origin applicable to imports from LDCs, in accordance with the guidelines adopted by WTO members at the Bali ministerial conference in 2013 and the decisions taken at the Nairobi ministerial conference in 2015. We call on preference-granting Members, who did not do so yet, to notify their LDC specific preferential rules of origin to enhance transparency.

189. We invite development partners to provide technical and financial assistance to LDCs to further scale up their legal and technical capacity to comply with sanitary and phytosanitary measures and technical barriers to trade provisions.

LDCs services waiver

190. We recognize that the agreements on trade in services enable liberalization of services across all modes of supply and help boost trade in services and attract investment as well as enable safe, regular and orderly mobility, including by removing barriers to the temporary movement of natural persons to supply services abroad, or “Mode 4” of trade in services. We note that efforts are being made to improve LDC participation in services trade. We note that 51 members (including individual EU member states) have notified their preferences under the LDCs Services Waiver. We note that multilateral commitments in this regard have been limited and conditioned by measures such as economic needs tests, quotas, or pre-employment requirements.

191. **Target:**

- i. Increase LDCs’ exports of services by fully implementing the WTO Ministerial Decision on the Operationalization of the Waiver Concerning Preferential Treatment to Services and Service Suppliers of LDCs. Encourage Members, who have not yet notified their preferences under the LDCs Services Waiver, to also do the same.

We commit to take the following actions:

192. We call upon the WTO members to take concrete measures including meaningful preferences for LDCs services and service suppliers in accordance with the WTO decisions in 2011, 2013 and 2015 on the operationalization of the LDCs services waiver and in response to the collective request of those countries and call for strengthening the domestic service capacity in LDCs through enhanced technical assistance and capacity building.

Technical assistance and capacity building including through aid for trade

193. We note that between 2011 and 2019, over USD 100 billion have been disbursed in aid for trade to support LDCs in strengthening infrastructure (61%), building productive capacity (38%) and enhancing trade policy and regulations (2%). After reaching a peak of USD 20 billion in 2018, aid-for-trade commitments to LDCs fell by 19% to USD 16.6 billion in 2019. Although Aid-for-Trade funding to LDCs has grown 13 per cent annually since 2006, reaching \$13.5 billion in 2018 and the pandemic threatens to slow or reverse this trend.

194. **Target:**

- i. Significantly increase aid for trade support going to LDCs, which is expected to double by 2031 from 2018 levels⁵.

We commit to taking the following actions:

195. We aim to increase the proportion of total Aid for Trade going to LDCs, provided according to development cooperation effectiveness principles, which is expected to double by 2031 from 2018 levels. We also call for increased support from multilateral development banks and the private sector to meet trade financing needs. We urge private and public sector actors to

⁵ Aid-for-Trade funding to LDCs has grown 13% annually since 2006, reaching \$13.5 billion in 2018
<https://trade4devnews.enhancedif.org/en/event-coverage/6-takeaways-wtos-aid-trade-stocktaking-event-least-developed-countries>]

work together to address trade finance gaps, by enabling a rapid transition to paperless trading and addressing regulatory constraints that hinder trade finance.

196. Acknowledging and building on achievements made so far, including by the Enhanced Integrated Framework and other agencies providing support to LDCs, we commit to providing trade-related assistance, financial and technical support to enhance the institutional and productive capacity of the LDCs, in line with the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind.

197. We note that 35 out of 46 LDCs, more than three quarters, are members of the World Trade Organization. Since 2011, six LDCs have successfully completed the accession process and joined the World Trade Organization. Currently, eight LDCs are at different stages of the World Trade Organization accession process.

198. *Target:*

- i. Ensure accession to the World Trade Organization of all LDCs committed to do so by the end of the current decade.

We commit to taking the following actions:

199. We call on WTO Members to fully implement the 2002 LDCs Accession Guidelines and 2012 General Council Decision "Addendum I," as the accession instruments for LDCs and refrain from seeking concessions and commitments beyond the benchmarks aiming at ensuring the accession of all LDCs into the WTO by next decade. We commit to supporting acceding LDCs meeting existing requirements and committed to acceding and pushing through the necessary domestic reforms in that respect to strengthen their human, institutional and regulatory capacities in trade policy and trade negotiations to ensure their accession.

200. We commit to providing appropriate support such as financial and technical support to LDCs to support the negotiations for the accession of LDCs to the WTO.

Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS)

201. We welcome the 23 January 2017 entry into force of the TRIPS Amendment aiming to facilitate access to medicines for countries having insufficient or no manufacturing capacities. We welcome that pursuant to the decision on the implementation of Article 66.2, developed Members have provided annual reports on incentives and planned actions under Article 66.2. We welcome that in 2021, the duration of the general transition period under Article 66.1 has been further extended until 1 July, 2034. Similarly, in 2015, the specific transition to implement or apply Sections 5 (patents) and 7 (protection of undisclosed information) of Part II of the TRIPS Agreement with respect to pharmaceutical products was extended until 1 January 2033 for LDCs.

202. *Target:*

- i. Support LDCs by providing incentives to enterprises and institutions in developed country member territories for the purpose of promoting and encouraging technology transfer to LDCs in order to enable them to create a sound and viable technological base.

We commit to taking the following actions:

203. We reiterate the importance of Article 66.2 of the TRIPS Agreement to provide incentives by developed country members to the enterprises and institutions in their territories for promoting technology transfer to enable LDCs to create a sound and viable technological base and take note of the recent discussions on this article, in particular on the meaning of “incentives to enterprises and institutions”.

204. We acknowledge the importance of the TRIPS flexibilities available to LDCs, including the extensions of the general transition period under Art. 66.1 of the TRIPS Agreement and of the transition period under Article 66.1 which provides that LDC Members will not be obliged, with respect to pharmaceutical products, to implement or apply Sections 5 (patents) and 7 (protection of undisclosed information) of Part II of the TRIPS Agreement or to enforce rights provided for under these Sections until 1 January 2033, or until such a date on which they cease to be an LDC Member, whichever date is earlier.

Agriculture and cotton

205. We take note of the progress made in reforming agricultural trade. We attach great importance to the ongoing discussions with a view to reducing trade distorting support in agriculture, including cotton in line with SDG2 commitments. We recognize the importance of food security and nutrition. We will engage constructively to continue negotiations, including on a permanent solution on the issue of public stockholding for food security purposes. We will work to advance the discussions on export restrictions including on foodstuff purchased by the World Food Programme.

206. Target: Correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural and cotton markets, including through elimination of all forms of agricultural export subsidies and disciplines on all export measures with equivalent effect, consistent with the Nairobi decision with a view to achieving the long-term objective of substantial progressive reductions in support and protection of agricultural products.

We commit to take the following actions:

207. We call for correcting and preventing trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural and cotton markets, including through the elimination of all forms of agricultural export subsidies and disciplines on all export measures with equivalent effect. We also call for better markets for small cotton farmers in developing and least developed countries and reaffirm the various commitments made on Cotton, the last of which was at the Tenth WTO Ministerial Conference in Nairobi.

WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA)

208. We note that while the current TFA implementation rate stands at 70.2 per cent for all World Trade Organization members, the implementation rate of LDCs is only 36.8 per cent, as of 10 June 2021. We also take note that 80 per cent of LDCs have already identified their technical assistance needs. We also note that there are several challenges for LDCs to implement the agreement primarily due to financial, technical, and regulatory capacity constraints.

209. **Target:**

- i. Fully implement the Trade Facilitation Agreement and provide assistance and support for capacity building of LDCs in this regard according to development cooperation effectiveness principles.

We commit to take the following actions:

210. We will implement the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) to speed up customs procedures; make trade easier, faster and cheaper; provide clarity, efficiency and transparency; reduce bureaucratic hurdles; and use technological advances.

211. We commit to supporting LDCs with the implementation of TFA, including assistance and support for capacity building to least developed countries to enable implementation of the agreement, consistent with the trade facilitation agreement especially for implementation of category C provisions based on the technical assistance requirement as notified by LDC members. We also commit to working together within the WTO, including through the ongoing quadrennial reviews of the TFA, to support implementation through coordination, experience sharing and transparency.

E-commerce

212. We note that the pandemic has highlighted the importance of digital technologies as tools for continuing economic activity during the crisis. E-commerce can take the form of business to business (B2B) or business to consumers (B2C) transactions combined with secure online mobile platforms and financial technology (fintech) solutions fundamentally and can profoundly reduce the matching costs by which buyers and suppliers can meet, connect and create profits within the country and across the borders and facilitate access to last mile producers and markets. This can speed-up economic adjustments to shocks like COVID-19 and many other profound economic, environmental, and geopolitical shocks that a country may face in the coming years. Despite huge potentials, LDCs have not been able to sufficiently benefit from the opportunities offered by the e-commerce due to lack of necessary digital infrastructure, logistical facilities, digital literacy and skills, and financial technology (fintech) solutions as well as regulatory and policy frameworks.

213. **Target:**

- i. Increase participation of LDCs in e-commerce by strengthening ICT infrastructure and building their human and institutional capacities to better support development of, and integrate into, digital value chains.

We commit to take the following actions:

214. We will contribute to strengthening e-commerce in LDCs by building digital eco-system and providing capacity building support. We urge development partners to provide additional and substantial support to LDCs to build and access to required infrastructure in energy, electricity, digital infrastructure; promote personal data protection; upgrade workforce skills, ensure affordable and reliable access to broadband and mobile networks and Wi-Fi connectivity, including in the last mile; facilitate mobile banking with low or no fee of digital payment; strengthen productive capacity and structural transformation along with transparent and fair regulations for promoting e-commerce and integration of LDCs in the global economy. We take note of the efforts of participants in the ongoing WTO Joint Statement Initiative on e-commerce, towards a high standard and commercially meaningful outcome that works for all to promote data flow with trust.

215. We take note of the discussions under the 1998 work programme on e-commerce and encourage all the WTO members to reinvigorate the work programme as per the spirit of its mandate and with a view to bridging the digital gaps among and within countries. We urge all development partners to enrich their support to address capacity constraints in e-commerce in the LDCs to enable them to participate in and benefit from the global trading system through e-commerce and digital economy which is much needed in the current situation of COVID-19 pandemic.

Special and Differential treatment

216. We call for the full implementation of the provisions of special and differential treatment for developing countries, in particular LDCs, in accordance with World Trade Organization agreements. We welcome the establishment of the monitoring mechanism to analyze and review all aspects of the implementation of special and differential treatment provisions, as agreed in Bali, with a view to strengthening them and making them more precise, effective and operational as well as facilitating integration of developing and least-developed World Trade Organization members into the multilateral trading system.

Regional integration

217. We underline that regional cooperation, including trade integration, and transit cooperation, can facilitate LDCs integration into the global trading system. We note that as of 1 February 2021, 339 Regional Trade Agreements were in force of which 42 are in Africa. Among others, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) present a major opportunity for participating LDCs to boost trade, output in services, manufacturing, and natural resources sectors. Despite positive experiences, regional and international cooperation still needs to rise to the challenges ahead.

We commit to take the following actions:

218. We commit to promoting regional economic integration and enhance regional connectivity to increase regional trade including integration of LDCs into regional value chains and services trade. We urge the international community, including international financial institutions and multilateral and regional development banks, to increase their support to capacity

building projects and programmes, that foster regional and subregional integration, with special attention to LDCs, and that enhance the participation and integration of small-scale industrial and other enterprises into regional and global value chains and markets.

219. We commit to supporting LDCs in the implementation of multi-country customs transit guarantee regimes through the implementation of either international transit agreements or functional regional agreements.

220. We commit to supporting LDCs efforts in promoting subregional and regional cooperation, including export promotion and improving regional connectivity through trade-facilitating measures, such as joint projects on customs and border procedures, and insofar as possible telecommunications facilities and energy.

221. We will provide assistance to landlocked and small-island LDCs aimed at addressing the challenges of their remoteness from international markets and lack of infrastructure.

V. Addressing climate change, environmental degradation, recovering from COVID-19 pandemic, and building resilience against future shocks for risk-informed sustainable development

222. The LDCs are especially vulnerable to and disproportionately affected by the adverse effects of climate change, environmental degradation and other disasters. Some countries have adopted good practices in addressing these effects, which include installation and use of early warning systems; adaptation solutions in key sectors/systems such as agriculture and food security, water, health, infrastructure and ecosystems; forecast-based financing; integrating climate change, environment and disaster risk considerations in development planning; development of risk indices to support different stakeholders; comprehensive risk management approaches; and sustainable management of natural resources, among others.

223. We recognize the outcomes from the COP26⁶ related to loss and damage, including resolving to strengthen partnerships between developing and developed countries, funds, technical agencies, civil society and communities to enhance understanding of how approaches to averting, minimizing and addressing loss and damage can be improved and urge developed country Parties⁷, the operating entities of the Financial Mechanism, United Nations entities and intergovernmental organizations and other bilateral and multilateral institutions, including non-governmental organizations and private sources, to provide enhanced and additional support for activities addressing loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change.

224. The Covid-19 pandemic and its health, economic and social consequences, including increasing gender and other inequalities, have further underlined the need for multilateral cooperation, unity and solidarity to protect public health and to prepare for and respond to health

⁶ The twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26), the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol and the third session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement held in Glasgow from 31 October to 13 November 2021.

⁷ UNFCCC

emergencies, across all sectors, using holistic, all-hazard and One Health approaches, recognizing the interconnectedness between the health of humans, animals, plants and their shared environment including through collaboration among WHO, FAO, OIE and UNEP.

225. Among more than 120 countries reporting across all Sendai Framework targets for disaster losses in 2019, LDCs account for 48 per cent of livelihood disruptions, 40 per cent of deaths, 17 per cent of economic losses, and 14 per cent of infrastructure damage, although their combined gross domestic product amounts to only 1 per cent of the total; and their combined populations are just 18 per cent of the global population.

226. The COVID-19 pandemic has not only exposed but also amplified LDCs' high degree of vulnerability and the risks of cascading crises. We are concerned that a prolonged economic downturn following the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic risks adversely impacting the implementation of the Paris Agreement, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sendai Framework, the ability of countries, especially LDCs, to adequately respond to the adverse impacts of climate change and environmental degradation.

227. We are deeply concerned that the limited fiscal space and resilience capacity in LDCs seriously constrains their ability to tackle the pandemic and foster sustainable recovery. The investments in climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction in LDCs have fallen considerably short of meeting the needs. We are also concerned that climate change impacts are becoming more acute. Food insecurity and malnutrition, water stress, quality and scarcity, land degradation, biodiversity loss, melting of glaciers, ocean acidification, coastal erosion, sea level rise, damage to infrastructure and assets, pressures on pastures, displacement of populations, threats to cultural heritage, disruption of indigenous and traditional lifestyles, and threats to livelihoods are severely disrupting economic and social development. Changes in water resources access and availability are disrupting hydroelectric generation and putting industrial production and basic services at increased risk while sanitation and wastewater management remain a source of concern. We urge LDCs and will support them through strengthening partnerships, global coordination and cooperation, to adopt an all-hazard, multisectoral, coordinated approach in preparedness for health emergencies, recognizing the links between human, plant and animal health and their shared environment and the need for a One Health approach.

228. We are committed to reducing the vulnerability of the LDCs to economic, environmental shocks and natural hazards, especially those related to climate change, and to enhance their ability to meet these and other challenges through enhanced adaptive capacity and resilience. Building adaptive capacity and resilience, including at persons and communities level, lies at the core of the new Programme of Action for LDCs, in alignment with the provisions contained in international agreements on climate change, disaster risk reduction and environment.

Key Action Areas

Building sustainable and inclusive recovery from COVID-19 and resilience against future shocks

229. On average, the projection suggests⁸ that the LDCs are expected to take three to five years or more to recover to their pre-crisis level of gross domestic product per capita. The persistent challenges posed by climate change and environmental degradation threaten to further impede the recovery efforts.

230. Target:

- i. Support timely access to safe, effective and affordable COVID-19 vaccines
- ii. Provide necessary support to COVAX and other relevant initiatives to vaccinate all eligible individuals against COVID-19 as early as possible and 70 per cent of the population in LDCs by mid-2022 as recommended by the World Health Organization⁹.
- iii. Ensure equitable, affordable access for all to safe, quality, efficacious, effective, accessible and affordable COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics.
- iv. Promote and encourage technology transfer on mutually agreed terms to increase production capacities of the complete supply chain of vaccines and any other health products in the regions of LDCs.
- v. Support the supply and conservation environment, distribution and administration and surveillance of vaccines.
- vi. Ensure adequate domestic and international support to strengthen inclusive social protection systems in the LDCs, to tackle current poverty and vulnerability and future shocks.
- vii. Support awareness campaigns about the benefits of COVID-19 vaccination.
- viii. Ensure widespread testing and tracing, maintenance and access to adequate stocks of therapeutics and personal protective equipment and ventilations.
- ix. Promote the building of strong health systems and regulatory authorities that ensure universal access to healthcare in the LDCs to tackle the current and future shocks.

We commit to take the following actions

231. We take note of the “Statement dated 28 April 2020 of the Group of LDCs on the coronavirus disease (COVID-19): burgeoning challenges and a global stimulus package for the least developed countries” contained in A/74/843 and commit to supporting for its implementation, as appropriate.

232. We recognize the role of extensive immunization against COVID-19 as a global public good for health in preventing, containing and stopping transmission in order to bring the pandemic to an end, through safe, quality, efficacious, effective, accessible and affordable vaccines are available leaving no one behind. We support adequate and timely access to quality, safe, effective

⁸ UNCTAD?

⁹ “Strategy to achieve global COVID-19 vaccination by mid-2022”, developed by the secretariat of the World Health Organization

vaccines in order to vaccinate all of their eligible populations in LDCs at an affordable price, on an equitable basis, and as quickly as possible including through the COVAX facility.

233. We stress that vaccinations need to be supported with essential complementary measures to minimize the loss of lives and morbidity from this pandemic and urge development partners to provide to LDCs in a timely manner, access to quality, safe, efficacious and affordable diagnosis, therapeutics, medicines and medical science-based treatment protocols, vaccines, and essential health technologies, and their components, as well as equipment, for the COVID-19 response, including through the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A). We reaffirm the World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS Agreement) as amended, and also reaffirming the 2001 World Trade Organization Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health, which recognizes that intellectual property rights should be interpreted and implemented in a manner supportive of the right of Member States to protect public health and, in particular, to promote access to medicines for all, and notes the need for appropriate incentives in the development of new health products.

234. We support adequate and timely access to quality, safe, effective vaccines in order to vaccinate all of their eligible populations in LDCs at an affordable price, on an equitable basis, and as quickly as possible including through the COVAX facility, adequate support to address liquidity and fiscal space constraints and debt relief when appropriate, and that international trade measures are put in place to support their recovery that is sustainable and build resilience against future shocks.

235. We commit to providing adequate domestic and international support to ensure equitable, affordable access for all to COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics, and strengthen inclusive social protection systems in the LDCs, to tackle current poverty and vulnerability and future shocks. In the spirit of global solidarity, and international cooperation between governments, as well as partnerships with international organizations, international financial institutions, civil society and the private sector, we call upon development partners to provide financial and in-kind support to least developed countries such as direct budgetary support or project-type interventions and to increase the resources of relevant regional and multilateral emergency financing facilities and to ease the conditions of access to these facilities.

236. We commit to establishing and strengthening inclusive social protection mechanisms to protect the poorest and most vulnerable, including provision of direct support in the form of cash or food or other essentials, as appropriate, to at least 350 million people living in extreme poverty in LDCs. In this regard, we encourage governments and development partners to provide funds for social protection, including to those living in extreme poverty in LDCs.

237. We commit to ensuring that stimulus measures are aligned with the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and Sendai Framework and contribute to fast recovery and “building back better”¹⁰ from the pandemic and building resilience in LDCs, including among others: conserving, sustainably using and restoring natural ecosystems and biodiversity; including through nature-based solutions; sustainable agriculture; sustainable, accessible, reliable and resilient

¹⁰ In the context of Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030, which aims at enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to “build back better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

infrastructure and the built environment; catalytic concessional financing for MSMEs; sustainable finance instruments such as green bonds and Sustainable Development Goal bonds; incentives for private investment in sustainable opportunities such as: affordable renewable energies; sustainable waste management; shock-responsive supply chains; lifecycle approaches and safe, smart and sustainable mobility.

238. We commit to enhance cooperation at the national, regional and global levels to address antimicrobial resistance, using an integrated and systems-based one-health approach, including through health system strengthening, capacity-building, including for research and regulatory capacity, and technical support and ensure equitable access to affordable, safe, effective and quality existing and new antimicrobial medicines, vaccines and diagnostics as well as effective stewardship.

Climate adaptation and building resilience including sustainable management of natural resources

239. While LDCs have made some progress with the process to formulate and implement National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and in implementing the Sendai Framework, they often lack the resources and capacity to address critical needs. Adaptation and resilience in food systems, including in the sectors of agriculture, manufacturing, social protection services and livestock is of prime importance for LDCs, and has major implications for food security, nutrition, livelihoods especially of the most vulnerable society, and employment. Water resources already face multiple pressures and are highly sensitive to climate change impacts such as drying up of sources, disruption in rainfall patterns and increased frequency of both extreme and slow-onset events which reinforce already existing trends on land degradation and desertification. The rapid projected growth of urban populations presents challenges for the provision of services such as water and sanitation, which must develop and grow at a faster rate in order to keep pace. Localization of climate action, including support local governments and building resilient communities, is extremely important as they understand local needs and are on the front line of climate change adaptation action, disaster risk reduction, response, and recovery. Critical infrastructure services, such as transport, water, electricity, remain highly unreliable and vulnerable to extreme climatic events. Measures to restore and improve the sustainable management of key natural resources such as water and land as well as biodiversity are urgently needed.

240. We note the high importance of building resilience in LDCs through stepped up capacity building and finance for adaptation to climate change, including through a comprehensive multi-stakeholder resilience-building measures for LDCs' leveraging the GCF; existing measures; and initiatives such as NAP Global Network and UNCDF's Local Climate Adaptive Living Facility (LoCAL).

241. *Targets:*

- i. Support full formulation and implementation of NAPs, including integrated and strategic adaptation actions at the national and local levels by all LDCs making use of the GCF and existing initiatives such as the NAP Global Network and the Local Climate Adaptive Living Facility (LoCAL).

- ii. Develop and strengthen national and regional platforms and strategies for disaster risk reduction to take actions to achieve the Sendai Framework targets.
- iii. Support and reinforce, as appropriate, the existing comprehensive multi-hazard early warning system and comprehensive multi-hazard crises mitigation and resilience building measures for LDCs.
- iv. Continue to support the development and implementation of adaptation communications, strategies, and plans, including those that may be included as components of Nationally Determined Contributions and long-term strategies under the Paris Agreement.

We commit to take the following actions:

242. We commit to continue and strive for increased support, including for capacity building for adaptation planning and implementation in LDCs, including through the LDC work programme under the UNFCCC as well as through additional and complementary means, in order to address medium to long term adaptation needs through the formulation of national adaptation plans and subsequent implementation of the policies, programmes and projects identified by them.

243. We commit to strengthen Action for Climate Empowerment in LDCs through the development and implementation of training programmes focused on climate change education at all levels.

244. We commit to providing necessary technical assistance to LDCs to develop operational national risk information systems that support policy and decision-making by all stakeholders, including national and local governments, private sector business operations, cultural heritage managers and bearers, real estate and land planning, insurance industry, local communities and others.

245. We decide to enhance support to LDCs to strengthen national statistical and planning offices and other relevant authorities for the systemic collection, analysis and validation of data on disaster loss and other relevant disaster risk reduction targets, and to strengthen inter-institutional, inclusive coordination on disaster risk data, risk assessments and integrated analysis.

246. We underline the need for reinforcing the existing comprehensive multi-hazard early warning system and comprehensive multi-hazard crises mitigation and resilience building measures for LDCs aligned with the Sendai Framework as a key instrument to build resilience against and mitigate the impacts of various shocks and we are committed to making the best use of existing initiatives. We invite the Secretary-General to undertake a comprehensive study involving all relevant UNDS and other relevant stakeholders on the existing arrangements, lessons learned, identified gaps with LDCs and submit it to the General Assembly for further consideration.

247. We call for public and private, domestic and international investment, as well as bilateral and multilateral support, to be climate resilient risk informed and aligned with national and local adaptation, climate resilience, and disaster risk reduction strategies and efforts related to averting, minimising, and addressing loss and damage associated with the adverse impacts of climate change.

248. We commit to enhancing international cooperation and technical assistance and support to LDCs to take urgent and significant actions to reduce the degradation of natural habitats and land degradation and loss of territory, halt biodiversity loss and prevent extinction of threatened species.

Access to finance and technology to address climate change

249. We note with concern that the current provision of climate finance for adaptation remains insufficient to respond to worsening climate change impacts in developing country Parties; and recognize the importance of the adequacy and predictability of adaptation finance. We welcome that the Parties¹¹ urged developed country Parties to urgently and significantly scale up their provision of climate finance, technology transfer and capacity-building for adaptation so as to respond to the needs of developing country Parties as part of a global effort, including for the formulation and implementation of national adaptation plans and adaptation communications; Many LDCs currently face challenges in accessing the international public finance directly due to lack of technical capacity. We support providing assistance to LDCs in preparing bankable projects and creating enabling environments. And we encourage further efforts to enhance access to finance.

250. *Targets:*

- i. Recognizing the outcomes from COP26 regarding delivering on the goal of jointly mobilizing US\$100 billion Climate Finance per year, scale up support to developing countries including LDCs,
- ii. The provision of scaled-up financial resources should aim to achieve a balance between adaptation and mitigation taking into account country-driven strategies.
- iii. Increase climate finance provided for adaptation and resilience particularly for vulnerable countries, including LDCs.
- iv. Continue supporting the implementation of national adaptation plans and NAPAs of LDCs under the Green Climate Fund, and other climate-relevant funds under the Global Environment Facility (GEF) including the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF), the Special Climate Change Fund, and the Adaptation Fund.
- v. Increase financing for nature-based solutions or ecosystem based approach for climate mitigation and adaptation.

We commit to take the following actions

251. We recognize that limiting global warming to 1.5 °C requires rapid, deep and sustained reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions, including reducing global carbon dioxide emissions by 45 per cent by 2030 relative to the 2010 level and to net zero around mid-century, as well as deep reductions in other greenhouse gases. We urge Parties to the Paris Agreement that have not yet communicated new or updated nationally determined contributions to do so as soon as possible in advance of the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement. Recalling Article 3 and Article 4, paragraphs 3, 4, 5 and 11, of the Paris Agreement, we welcome the request of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties of the Paris Agreement for Parties to revisit and strengthen the 2030 targets

¹¹ UNFCCC and/or Paris Agreement

in their nationally determined contributions as necessary to align with the Paris Agreement temperature goal by the end of 2022, taking into account different national circumstances. We further welcome the establishment of a work programme to urgently scale up mitigation ambition and implementation in this critical decade, as well as the convening of an annual high-level ministerial round table on pre-2030 ambition, beginning at the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement.

252. We welcome that the Parties¹² urged developed country Parties to fully deliver on the USD 100 billion goal urgently and through to 2025, and emphasize the importance of transparency in the implementation of their pledges; and that they urged the operating entities of the Financial Mechanism, multilateral development banks and other financial institutions to further scale up investments in climate action, and call for a continued increase in the scale and effectiveness of climate finance from all sources globally, including grants and other highly concessional forms of finance (27 y- 28 GCP).

253. We recall, as provided in Article 9.4 of the Paris Agreement, that the provision of scaled-up financial resources should aim to achieve a balance between adaptation and mitigation, taking into account country driven strategies, and the priorities and needs of developing country Parties, especially those that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change and have significant capacity constraints, such as the LDCs and SIDS, considering the need for public and grant-based resources for adaptation.

254. We welcome that the Parties¹³ urged developed country Parties to at least double their collective provision of climate finance for adaptation to developing country Parties from 2019 levels by 2025, in the context of achieving a balance between mitigation and adaptation in the provision of scaled-up financial resources, recalling Article 9, paragraph 4, of the Paris Agreement.

255. We welcome the decisions of the Board of the Green Climate Fund to aim for a 50:50 balance between mitigation and adaptation over time on a grant equivalent basis and to continue to provide at least 50% and (in line with the GCF's Initial Resource Mobilisation allocation floor) to aim to allocate 69%¹⁴ of the adaptation allocation for particularly vulnerable countries, including LDCs.

256. We commit to increasing effectiveness and efficiency of funding to climate-related multilateral funds such as the Green Climate Fund, the Global Environment Facility including the least developed countries Fund (LDCF), the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF), and other climate- relevant funds and to continue to improve access to all these funds by LDCs. We also call on relevant parties to simplify, as appropriate, the access procedures for climate finance for LDCs and supporting the LDCs, including through the new Taskforce on Access to Climate Finance. We also call for greater efforts to improving access to climate finance for LDCs and supporting LDCs to develop technical capacity to ensure efficient access to financial resources.

¹² UNFCCC and/or Paris Agreement

¹³ UNFCCC and/or Paris Agreement

¹⁴ Decisions of the Board – twenty-seventh meeting of the Board, 9 – 13 November 2020; paras 33 B & H (ii) <https://www.greenclimate.fund/sites/default/files/document/gcf-b27-22.pdf>

257. We will continue to support the development of approaches in LDCs for dealing with adaptation including on nature-based solutions or eco-system based approaches, adaptation in cities, while including the most disproportionately affected people such as youth, children, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and local communities, and women and girls, and with a focus on the development of essential climate resilience programmes around food systems, water resources, health services, living spaces/settlements and critical infrastructure.

258. We will continue to enhance regional cooperation and support to LDCs in addressing the impacts of regional transboundary climate risks associated with supply and value chains.

259. We request relevant entities of the United Nations system, international financial institutions and development banks as well as private sector and foundations to continue supporting LDCs to formulate and implement national adaptation plans and strategies, national determined contributions, as well as national disaster risk reduction strategies to advance mitigation and adaptation. We also call on these entities to apply the Principles for Responsible Investment and to commit to comprehensive and robust physical climate-related risk assessments and disclosures related to their activities in LDCs.

260. We will continue investing in gender-responsive prevention and risk reduction, including risk-informed and resilient infrastructure and public services; the adoption of legislation, policies and standards that regulate and incentivize investors and companies to adopt a risk-informed approach; and for monetary and regulatory authorities to incorporate the impact of disaster and climate risks into regulatory and policy frameworks, as recommended in Sendai Framework.

261. We commit to providing significant support to existing climate and disaster risk finance and insurance and catastrophe-triggered financial instruments such as the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF), African Risk Capacity (ARC) and the Pacific Catastrophe Risk Insurance Company (PCRIC), as well as developing and enhancing the capacity of existing instruments and derivatives that provide risk insurance and guarantees for where they are most needed, such as micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and low-income households with a gender-responsive approach. We note the risk pools by development partners within the framework of the InsuResilience Global Partnership.

262. We commit to providing financial and technical assistance and facilitate technology transfer on mutually agreed terms to LDCs to develop and implement national strategies for sustainable use, preservation, protection and restoration of the natural resources and the sustainable management of marine and terrestrial biodiversity and ecosystems based on the best scientific evidence available in line with the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.

263. We call for action by the private sector, including bank and institutional investors, to support environmental, social, and corporate governance issues as well as take climate change and biodiversity into consideration in their investment decisions in LDCs.

VI. Mobilizing international solidarity, reinvigorated global partnerships and innovative tools- A march towards sustainable graduation

264. We acknowledge that LDCs are largely dependent on public resources to finance sustainable development needs and ensure a smooth transition from the least developed countries category. Available resources – domestic and external, public, and private - have not been sufficient to meet growing investment and spending needs. The high reliance of LDCs on external resources, including official development assistance, foreign direct investment, concessional lending, and private flows, such as remittances and portfolio investment, persisted over the past decade. During the IPoA implementation period, external debt has been rising, and it is, in some cases, exacerbated by large costs caused by disasters and structural vulnerabilities. The pandemic and its economic fallout have exacerbated financial vulnerabilities and debt risks in least developed countries that have been building up over the last decade.

265. We welcome progress made over the past decade with respect to graduation and stress that continued support and incentives will be important to accelerate the number of least developed countries reaching the graduation thresholds and for ensuring sustainable and irreversible graduation with momentum.

266. We aim to support LDCs to achieve at least 7 per cent gross domestic product growth per annum in LDCs and graduating countries and growth in the disposable income of households in the bottom half of the income distribution.

Key Action Areas

Support for domestic resource mobilization and fight-against illicit financial flows

267. We acknowledge that the low tax-to-gross domestic product ratios of LDCs can be explained in part by their economic structures, high poverty rates, weak tax administration and the nature of their tax systems. The median tax-to-gross domestic product ratio in LDCs increased very slowly, from 13.3 in 2011 to 16.2 in 2018, with rates lower than 10 per cent in several of them. Efforts to increase government revenue have been under way in many LDCs, including broadening of the tax base and enhancing compliance and transparency, including through digitalization of tax systems. Other challenges for LDCs include illicit financial flows as well as resource-intensive tax administration, and inappropriate transfer pricing.

268. We recognize that continued development of LDCs institutional capacity for efficient, effective and transparent public procurement practices is an important opportunity for expanding the resources the LDC countries can channel towards achieving the 2030 Agenda including its Sustainable Development Goals, combating climate change, and bio-diversity loss and recovering from COVID-19.

269. *Target:*

- i. Increase tax revenue as a proportion of gross domestic product to at least 15 per cent in all LDCs to enable LDCs to become self-sustainable.
- ii. Enhance international cooperation for the recovery of stolen assets and its return to their countries of origin, in accordance with the United Nations Convention against Corruption.
- iii. Enhance inter-governmental coordination to prevent illicit financial flows.

We commit to take the following actions:

270. We call upon LDCs to make substantial efforts to effectively mobilize domestic resources, build up financial infrastructure and capacities, and put in place appropriate regulatory measures and institutions; continue taking measures to create conditions for attracting and sustaining investments and mobilizing domestic savings, both public and private; continue undertaking necessary fiscal reforms, as appropriate, to build effective, transparent, fair and accountable national tax and financial management systems, in line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda . We call upon development partners and relevant institutions to enhance support for development and strengthening revenue digitization and call for enhanced financial and technical support to build LDCs revenue collection capacity.

271. Recognizing the efforts of LDCs to enhance domestic resource generation, we commit to supporting efforts by LDCs towards progressive taxation, building capacity and strengthening tax administration, combatting tax evasion, savings mobilization, digitalization of tax administration and financial inclusion, all of which should enable the delivery of sustainable, effective and transparent and efficient public service, including for the poorest and most vulnerable, channeling savings to productive investment and to reducing inequalities. We stress the importance of conducive international regulatory frameworks and transparency as well as support by national and regional financial institutions, including development banks in this respect.

272. We commit to enhanced international tax cooperation and efforts to close international tax loopholes, all of which aiming at avoiding base erosion and profit shifting, and welcome support through initiatives including Tax inspectors without borders and the Addis Tax Initiative. We commit to supporting LDCs to take advantage of increases in tax transparency and exchange of information, such as by implementing the new international standard of automatic exchange of information.

273. We recommit to strengthening the capacities of revenue administration and broadening of the taxpayer base, supporting voluntary compliance, accountability and transparency, efficient revenue management, efficient risk management, including through digitalization transformation of the tax administration in line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. We acknowledge that any consideration of tax measures in response to the digital economy should include a careful analysis of the implications for LDCs, taking into account their inputs and their unique needs and capacities.

274. We encourage the use of and improved access to innovative tools, such as mobile banking, payment platforms and digitalized payments, as appropriate, including by women and micro-businesses, and we recognize the role that this can play in promoting financial inclusion, as well as in reducing costs, increasing transparency, improving the speed and security of payments and opening up new markets.

275. We call for support by development partners and international and regional financial institutions, to support strengthening the capacity of domestic financial institutions and the banking system, to promote appropriate, affordable, and stable financing for MSMEs through the creation of credit lines encouraging venture capital funds, facilitating access to public capital market,

targeting those enterprises and to create, strengthen, and widen lending markets that cater to the diversified needs of private enterprises, MSMEs, and consumers, including women.

276. We commit to substantially reducing illicit financial flows in order to help LDCs to mobilize resources, including through increased international cooperation to stem corruption, money laundering and identify, freeze and recover stolen assets and their return to countries of origin, in accordance with the United Nations Convention against Corruption and to developing their capacities to track financial transactions, administer taxation, facilitate customs services and investigate and prosecute offences to contribute to the success of efforts to reducing illicit financial flows derived from crimes.

277. We call upon all countries and relevant institutions to implement measures to enhance disclosure practices and promote transparency in financial information and enhance disclosure practices and transparency in both source and destination countries and cooperate in efforts to reduce illicit financial flows, and corruption.

International public and external finance to contribute to sustainable development in least developed countries

278. We note with appreciation that official development assistance to LDCs by Development Assistance Committee (DAC) countries increased in real terms from 2011 to 2019 by around 4.6 per cent but note with concern that the average share of gross national income provided as ODA to LDCs from DAC countries declined from 0.10 per cent to 0.08 per cent over that time period¹⁵. At the same time, we note that ODA remains crucial for financing investments for sustainable development in LDCs, while innovative sources of finance, such as blended finance, remained limited in these countries. There is a clear need for more determined efforts by developed countries to fulfill, and where possible to enhance, their respective ODA commitments to LDCs.

279. We underline that North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation is vital to LDCs, noting that South-South cooperation and commitments are not a substitute but a complement to North-South cooperation, particularly in regard to technical assistance, sharing of best practices in terms of their development, especially in areas of productive capacity-building, infrastructure, energy, science and technology, trade, investment and transit transport cooperation.

280. We recognize the rising significance of impact investing as a new public-private financing mechanism for SDG Agenda 2030, and we underline the urgent need to develop mechanisms to channel public and private investments towards achieving the SDGs in LDCs and encourage greater effort in establishing impact investing funds, targeting agri-commodities and associated smallholders and SMEs in the LDCs.

281. **Target:**

- i. Ensure the fulfilment of respective ODA commitments to least developed countries.

¹⁵ OECD's statistical online database OECD.Stat, with the ODA to LDCs figures deriving from table DAC 2a and the underlying GNI figures deriving from table DAC 1

We commit to take the following actions:

282. We commit to ensuring the fulfilment of all ODA commitments to least developed countries and ensuring the alignment of aid with least developed countries' national priorities and increase the alignment of aid with least developed countries' national systems and procedures. We welcome the decision by the European Union which reaffirms its collective commitment to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of GNI for ODA within the time frame of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and undertakes to reach 0.20 per cent of GNI for ODA to the least developed countries within the time frame of the 2030 Agenda. We encourage ODA providers to consider setting a target to provide at least 0.20 per cent of GNI for ODA to the least developed countries. We are encouraged by those who are allocating at least 50 per cent of their ODA to the least developed countries.

283. We invite development partners to ensure that the allocation of global ODA resources takes into account the structural handicaps and constraints which are unique to LDCs. We call upon development partners to ensure the right balance in the allocation of ODA fostering sustainable development in its three dimensions, including economic, social and environmental, and in various sectors, as well as for building resilience against various shocks and for empowerment of women.

284. We call upon the countries of the Global South to further strengthen their support provided to LDCs in all these areas in a predictable manner along the lines of the outcome document of the Second High-Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation.

285. We urge development partners to assure multilateral, regional and national development banks facing capital constraints to have a solid financial position to provide necessary and timely support, including concessional finance of MDBs to LDCs through simplified access process. We welcome the advancement of IDA's 20th replenishment and call for further initiatives by the international community.

286. We welcome continued efforts to improve the quality, impact and effectiveness of development cooperation and other international efforts in public finance, including adherence to agreed development cooperation effectiveness principles. We will align activities with national priorities of LDCs, including by reducing fragmentation, accelerating the untying of aid. All parties to the Programme of Action will promote country ownership and results orientation and strengthen country systems, use programme-based approaches where appropriate, strengthen partnerships for development, reduce transaction costs and increase transparency and mutual accountability. We will make development more effective and predictable by providing LDCs with regular and timely indicative information on planned support in the medium term. LDCs will provide whole-of-society national sustainable development strategies and costed medium term financing frameworks. LDCs will improve transparency and accountability on external finance to all domestic constituencies.

287. We will hold open, inclusive and transparent discussions on the modernization of the ODA measurement and on the proposed 28 measure of "total official support for sustainable development" and we affirm that any such measure will not dilute commitments already made.

288. We encourage innovative finance, including blended finance, to aim to leverage additional, substantial, predictable finance, and disbursed in a manner that respects the priorities and special needs of LDCs and does not unduly burden them. This could include expanding ODA allocations and other international public finance uses to include flexible financing that can be used as first loss, concessional, or de-risking capital to attract additional resources from the private sector to SDG-aligned investments across the investment continuum that can scale to address the needs of LDCs. We commit to significantly scaling up support in the form of concessional financing and equity for existing financing mechanisms, that deliver catalytic investment capital, for example for MSMEs and small investment projects in LDCs and graduated countries to mobilize sustainable private investments that advance the SDGs and act as a crisis facility.

289. We welcome the International Monetary Fund's special drawing rights allocation of the equivalent of 650 billion dollars of 23 August 2021 to meet the long-term global need to supplement reserve assets, and encourages countries with strong external positions to seek options for voluntary channelling of special drawing rights, in accordance with national laws and regulations, and to this end appreciates the Fund's efforts to seek further viable options for the voluntary channelling of special drawing rights to countries most in need, including LDCs, such as the Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust and the new Resilience and Sustainability Trust of the Fund, with a view to providing affordable long-term financing to developing countries in a manner that preserves their external debt sustainability, and encourages the consideration of viable options to voluntarily channel through multilateral development banks.

290. We call on official creditors to make long-term sustainable finance available to LDCs through grants and concessional funding and offer more fixed-interest lending at low interest rates emphasizing that this is part of a mix of financing approaches that also include grants.

Foreign Direct Investment

291. We note with concern that the FDI flows to LDCs had already been on a declining trend since 2015, reaching \$21 billion, or 1.4 per cent of world foreign direct investment in 2019. COVID-19 accelerated the decline of FDIs to LDCs, which remains heavily concentrated in the extractive industries. Several LDCs have undertaken steps to facilitate investment, such as the acceleration of approval procedures, an increased use of digital tools, a reduction of fees and an automatic renewal of permits.

292. We take note of the establishment of the Investment Support Program for Least Developed Countries (ISP/LDCs), implemented by the International Development Law Organization (IDLO) and aimed at providing legal and technical support to LDCs on investment-related matters. We commit to further strengthening of this Program, invite donors to continue supporting it, and encourage LDCs to make wide use of the Program's facilities.

293. **Target:**

- i. Adopt and implement investment promotion regimes for LDCs.

We commit to take the following actions:

294. We commit to implementing the decision contained in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda to adopt and implement investment promotion regimes for the LDCs. We reiterate the decision¹⁶ to provide financial and technical support for project preparation and contract negotiation, advisory support in investment-related dispute resolution, access to information on investment facilities, improving enabling environments, and risk insurance and guarantees such as through the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency. In this regard, we request the Secretary-General to explore the feasibility of establishing an International Investment Support Center (IISC) for LDCs in the form of a one-stop shop to mobilize support for implementation of the investment promotion regime for LDCs and graduated countries and to submit this study and recommendations to the General Assembly for its consideration at its 78th session.

295. We will incentivize additional financing and investment including grants, guarantees, and blended finance, in quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure and facilitate efforts to channel long-term sustainable investment to LDCs. We commit to helping LDCs benefit from sustainable financing sources, strengthen their regulatory and policy environment, and support existing initiatives to develop pipelines of investable projects and use risk - sharing mechanisms to incentivize private investment and mobilize international capital, where applicable.

Debt sustainability and debt cancellation initiative through improved and transparent debt architecture

296. We note with concern that the stock of debt as well as debt service payment obligations of LDCs increased significantly over the past decade. Total debt service increased from an average of 5 per cent of exports of goods and services in 2011 to 13 per cent in 2019. As of February 2021, 4 LDCs were classified as in debt distress, while the number of LDCs at high risk of debt distress increased to 16. Over the past decade the composition of debt of LDCs changed considerably towards less concessional finance. We welcome the measures adopted in 2020 by the G20 and the Paris Club, namely the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) to facilitate higher pandemic-related spending and the Common Framework for Debt treatments beyond the DSSI to facilitate timely and orderly debt treatment on a case-by-case basis with broad participation of all creditors, on comparable terms including the private sector in line with the comparability of treatment principle.

297. Target:

- i. Address the debt distress of LDCs by 2025 and provide coordinated and appropriate debt solutions in a timely manner to all LDCs that face debt vulnerabilities or are in debt distress in order to work toward sustainable debt levels in all LDCs.

We commit to take the following actions:

298. We commit to assisting LDCs in attaining long-term debt sustainability, coordinated policies aimed at fostering adequate debt financing, debt relief, when appropriate, debt

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restructuring and sound debt management, as appropriate and ensuring that debt relief does not detract from ODA resources intended to be available for LDCs.

299. We encourage the IMF to conduct in-depth review of LDCs' external debt, effects of the pandemic on LDCs' debt servicing capacity and possible policy options at national and international levels to effectively address the external debt problem of LDCs.

300. We commit continuing enhancing efforts to increase support, including financial and technical assistance, for institutional capacity-building in LDCs to enhance sustainable upstream and downstream debt management as an integral part of national development strategies, including by promoting transparent and accountable debt management systems and negotiation and renegotiation capacities and through supporting legal advice in relation to tackling external debt litigation and debt data reconciliation between creditors and debtors, notably through the G20-Paris Club Common Framework, so that debt sustainability may be achieved and maintained.

301. We invite official creditors, including international financial institutions, to consider exploring the inclusion of state-contingent clauses in public debt contracts to enable standstills in times of crisis, and to provide an example for private markets, including through granting suspension of debt service.

302. We invite creditors and debtors to further explore, where appropriate and on a mutually agreed, transparent and case-by-case basis, the use of debt instruments, such as debt swap initiatives, for sustainable development and climate action.

Remittances

303. We note that remittances to LDCs have increased significantly over the past decade but declined in 2020 due to COVID-19. At the same time costs of remittances to LDCs have remained disproportionately high.

304. *Target*

- i. By 2030, reduce to less than 3 per cent the transaction costs of migrant remittances.
- ii. Eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5 per cent.

We commit to take the following actions:

305. We commit to working to improve the access to, usage and quality of financial services to lower the cost of remittances to LDCs and welcome international actions, such as the, Global Forum on Remittances led by IFAD and the Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion with the objective of improving the flow and reducing the cost of remittances.

306. We commit to provide accessible information on remittance transfer costs, including foreign exchange margins, by provider and channel, such as comparison websites, in order to increase the transparency and competition on the remittance transfer market, and promote financial literacy and inclusion of migrants and their families through education and training.

307. We decide to support incentive programmes to ensure that remittances are used for long-term investments in productive capacity building in LDCs, such as MSMEs, and ensure that women and men are engaged as equal partners and beneficiaries. We will also support efforts to more easily link remittances to other financial services such as savings, credit, insurance and pensions, all of which can expand financial health and strengthen resilience to shocks and setbacks for migrants and their families.

Extension of international support measures to graduating and graduated least developed countries to make graduation sustainable and irreversible

308. We note with appreciation that four countries have graduated since 2011, another four have been designated to graduate by 2024 while another twelve have met the graduation criteria at least once. However, most graduating LDCs face a multitude of challenges, including poverty and inequalities, in particular gender inequality, inadequate structural transformation and productive capacity, as well as vulnerability to economic and climatic shocks. Furthermore, we are concerned by the simultaneous loss of LDC specific support measures compounded by the negative social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis.

309. We further note that the Committee for Development Policy has found that a five-year preparatory period is necessary for all countries recommended for graduation at the 2021 triennial review to effectively prepare for a smooth transition, as these countries will need to prepare for graduation while planning for a post-COVID-19 recovery and implementing policies and strategies to reverse the economic and social damages incurred by the COVID-19 shock.

310. We encourage the Committee for Development Policy to continue to engage with graduating countries and countries recently graduated from the LDC category so the full extent of the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 are understood in line with the work of the Committee on sustainable development and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

311. We aim to ensure an incentives-based international support structure to graduating and graduated least developed countries, including support for their smooth transition by development and trading partners, as well as the UN system, to make graduation sustainable and ensure post-graduation development momentum and achievements of SDGs.

312. *Targets:*

- i. Enable 15 additional LDCs to meet the criteria for graduation by 2031.
- ii. Improve the scope, where necessary, and use of smooth transition measures and incentives for all graduating LDCs.
- iii. Provide specific support measures to recently graduated countries for making the graduation sustainable and irreversible.

We commit to take the following actions:

313. We emphasize that a successful transition out of the LDC category needs to be based on a national smooth transition strategy, elaborated by each graduating country. We urge development and trading partners and the United Nations system to continue their support for the

implementation of smooth transition strategies so as to avoid any abrupt reductions in either official development assistance, special and differential treatments, aid for trade or other technical and financial assistance provided. This includes the need for better planning and coordination of transition finance by ODA providers both during preparatory period and in the post-graduation phase.

314. We reiterate our conviction that no country graduating from the least developed country category should have its development progress disrupted or reversed. We welcome that the UN graduation process helps to ensure that no graduating country has its special and differential treatment measures and exemptions abruptly reduced. We invite development and trading partners to consider extending to the graduated country trade preferences previously made available as a result of least developed country status, or reducing them in a phased manner in order to avoid their abrupt reduction. We take note that the LDC group put forward various proposals at the WTO, pertaining to, among other things, trade-related challenges as well as those related to smooth transition of the countries graduating from the LDC category, and seek to further examine these issues. We call upon the development partners to continue to provide, as appropriate, special climate-change related finance and technological support to graduated countries to support actions towards the achievement of the goals of the Paris Agreement and for a period consistent with their vulnerabilities, sustainable development needs and other national circumstances and emerging challenges.

315. We encourage the LDCs and development partners to integrate graduation and smooth transition strategies into their respective national development and aid strategies, as appropriate, including capacity-building and technical assistance to diversify sources of financing; including blended finance and private finance.

316. We recognize that graduating countries face major challenges in addressing the social and economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and disasters and encourage the integration of disaster risk reduction into the smooth transition strategies of graduating countries to promote sustainability of development progress, including the impact assessment of the likely consequences of graduation and the vulnerability profiles.

317. We recognize the need for enhanced support to countries before and after graduation, through appropriate predictable additional and demand-driven incentives and support measures, including in the following areas:

- Technical assistance for preparing and implementing a smooth transition strategy, including capacity development and technical assistance for analysis and identification of support needs;
- Legal assistance to negotiate market access after trade preferences that are granted based on least developed countries status end;
- Availability of credit ratings and risk management measures, including through the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency;
- Technical assistance to negotiate market access after trade preferences that are granted based on least developed countries status end;
- Technical assistance to build and strengthen their intellectual property rights systems to enable them to comply with obligations related to intellectual property after graduation, and

- Consider extending access to dedicated funds for tackling adverse impacts of climate change; vertical funds such as Gavi; Aid for Trade; and Technology Bank for LDCs for graduated countries for a fixed period of time and in a predictable manner.

318. We welcome the work of the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on LDC Graduation, led by OHRLLS, to provide strengthened and coordinated UN System-wide support to the countries graduating from the LDC category and invite OHRLLS to advocate for appropriate predictable and additional incentives and support measures for graduating and recently graduated countries and mobilize additional international support for the implementation of the smooth transition strategies. We invite all relevant UN entities to collaborate under the UN Inter-Agency Task Force and develop operational guidelines for their support to least developed countries, including assistance to graduating countries.

319. We welcome the establishment of a Sustainable Graduation Support Facility (SGSF) jointly by the OHRLLS as Chair of the UN Inter Agency Task Force on LDC graduation and UN DESA as the Secretariat for the UN Committee for Development Policy (CDP), as a concrete country-led solution of dedicated capacity development support. We call on member states to support this initiative operationalized under the umbrella of the UN Inter Agency Task Force to further strengthen coordinated and coherent UN System support and bring together country-specific integrated graduation-related advisory and capacity building services responding to the concerns of Member States regarding graduation and serving as a repository and clearing house of initiatives and projects pursued in support of these countries.

320. We call for a monitoring mechanism that is responsive to emerging crises and that better links monitoring to specific support, including possible extensions of the preparatory period. An enhanced monitoring by the Committee for Development Policy should include, among others:

- Establishing a crisis response process within the monitoring mechanism to react to crisis and emergencies happening within the annual monitoring cycle
- Mobilizing existing crisis management expertise of the UN System and other international entities, utilizing the convening power of the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, both in case of crisis and in case of regular monitoring
- Expanding coverage of annual monitoring reports and the preparation process.

321. We call upon the Committee for Development Policy to continue due consultations with LDCs and countries recently graduated from the LDC category, while conducting the triennial reviews of the list of LDCs and monitoring the countries that are graduating and have graduated from the list of LDCs and request the Committee to include in these consultations those LDCs whose graduation may have been deferred.

Availability and use of data

322. We note with concern that many LDCs lack quality data to measure and track progress in the goals and targets of the Istanbul Programme of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals. The average statistical capacity indicator increased from 56.4 in 2011 to 58.0 in 2019 but remains below the world average of 64. The COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated vividly, how crucial

reliable data is for policy making. Inclusive data is required to understand the differential impacts of the pandemic and address its economic and social effects, especially for people in vulnerable situations.

323. Target:

- i. Significantly increase the availability of high-quality, timely reliable and disaggregated data.

We commit to take the following actions:

324. We commit to further strengthen traditional data sources, such as surveys and administrative records, complemented by new sources, and continue to strengthen our efforts to collect, analyze and disseminate high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable data for better monitoring and policymaking to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the Doha Programme of Action.

325. We commit to providing financial support, equipment and infrastructure and technical assistance to strengthen capacities and capabilities of national statistical offices as well as monitoring policies of LDCs and fill data gaps with responsible, open and inclusive data that takes into account diversity in programming. In this regard, we recognize that modernizing population data systems, through improving civil registration and vital statistics systems and geospatial information sources must be a priority to prepare for future disasters and make progress on the SDGs.

Implementation, follow-up, and monitoring

326. Efficient follow-up and monitoring mechanisms adapted at the national, sub-regional, regional and global levels are crucial for the successful implementation of this Programme of Action and fully aligned with existing frameworks such as the SDGs. National, regional and global mechanisms should be mutually complementary and reinforcing. Necessary steps will be taken to ensure mutual accountability of LDCs and their development partners for delivering their commitments undertaken under this Programme of Action.

327. National-level arrangements are particularly important, as the Programme of Action is owned and led by the LDCs themselves. At the national level, each LDC Government should develop an ambitious national implementation strategy of the Programme of Action and integrate the provisions of this Programme of Action into its national policies and development and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation framework and conduct regular reviews, which are country-led and country-driven, with the full involvement of all key stakeholders. Existing country review mechanisms and report dissemination, including those for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, poverty reduction strategy papers, Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, and the existing consultative mechanisms should be broadened to cover the review of this Programme of Action and extended to all LDCs. National parliaments as well as other institutions can also support these processes.

328. We call on the entities of the United Nations Development System (UNDS) to actively support the implementation of the Programme of Action for LDCs at the national, subregional,

regional and global levels, in close cooperation and partnerships with the World Bank and the international financial and development institutions, and to integrate this programme of action into their strategic plans and annual work programmes and reporting at all levels and further calls on the entities of the United Nations development system to support the Resident Coordinators in the LDCs and to assist them in the mainstreaming of the Programme of Action into development planning at the country level in a coordinated and cohesive manner.

329. We invite Resident Coordinator and UN Country Teams, as well as country-level representatives of the World Bank Group, the International Monetary Fund, and other multilateral institutions, to continue to collaborate with and provide support to national follow-up and monitoring.

330. In line with the principles of development cooperation effectiveness, development partners should support agreed objectives and policies designed by LDCs on the basis of the Programme of Action that are integrated into existing national development and cooperation frameworks. They should monitor the delivery of their commitments and consider appropriate measures to overcome shortfalls or shortcomings, if any.

331. At the regional level, the relevant United Nations regional commissions and agencies should undertake biennial reviews of the implementation of this Programme of Action in close coordination and cooperation with subregional and regional development banks and intergovernmental organizations. Inclusive regional processes will draw on national-level reviews and contribute to follow-up and review at the global level. The relevant United Nations regional commissions and agencies should continue to ensure that the needs and challenges of LDCs are addressed as part of their ongoing work.

332. At the global level, the implementation and monitoring mechanisms established after the IPOA should be strengthened and improved with a view to ensuring timely and effective follow up of the implementation of the Programme of Action including, inter alia, through better stocktaking of policies and measures at the national, regional and sectoral levels; improved substantive support to the implementation of the Programme of Action at the global level; systematic monitoring of relevant developments in other intergovernmental processes and actions by the UN system organizations and interagency processes; and structured support to follow up by the LDCs themselves. The General Assembly should continue to monitor the implementation of this Programme of Action on an annual basis under the specific item on its agenda. Effective linkages will be made with the follow-up and review arrangements of all relevant UN Conferences and processes, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework.

333. We invite the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, as well as the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under their auspices, to devote adequate time to the discussion of the sustainable development challenges facing the LDCs in order to enhance engagement and implement commitments.

334. The Economic and Social Council is invited to continue to include periodically an agenda item during its annual substantive session on the review and coordination of the implementation

of this Programme of Action. Periodic reviews of progress made, and constraints confronted by least developed countries should be conducted by the Economic and Social Council to allow for focused interactions. The Development Cooperation Forum should keep reviewing trends in international development cooperation, as well as policy coherence for development, including for LDCs and graduated countries. These will be supported by reviews by the ECOSOC functional commissions and other inter-governmental bodies and forums.

335. The General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council should conduct annual review of the progress in the implementation of the current Programme of Action.

336. We invite the governing bodies of the United Nations funds and programmes and other multilateral organizations, including the World Bank Group, the IMF and other international financial institutions, and the WTO to contribute to the implementation of the Programme of Action and to integrate it into their work programmes, as appropriate and in accordance with their respective mandates. These organizations are invited to participate fully in reviews of the Programme of Action at the national, subregional, regional and global levels.

337. The Secretary-General of the United Nations is requested to ensure the full mobilization and coordination of all parts of the United Nations system to facilitate coordinated implementation and coherence in the follow-up and monitoring of the Programme of Action at the national, subregional, regional and global levels. The coordination mechanisms available, such as the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and the United Nations Development Group, should be broadly utilized and the inter-agency consultative group should be kept active in this regard.

338. We welcome the work of the Inter-Agency Consultative Group for LDCs, led by the Office of the High Representative, invite the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and the High-level Committee on Programmes to support the coordination and follow-up of the implementation of the Programme of Action on a system-wide basis, and invite the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of the Chief Executives Board, to include the implementation of the Programme of Action in the agenda of the Board. We invite all relevant UN entities to collaborate under the UN Inter-Agency Consultative Group for LDCs to develop operational guidelines for their support to countries in conflict and post conflict situation.

339. We invite the Office of the High Representative for the LDC, LLDC, and SIDS to prepare a comprehensive roadmap for accelerated implementation of this Programme of Action identifying specific roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders with a view to ensuring that the commitments in favor of LDCs lead to concrete deliverables that would facilitate implementation of the Programme of Action and help LDCs achieve the SDGs.

340. The Office of the High Representative for the LDC, LLDC, and SIDS should strengthen its functions to:

- (i) assist the Secretary-General in the systematic and effective follow-up and monitoring of the implementation of the Programme of Action and the full mobilization and coordination of all parts of the United Nations system, including with the use of data with a view to facilitating the coordinated implementation of and coherence in the follow-up and monitoring of the

Programme of Action for the least developed countries at the country, regional and global levels aligned with the 2030 Agenda,

(ii) assist in mobilizing international support and resources for the implementation of the Programme of Action for least developed countries.

(iii) strengthen its awareness-raising and advocacy works in favor of least developed countries in partnership with the relevant part of the United Nations System, as well as with parliaments, civil society, the media, academia and foundations, and

(iv) undertake research and analytical works to provide substantive support to LDCs in group consultations and their participation in other intergovernmental meetings and conferences to facilitate science and evidence-based decisions in favor of LDCs taking into account new and emerging challenges and opportunities; support the works of the General Assembly, Economic and Social Council, High-level Political Forum and the CEB as they relate to LDCs and foster debate and innovative thinking, promote consensus on ways forward, and coordinate efforts to achieve the implementation of the Programme of Action.

341. The Office of the High Representative for the LDC, LLDC, and SIDS will continue to be responsible for coordinated substantive support to the global-level review of the Programme of Action including through: (a) following up actions at national level based on inputs from governments, UN system agencies, civil society organizations and other relevant stakeholders; (b) monitoring sectoral policy developments at the intergovernmental processes of relevant international and regional organizations; (c) maintaining substantive contacts with UN system organizations and other relevant international and regional organizations as well as UN resident coordinators in LDCs; and (d) assisting the Secretary-General in his actions in support of LDCs; (e) supporting follow up by LDCs themselves at the global and sectoral levels. The Office of the High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS will continue to monitor international policy developments of relevance to LDCs including the outcomes of major global conferences, and carry out relevant advocacy efforts aimed at effective and timely implementation of the Programme of Action.

342. We take note of the network of the national focal points of LDCs established by OHRLLS and convening meetings of the national focal points on a regular basis. We also note that the national focal points designated by respective LDCs are heavily involved in the localization of the IPoA and the SDGs as well as their national implementation, monitoring, review and reporting of the PoA. We invite the OHRLLS to further strengthen the network of national focal points of LDCs and convene annual meetings of the focal points to share experiences and best practices on mainstreaming the Programme of Action and SDGs into national development processes as well their implementation and follow up; network among the peers; and better understand existing means of implementation, including viable financing and business models.

343. With a view to ensuring the effective implementation of the functions of Office of the High Representative for the LDC, LLDC, and SIDS and strengthening its capabilities and its effectiveness to support the LDCs, as well as the effectiveness of the United Nations system support provided to LDCs, we request the Secretary-General to prepare a report, in consultation with Member States and the relevant specialized agencies, funds, programmes and regional commissions, taking into account the work done by the United Nations system, and to submit it with recommendations to the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session.

344. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development should continue to address the challenges faced by least developed countries through conducting intergovernmental consensus-building, especially in the Trade and Development Board, and to contribute to the implementation of the Programme of Action also through its technical assistance to LDCs. UNCTAD's institutional capacity in the research and analysis of LDC issues should be maintained to this end.

345. The United Nations General Assembly is invited to consider conducting a comprehensive high-level midterm review on the implementation of the Programme of Action in 2026. The General Assembly, towards the end of the decade, is also invited to consider holding a Sixth United Nations Conference on the LDC in 2031, in order to make a comprehensive appraisal of the implementation of this Programme of Action and to decide on subsequent action.