



LDC5
5TH UNITED NATIONS
CONFERENCE ON THE
LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

High-level Thematic Round Table 2
Leveraging the power of science, technology and innovation for the
sustainable development of least developed countries

Summary of proceedings (maximum 600 pages)

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I'm honored to deliver this statement on behalf of the co-
chairs of Round Table 2, H.E. Dr. Lotay Tshering, Prime
Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan and H.E. Mr. Édouard
Ngirent, Prime Minister of the Republic of Rwanda.

The theme for Round Table 2, held on 6 March from 9am to 12pm, was “Leveraging the power of science, technology and innovation for the sustainable development of least developed countries”.

Delegations highlighted that science, technology and innovation has the power to transform LDCs and, accelerate their development path. It can help drive financial inclusion, contribute to emergency responses and advance e-services. Some Member States shared their experiences on how they have managed to digitalize government services.

However, it was clear that there are marked gaps between LDCs and other more advanced economies in the area of science, technology and innovation. This is largely a result of structural constraints including: limited fiscal space, low access to electricity, and, low investment in

research and development. It was noted that only a few universities in LDCs that are internationally competitive, especially in science, technology, and innovation.

This is why the Doha Programme of Action stresses the need to promote partnerships with stakeholders to leverage, in full, their capacity for innovation and encourage greater investment in this area. This includes through sustainable network infrastructure and practical digital capacity-building initiatives in the LDCs.

In line with the Doha Programme of Action, delegations emphasised that digital skills and education, especially for women and girls, are crucial. It was made clear that digital transformation will not be successful unless skill sets in the society correspond to the level of digitalization in businesses and the public sector. In this

regard, the need to foster more research and development and knowledge-building was underscored.

It was also emphasised that promoting open innovation, leveraging emerging technologies and promoting policy coherence would help to advance science, technology and innovation in LDCs.

Some delegations underscored the need for Governments in LDCs to develop enabling and stable policy and regulatory frameworks to attract needed investment and innovation.

During the discussion, several initiatives that are contributing to the advancement of Science, Technology and Innovation in LDCs were highlighted. These include;

- **the United Nations Technology Bank for LDCs, which is implementing the Technology Makers Lab, focussed on youth empowerment, capacity building and skills development.**
- **GovStack; an initiative that is aimed at helping countries leverage open-source building blocks that can form the foundation of a multitude of e-government services.**
- **Partner2Connect initiative, which aims to foster meaningful connectivity and digital transformation, including in LDCs. It was announced that around 34% of the pledges made under the partner2connect coalition in the past year, totalling about 12 billion US Dollars, targets at least one LDC.**
- **The GIGA school, which has helped map over 2 million schools worldwide and are now working to connect schools in 19 countries, including in LDCs.**

The list is not exhaustive, but it shows examples of opportunities that exist for LDCs and need to be further leveraged. However, there is also need to scale up this work.

A recurring theme during the discussion was the power of multistakeholder partnerships in science, technology and innovation.

Finally, we also discussed the need for science, technology and innovation to be a more fundamental part of the ecosystem of an economy.

There should be a holistic approach, reflecting the fact that STI is more often a means and not an end of itself. Measures should therefore be taken by all LDCs to ensure it cuts across every sector of the economy.

I thank you!