

## **UN Environment Programme submission on potential elements for the zero draft of the Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries**

### **I. Background.**

More than a year from the onset of the pandemic, the social and economic costs of COVID-19 continue to mount and reverberate across the globe.

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed an unprecedented challenge to humankind, revealing the weaknesses of many aspects of our current economic and development models. It has clearly highlighted the need to re-shape policies, business practices, investments and consumer choices that are driving production and consumption patterns to create more resilient economies which ensure human well-being and conserve the natural environment.

As we start the process of charting pathways towards building-back better, we need to ensure that we leave no one behind. In the response to the pandemic, the incorporation of environmental perspectives in development and recovery plans becomes even more important in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) which have particular vulnerabilities and challenges. The environment is intrinsically linked to their socio-economic development and must be addressed systematically and holistically if any economic and social gains are to be made and sustained.

In this sense, the new programme of action for LDCs comes at a critical point for people and the planet, considering that:

- The world is already more than 1°C warmer than a century ago and approaching 1.5 °C.
- Accelerating sea level rise, with more frequent and intense extreme events, is threatening the welfare of current and future generations in these countries. Biodiversity continues to decline, and this alarming trend endangers economies, livelihoods, food security and the quality of life as nature provides a range of goods and services that are critical to adapt to climate change and provide essential services like clean water and air, pollination, regulate flood, hinder erosion and more.
- Destruction and degradation of nature and its services negatively affects the well-being of at least 3.2 billion people globally.
- The impact of climate change and environmental degradation is expected to be more comprehensive and long lasting than the pandemic.

There is a large opportunity for Least Developed Countries, with the support of partners, to build forward better promoting a nature positive, low emission, circular economy that protects the welfare and creates decent jobs for people now and in generations to come. Human knowledge, ingenuity, technology, and cooperation can transform societies and economies and secure a sustainable future, but this requires leadership and decisive action across sectors, and the new Programme of Action for the LDCs is an important platform for that.

### **II. Suggested environmental considerations for the Programme of Action.**

#### **Introduction.**

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ It is suggested to introduce the concept of '<i>environmental sustainability</i>' following paragraphs 3 and 4 from the outcome document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development "The Future We</li></ul> |
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Want”<sup>1</sup> and the importance of environmental dimension for sustainable development. Environmental sustainability is intrinsically linked to the socio-economic development of countries and must be addressed systematically and holistically if any economic and social gains are to be made and sustained. Incorporation of environmental perspectives in development plans and programmes is even more important in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) which have particular vulnerabilities and challenges.

- It is suggested to introduce language on **green economy** with reference to the Paragraph (62) – The Future We Want<sup>2</sup>, such as “*Promote the implementation of green economy policies in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, to drive sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth and job creation, particularly for women, youth and the poor*”.
- Although climate change, nature loss and pollution are mentioned in the paragraph (12) of the Draft, it is suggested to add an integrated introductory emphasis on the triple planetary crisis of climate change, nature loss and pollution as this profound concern on the crisis is established in global scientific assessments. This has also been raised by Member States at the Fifth Session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA5) and was recently marked by UN Secretary General, as our number one existential threat, with urgent and all-out effort to turn things around.

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

- **1.1 Social protection systems for inclusive economic growth and resilience against shocks**  
The education system, including lifelong learning, should provide updated knowledge and skills, preparing people for transformation of society towards sustainability and resilience, leaving no one behind.
- **1.4 Population and Health**  
Pollution, degradation of ecosystems and climate change represent significant and increasing public health risks. The programme of action would benefit from including this language and promoting a One Health approach.
- **1.6 Water, sanitation, and hygiene**  
The draft programme of action would benefit from including waste management, including electronic and hazardous waste.

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<sup>1</sup> Paragraph ‘3. We therefore acknowledge the need to further mainstream sustainable development at all levels, integrating economic, social, and environmental aspects and recognizing their interlinkages, so as to achieve sustainable development in all its dimensions.

Paragraph 4. We recognize that poverty eradication, changing unsustainable and promoting sustainable patterns of consumption and production and protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development are the overarching objectives of and essential requirements for sustainable development. We also reaffirm the need to achieve sustainable development by promoting sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth, creating greater opportunities for all, reducing inequalities, raising basic standards of living, fostering equitable social development and inclusion, and promoting the integrated and sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems that supports, inter alia, economic, social and human development while facilitating ecosystem conservation, regeneration and restoration and resilience in the face of new and emerging challenges.’

<sup>2</sup> Paragraph 62. We encourage each country to consider the implementation of green economy policies in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, in a manner that endeavours to drive sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth and job creation, particularly for women, youth and the poor. In this respect, we note the importance of ensuring that workers are equipped with the necessary skills, including through education and capacity-building, and are provided with the necessary social and health protections. In this regard, we encourage all stakeholders, including business and industry, to contribute, as appropriate. We invite governments to improve knowledge and statistical capacity on job trends, developments and constraints and integrate relevant data into national statistics, with the support of relevant United Nations agencies within their mandates.

- 1.7 Urbanization and Shelter

Highlight the importance of urban Planning – Smart Cities, developing low emission, resource efficiency and green growth to contribute to healthier lives in cities, particularly in a changing climate.

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

- 2.2 Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) for development and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and building resilience against emerging challenges  
Use of ICT and digital technologies for environmental governance.
- 2.3 Promoting private sector engagement, digitalization, and broadband connectivity  
Introduction of language on green fiscal policy and public finance that provides an accommodative environment and strengthens opportunities for private sector engagement in green foreign investment and capital in LDCs.

**Key focus area III. Structural transformation as a driver of prosperity.**

3.1 Productive capacity building

- Restructure the economy to consider waste as a resource for the economy and not an escalating burden for people and the environment. Regulatory measures and criteria for investment should stimulate a transition to a circular economy that reduce the dependence on extraction of new resources, reduce accumulation of waste, restore nature and its services and create decent new jobs and use the creativity and innovation of a growing population.
- There is a need to “build back better” from the Covid-19 pandemic and advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, while ensuring a just transition to sustainable and resilient economies with environmental and social benefits, including job creation and shared prosperity. Shifting to sustainable consumption and production (Sustainable Development Goal 12) addresses the key drivers of ecosystem disruption, biodiversity loss, resource depletion, and climate change<sup>3</sup>. Accelerate the shift towards more sustainable consumption and production (SCP) patterns, as an overarching objective and prerequisite for sustainable development<sup>4</sup>, and as one of the most cost-efficient and effective ways to achieve economic development, reduce impacts on the environment and advance in human well-being.
- Adopting a value chain approach<sup>5</sup> which fosters creativity, engagement of and cooperation among all value chain actors is critical for avoiding siloed interventions and to create more impactful and transformative opportunities to scale up SCP. The value chain approach drives the alignment of policy makers, private sector, including SMEs, academia, consumers, and citizens towards a common objective, and underpins relevant partnerships to transform the current SCP patterns towards sustainability and circularity. It can be applied to multiple sectors and has proven effective in driving coordinated action across the plastic value chain to tackle plastic pollution and plastic

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3 UNEP 2019: Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6)

4 Johannesburg Plan of Implementation

5 UNEP (2021). Catalysing Science-based Policy action on Sustainable Consumption and Production – The value-chain approach & its application to food, construction and textiles. Nairobi.

waste<sup>6</sup>.

- Support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) should also be a priority. Most businesses in the world are SMEs; most formal jobs are generated by SMEs, which create 7 out of 10 jobs<sup>7</sup>. Given their strong roots in local communities, SMEs can be influential agents of change and innovation.
- It is broadly recognized that GDP does not accurately capture the wealth nor progress of countries. LDCs could greatly benefit from developing systems to map, monitor and integrate biodiversity and ecosystem services in decisions. Systems for natural capital accounting can capture natural capital as important assets for future development needs to be protected and invested in. Reference should be made to the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting—Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA EA) adopted by the 52nd United Nations Statistical Commission.

### 3.2.1 Transport

- Investments should be made in facilitating public and low emission transport avoiding “lock in” in old and polluting options harmful for public health and the environment.
- Regulatory measures are essential for import of used vehicles. This to address key concerns regarding pollution and carbon emissions of used vehicles, their quality and safety, energy consumption, and the costs of operating used vehicles<sup>8</sup>.

## Key focus area IV. Enhancing International trade of least developed countries and regional integration.

- Governance strategies would be needed to capture a greater share of value, break away from the enclave nature of the extractive sector, and diversify their economies, including into emerging sectors such as recycling and renewables. Trade agreements should be leveraged in a way that aids developing countries in reducing the environmental impacts associated with resource extraction, while mitigating any negative spillover effects resulting from decoupling growth. This will require, among others, targeted capacity-building and development assistance, and affording developing countries sufficient policy space to use a wide range of policy instruments to achieve resource-based industrialization at the local level.

## Key focus area V. Addressing climate change, recovering from COVID-19 pandemic, and building resilience against future shocks.

### 5.1 Building sustainable, equitable and resilient recovery from COVID-19

- Promote innovative and accessible green public and private financing and investment adapted to the national context, to enhance socio-economic resilience in the post-pandemic recovery.
- Capacity development of national institutions on green economy, natural capital accounting, and resilience approaches with the connection to green markets and green finance and the connection of investments to LDCs’.
- The UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration and the 2018-2030 strategic framework of the UNCCD are timely opportunities for enhancing a nature-positive society, protecting and enhancing natural capital. Land degradation and loss of ecosystem services represent a 10% loss in global annual gross product and negatively impact on the well-being of at least 3.2 billion people.

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6 UNEP (2019). Addressing marine plastics: A systemic approach - Recommendations for action. Notten, P. United Nations Environment Programme. Nairobi, Kenya.; available at: <https://buildingcircularity.org/plastics/>

7 World Bank: Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Finance [www.worldbank.org/en/topic/sme/finance](http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/sme/finance)

8 [Global Trade in Used Vehicles Report | UNEP - UN Environment Programme](#)

**Key focus area VI. Mobilizing international solidarity, reinvigorated global partnerships and innovative tools for risk-informed sustainable development - A march towards sustainable graduation.**

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

- Suggested inputs on main areas of support to LDCs on the Graduation and smooth transition strategies include:
  - Support LDCs in drafting national LDC Graduation Strategies to strengthen environmental sustainability including adding additional, locally relevant environmental indicators to the standard LDC Economic and Environmental Vulnerability Index (EVI).
  - Support LDCs by preparing an analysis or general global review of LDC graduation strategies and post- graduation impacts from an environmental/climate change perspective.