**United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States**

**(UN-OHRLLS)**

# Report of the Sixteenth Inter-Agency Consultative Group Meeting of the United Nations system and international organizations on the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020

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**Conference Room S-4**

**Palais des Nations, Geneva**

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## A. Executive summary

The Sixteenth IACG Meeting of the IPoA for the LDCs, which took place on 10 April 2018 in Geneva, provided the opportunity for the agencies, funds and programmes and other international organizations to share an update on their efforts to support the LDCs across the priority areas of the IPOA. In addition, a session was dedicated to a thematic discussion on the role of international trade in implementation of the IPoA including areas for enhanced cooperation by the UN system.

Follow-up actions from the meeting are listed below:

1. The UN system entities should refocus their collective activities and build further partnerships in the last 2 half years of the IPoA. It is important to build better linkages and coherence on the work done at country, regional and global levels.

2. The interlinkages and coherence in the implementation of the IPoA and the SDGs was crucial and there should be further work into better understanding this, possibly through an expert meeting or a joint publication, which OHRLLS could take the lead on.

3. As the Technology Bank is being inaugurated and will start its first year of activities, all members were encouraged to continue supporting the substantive work and programme, while avoiding duplication and yet bringing in respective areas of expertise.

4. Access to finance remained crucial. The provision of support, training and capacity building for the LDCs should be increased. The members should seek opportunities to increase South-South and triangular cooperation.

5. Regarding graduation and the need to support smooth transition, a draft list of international support measures would be circulated for comment and additions. The issue of vulnerability criteria and graduation remained a difficult one which required further clarification. This was a critical issue for some graduating LDCs, especially the SIDS.

6. There was a need to continue to focus on all LDCs – those who were the furthest behind, those emerging from conflicts and those embracing graduation. All needed the UN's targeted support and collaboration.

7. On international trade, three topics for further UN system joint action were identified: a joint study on how to increase the value chain for LDCs; capacity building for the LDC's participation in trade negotiations; and ways to strengthen activities on investment promotion.

**Acronyms**

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| AAAA | Addis-Ababa Action Agenda |
| CDP | Committee for Development Policy |
| CFC | Common Fund for Commodities |
| ECA | Economic Commission for Africa |
| EIF | Enhanced Integrated Framework |
| ESCWA | UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia |
| FDI | Foreign Direct Investment |
| IACG | Inter-agency Consultative Group |
| IATT | Inter-agency Task Team on the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries |
| IPoA | Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| IP | Intellectual Property |
| IPA | Investment Promotion Agency |
| ITC | International Trade Centre |
| ITU | International Telecommunications Union |
| LEG | LDC Expert Group |
| SMEs | Small and Medium Enterprises |
| STI | Science, Technology and Innovation |
| TDB | Trade and Development Board |
| UNCT | United Nations Country Team |
| UNCTAD | United Nations Conference on Trade and Development |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNEP | United Nations Environment Programme |
| UN-ESCAP | United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific |
| UNESCO | United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNFCCC | United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change |
| UNIDO | United Nations Industrial Organization |
| UNOSSC | United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation |
| WCO | World Customs Organization |
| WHO | World Health Organization |
| WIPO | World Intellectual Property Organization |
| WTO | World Trade Organization |

## B. Opening session

**Ms. Heidi Schroderus Fox, the Director of the Office of the High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS,** opened the meeting and welcomed participants to the sixteenth Session of the Inter-Agency Consultative Group on the Istanbul Programme of Action for the LDCs.

She expressed her appreciation for the strong commitment and continuous support of the members of the Inter-Agency Consultative Meeting on the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (IACG) to accelerate the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action and to promote the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in the least developed countries (LDCs).

She noted that the LDCs were highly reliant on support from the UN system to meet their global commitments towards eradicating poverty and building resilience. Addressing the challenges of the LDCs and enabling them to foster sustainable development, stability and prosperity required the UN system's individual and joint, coordinated efforts.

## C. Update on the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) and synergies and coherence with the 2030 Agenda

In introducing the item, **Ms. Heidi Schroderus Fox, the Director of the OHRLLS,** noted that her presentation on to stocktaking of progress in the implementation the IPoA would focus on four key areas. First, on growth, she noted that the recent performance for the LDCs, on average, had not been very positive, with growth increasing by only half a percentage point in 2017. While there were projected improvements in 2018 and 2019, this would still fall short of the IPoA's objective of at least the level of 7% per annum. More needed to be done to strengthen LDC productive capacity in all sectors through structural transformation and overcome their marginalization from the global economy. Second, the GDP per capita in LDCs had increased slightly between 2011 and 2016. The proportion of people in LDCs living on less than US$1.9 had reduced slightly. However, poverty eradication by 2020, the deadline for the IPoA, was also not likely to be achieved. Third, there was a large gap between investment needs and available finance in LDCs, which was not being reduced, as ODA has been stagnant and FDI was declining. Fourthly, she highlighted positive news in a few notable areas. Access to electricity had increased, as had mobile phone subscriptions, internet penetration reached almost 16% in 2016, and mobile-broadband penetration increased to one fifth of the population in 2017. There had also been some progress in the achievement of the SDGs, but this had been uneven across countries.

She noted that a detailed account of the status on implementation would be available in the Secretary-General's report on implementation of the IPoA. In this regard, she thanked organizations for the valuable contributions to the report.

She noted that this year marked a major milestone towards the fulfilment of graduation thresholds by LDCs. During the 2018 CDP review, Bangladesh, Lao PDR and Myanmar had fulfilled the criteria for graduation for the first time. Four more countries, namely, Bhutan, Sao Tome and Principe, Solomon Islands and Kiribati had met the graduation criteria for the second time and are recommended for graduation. Five other LDCs were at various stages of graduation, bringing the total to 12 LDCs meeting the thresholds. This was a result of hard-won gains by these countries. Sustained international support measures had played an important part, including the UN's own collective and coordinated efforts in supporting development strategies and programmes. She highlighted the importance of supporting smooth transitions and to advocate to others to do so as well. She noted the UN's stepped-up efforts to provide strengthened and coordinated UN system-wide support to the countries graduating from the LDC category. In October last year, in collaboration with DESA/CDP Secretariat, UNCTAD and other key partners, OHRLLS – had established an Interagency Task Force on UN support for graduation. It had focussing initially on information exchange among UN system agencies on graduation support, the coordination of activities related to LDC graduation, common messaging, promoting LDC-specific smooth transition measures and additional incentives, and joint activities such as the preparation of resource materials and online tools. She noted there had already been some results. Gradjet, an online service, was launched to help government officials in LDCs understand what it means to leave the LDC category and to plot a course for future action. An event had been organized the previous month in New York to celebrate those countries that met the criteria for the first time. Other proposals in the pipeline include holding a pledging conference for graduating countries, assisting them in accessing capital markets, and developing resource mobilization strategies.

She also provided an update on the operationalization of the Technology Bank (TB). In November 2017, the first meeting of the Council of the TB adopted the programme of work and budget for 2018. In the first year, the TB will carry out baseline STI reviews for 5 LDCs in collaboration with UNCTAD and UNESCO and other relevant organizations. Under the Digital Access to Research, the TB would focus on facilitating and increasing online access to scientific work in 13 countries. She noted that in addition to the host country's contribution from 2017 and 2018 of USD 4 million, an additional USD one million had been received from Norway for 2018.

She highlighted that for the successful implementation of the TB's programme of work, the support and the contribution of all agencies of the UN system was critical. She thanked the observer organizations UNCTAD, UNDP, UNESCO, the World Bank and WIPO for their substantive contribution at the 2017 Council meeting, and invited members of the IACG to strengthen their support to the Technology Bank, both in terms of staff secondments and resources for activities on the ground. She informed the meeting that the inauguration of the TB by the Deputy Secretary-General was scheduled for 4 June 2018.

She then opened the floor for statements by organizations both on the implementation of the IPoA and on ensuring synergy and coherence between the IPoA and the SDGs.

**Mr. Pierre Encontre, the representative of UNCTAD,** recalled his organization's dual objective of supporting LDCs to graduate smartly and to help others – the majority – to approach the thresholds. In the first objective, UNCTAD provided support before, during and after graduation, including by assessing the vulnerability to external shocks beyond the control of the country and bringing the analysis to the attention of the CDP, the loss of benefits and related smooth transition process and measures, and the continuation of provision of technical assistance, on request, to graduated countries, for example Cape Verde. For the others, efforts aimed at achieving structural progress, increasing productivity, diversifying the economy and specializing smartly, and rise in value chains.

**Mr. Ratnakhar Adhikari, the representative of EIF,** noted that there were challenges associated with the graduation criteria, since these aimed at numerical thresholds rather than substantive thresholds. Growth is now being driven by science and technology, the digital technology, number of patents, and women and youth empowerment. These issues need to be brought into the discussion. Second, on country ownership, those countries at had stated graduation as an official objective – such as Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar – are the ones that were likely to achieve sustainable graduation, since they would put in necessary resources, training and effort. Partnerships between government and international organizations were important. There was a role for the UN to provide support. EIF was providing 5 years support beyond graduation. Bringing the private sector on board was challenging but important. Some countries were requesting longer grace periods or postponement; the UN had a responsibility to prevent this from prevailing, by incentivizing graduation.

**Mr. Shishir Priyadarshi, the representative of WTO,** noted with regard to the IPoA objective of doubling of LDC share in global trade, as compared to 2011, the LDC share had decreased from about 1% to 0.94% reflecting the fact that LDCs trade had not expanded as fast as global trade. Since the 2005 decision in Hong Kong to provide Duty Free Quota Free (DFQF) access to LDCs, both developed and, increasingly, developing countries have gone out of the way to provide preferential DFQF access. The US remains the one large market which was not providing DFQF access to the Asian LDCs, although it was providing it to African LDCs. However, the fact that many Asian LDCs are heading towards graduation suggests that they have increased their competitiveness despite this. Many developed members have adopted more flexible rules of origin and efforts are underway to harmonize these unilateral schemes. In the past few years, the focus has shifted towards services, where more can be done in the remaining period of the IPoA. Twenty-four WTO Members had notified the WTO of possible areas where the LDC service sector and service providers could receive preferential access. This number needed to increase, while at the same time building LDC supply side capacity. The Aid-for-Trade and its EIF component was noteworthy in this regard, though more resources overall needed to be allocated to the LDCs, in particular the African LDCs. With donor budgets under pressure, LDCs needed to show positive impact from aid. Six LDCs have acceded to the WTO representing a major achievement, with another 8 in the accession process. The main challenges are huge dependence on commodities especially in times of falling prices, low value addition, an area where the TB could help - and integration into value chains, for example through increasing trade in intermediary products. Greater country ownership is needed to overcome reticence for graduation, together with assurances that UN support will continue. The IATF on LDC Graduation could assist UN system efforts by circulating together a table of international support measures (ISMs) together with examples of smooth transition provisions for each case, by organizations, governing bodies or individual member states. This checklist of measures and tools for graduating LDCs should be finalized with inputs from United Nations system and other international organizations. He noted that information on such support measures, along with best practices in smooth transition provisions/strategies, especially in the area of trade and development cooperation, could be further fine-tuned and disseminated through training and capacity building workshops organized jointly with WTO and other international organizations.

**Ms. Clare Stark, the representative of UNESCO,** noted that LDCs were currently not projected to achieve SDG4 since in these countries, around 24 million primary children were out of school, and LDCs further suffer from lack of training, equipment, infrastructure, and institutions. Aid to education had declined for the 6th consecutive years, with donors not targeting those most in need, including the LDCs. UNESCO was working closely with the Global Partnership for Education to raise an additional USD3.1 billion, as well as fundraising for the emergency educational fund component of the Humanitarian Summit outcome. Efforts were being made to ensure that emerging technologies such as AI did not widen the digital divide. The Technology Bank for LDCs (TB) could help in this regard. UNESCO was actively contributing to the various aspects of the TB's work.

**Ms. Marie-Helene Kyprianou, the representative of WFP,** noted that active support was being provided to the LDCs and LLDCs, by prioritising SDG 2 and SDG 17. WFP's Strategic Plan for the period 2017–2021 was aligned with the SDGs as its new approach to country strategic planning which reinforces national ownership. The Country Strategic Plan incorporates the entire humanitarian and development portfolio, subsuming all programmes and projects into clearly defined Strategic Outcomes. WFP works closely with national stakeholders and UN country teams to determine how best to achieve zero hunger objectives. WFP noted that it relied entirely on voluntary contributions from donor partners. However, at least 50 percent of WFP's development assistance is to be provided to LDCs and at least 90 percent to Low-Income Food-Deficit Countries (LIFDCs). The costs incurred for unloading and internal transport of food, and of any necessary technical and administrative supervision, normally borne by the government of the recipient country, were waived for LDCs. Over the period 2015-2016, WFP's operational expenditures amounted, under its development portfolio category, to some USD 200 million per year, while under the development and relief portfolio category to almost USD 2.5 billion per year. WFP also supported national economies through local procurement: in 2017, for example, WFP purchased over 1 million metric tons of food, for a value of approximately USD 350 million from LDCs. WFP also supports LDCs to in meeting graduation criteria. In Mozambique, for example, WFP's CSP contributes towards the Human Assets Index (HAI) and the Economic Vulnerability Index, and is aligned with the Government's Vision 2025 and Five-Year Plan (2015–2019). The CSP supports health-related nutrition-sensitive interventions, developing a nationally-owned, school meals programme integrated into the social protection framework, and disaster management preparedness, and smallholder farmers through labour-saving technologies, gender awareness training, managing food storage and handling, and quality control to reduce post-harvest losses.

**Ms. Monica Ferro, the representative of UNFPA,** noted that interventions with LDCs spanned several key areas within the social sector all aimed at eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity. These interventions included promotion of gender equality as well as sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights for women and girls, and elimination of harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage, investment in adolescents and youth, harnessing the demographic dividend, population data. In the aftermath of the ministerial pre-conference on the 2016 MTR of the IPoA where Ministers, senior officials, private sector and NGO partners had identified investments, policies and actions for realizing the demographic dividend, UNFPA had been working with countries in that regard. UNFPA would continue to collaborate with sister agencies and LDCs on the latter's needs with respect to humanitarian and emergency responses. Its support centred on the root causes by empowering individuals as well as communities, building the capacity of national actors to develop disaster risk reduction strategies and strengthening health systems at the national and sub-national levels. UNFPA was cognizant of the need to continue support to LDCs after graduation, to avoid losing gains made in the social sector. The nature of UNFPAs support also transitioned along with the development trajectories of recently graduated countries. Low Middle-Income Countries (MICs) could access UNFPAs commodity supplies which address the need for reproductive health commodities such as modern contraceptives and life-saving maternal health products. UNFPA would continue to work with recently graduated LDCs to develop phased strategies that would ensure the population continued to have access to essential reproductive health commodities. UNFPA would continue to work with Bhutan, Kiribati, Sao Tome and Principe and Solomon Islands as they transition to the middle-income country category. UNFPA looked forward to engaging further with OHRLLS and other partners to assist LDCs to achieve their development priorities.

**Mr. Bilal Al-Kiswani, the representative of ESCWA,** noted that ESCWA central aim is to help countries achieve the SDGs, both by forming regional partnerships, undertaking training, and promoting the exchange of expertise and best practices, as well as through direct technical support to countries based on their request and ESCWA's comparative advantage. With reference to the LDC member of ESCWA, MOUs for provision of technical support had been signed with Sudan and Mauritania, for which the IPOA had been one of the reference documents. He noted that ESCWA had recently published the "Arab Multidimensional Poverty Report" which had been released at the General Assembly last September. A key distinctive feature of the report was that the methodology had been developed by the member states over 2 years to identify the measure of poverty that was most relevant to them. Another publication has been launched "Rethinking Fiscal Policy in the Arab Region" that sought to identify the fiscal policy space to stimulate structural transformation and human development. ESCWA's aim with regard to graduation was to support countries develop their economies in parallel to social and human development as well as eradicating poverty. He noted that countries faced challenges in balancing economic development and human development. ESCWA provided support on poverty eradication, capacity building, developing strategic frameworks, fiscal policy, and employment and labour market policy, in cooperation with UN agencies and partners present in-country, with reference to the discussion on the Technology Bank for LDCs, he noted that in Sudan and Mauritania, ESCWA had supported the establishment of national technology transfer offices to promote innovation and link them to industrial platforms. He looked forward to linking these efforts to the work of colleagues and the technology bank. On the international trade side, ESCWA was supporting Mauritania to become part of Pan-Arab Free Trade Agreement, and Sudan to become part of the WTO.

**Mr. Joaquin Salido Marcos, the representative of ESCWA,** provided additional information on relevant activities. He noted that the three LDCs members of ESCWA had differentiated governance challenges. Mauritania would hold the next legislative and local elections in the last half of 2018 and the Presidential election were scheduled for 2019. Political stability could become increasingly fragile owing to competing agendas within the ruling party and the opposition. Sudan still faced many post-conflict and development related challenges, including issues of national unity, reintegration and reconciliation, several dimensions of poverty, unemployment, and severe regional disparities in income and access to economic and social services and opportunities. At the same time, a localized nucleus of violence was still active. Yemen was facing open war and the analysis of the current circumstances indicated no signs of progress towards a peace agreement that might allow an easing in the severity of the humanitarian crisis that is unfolding in the country. Conflict appeared to have reversed several improvements attributed to the implementation of successful projects aimed at achieving the Millennium Development Goals. For instance, in 2006 over 90 percent of primary school aged children were enrolled in school, with virtually no gender disparities up until age 12. However, the data for 2013 show a turn for the worse. There has been a substantial decline in overall enrolment rates across periods for all children, but especially for girls. Displaced populations were also a factor to consider, while food security had been seriously affected. These events undermined human capital and ultimately the productive capacity of the country. He expressed interest in working with the IACG members on issues of governance, which was one of the IPoA priorities and also related to achieving the SDGs, especially SDG16. He noted one of the main reasons for conflict was the level of disparities, including between urban and rural areas, and so monitoring progress ought to look at disparities. For example, access to electricity or telecommunications in Mauritania varied from 80 percent in urban areas to 20-23 percent in rural areas. Gender disaggregation would also show big differences. He noted the data challenges facing countries in conflict, where investments in data collection were not possible or viewed as an urgent need. Consequently, ESCWA had done work on how to make more efficient use of existing data on household and labour force surveys, showing that 11 out the 17 SDGs could be covered by existing data in the current collection efforts. This might be a cost-effective way to monitor SDGs progress in the LDCs with less means to afford costly data-collection exercises.

**Mr. Purevdorj Vaanchig, the representative of WIPO,** provided an update on recently accomplished and the ongoing work of WIPO, aimed at facilitating the use of intellectual property (IP) for promoting the national development objectives in LDCs. These mainly included cooperation program and activities on enhancing the access to knowledge, strengthening the technological and human resource capacity, and developing IP-related legal, institutional and regulatory frameworks in LDCs.  He noted that WIPO had been contributing continuously to the implementation of the relevant recommendations of the IPoA which had been mainstreamed into WIPO's work plan and were being implemented extensively, especially on strengthening the technology transfer capacities of the LDCs. The WIPO Division for LDCs was responsible for coordinating the implementation of the WIPO Deliverables - which is a set of priority thematic areas for cooperation with LDCs as identified by LDCs Ministers on the occasion of the Fourth UN Conference on the LDCs.

In 2017, WIPO carried out a total of 178 activities (with the total of 1966 participants) in LDCs in a wide range of areas, such as technical assistance on intellectual property policy and strategy, skills development and capacity building, appropriate technology, establishment of Technology and Innovation Support Centres (TISCs), automation and modernisation of national IP offices, patent, trademark, branding, copyright, traditional knowledge and geographical indication. In this context, a total of 491 people were trained in various capacity building activities, undertaken by the WIPO's LDC Division in 2017.

During 2016/2017, WIPO enhanced its technological and human resource capacity building cooperation with LDCs by adding each year two more training programs on technological capacity building and copyright for development. Thus, now a total of three training programs for 75 senior officials from LDCs are being conducted each year.

In 2016/2017, nine national and one interregional technological capacity building programmes on appropriate technology were held in LDCs. They have provided training to over 120 individuals from LDCs. A project-based approach, adopted in the training programs for LDCs, has resulted in the formulation and implementation of 44 national projects, which utilized IP tools for the promotion of development objectives.

WIPO continued to implement its project on Capacity-Building in the Use of Appropriate Technology Specific Technical and Scientific Information as a Solution for Identified Development Challenges. The first phase of the project was carried out between 2011 and 2013 in Zambia, Nepal and Bangladesh. It addressed important developmental needs identified by the national expert groups, such as water distillation system, rainwater harvesting, post-harvest drying of cardamom, and advanced ground improvement technique by cement and lime treatment for soft, low lying and marshy land, respectively.

The implementation of the Phase II of the WIPO's project on appropriate technology resulted in the identification and the preparation of business plans of six appropriate technologies in three beneficiary countries, namely, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Tanzania.

National experts identified solar coffee dryer technology, fish breeding technology, the processing of seaweed to extract carrageenan, and solar water distillation technology. A national meeting to discuss the future implementation of the identified technologies was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 5-7 March 2018, and for Rwanda and Tanzania they were planned to be held in April this year.

WIPO continued to assist Member States in establishing Technology and Innovation Support Centres (TISCs), which provides innovators in developing and least developed countries with access to locally-based, high quality technology information and related services. To date, TISCs had been set up in 124 institutions in 18 LDCs, and the work on establishing Technology and Innovation Support Centres is underway in ten LDCs.

As of 2017, 309 government agencies, universities and research institutions in 37 LDCs had been provided with the access to Access to Research for Development and Innovation (ARDI) - a program coordinated by WIPO together with its partners in the publishing industry to increase the availability of scientific and technical information in developing and least developed countries. Moreover, patent offices as well as academic and research institutions in all LDCs continued receiving free access to flagship patent data search and analysis products.

Since the start of the implementation of the WIPO Deliverables, adopted in 2011, to date a total of 154 students from LDCs have attended Master's degree studies in intellectual property thanks to the full and partial sponsorship provided by WIPO.

WIPO would continue to strengthen and expand its technical cooperation programs with partner Member States and national and regional institutions, aimed at building the technological and human resource capacity of LDCs to promote the use of IP for attaining their national development objectives. WIPO would also enhance its work on facilitating the utilization of technical and scientific information for the transfer of appropriate technology and the integration of appropriate technologies in the national innovation and IP policies and strategies in LDCs.

**Mr. Ferran Pérez Ribó, the representative of the World Bank** recalled that the WBG's primary tool to support the sustainable development of LDCs was the International Development Agency (IDA), the WBG's fund for the 77 poorest countries. In FY 2017, IDA provided $19.5 billion, a three billion increase from the previous year. The WBG was committed to drastically scaling up IDA's development interventions through innovative financing. Because of these efforts and the continued strong support of our partners, a record $75 billion replenishment was achieved for IDA18 and with new tools, although allocations would only be available in June 2018.

The transformational IDA18 Replenishment was finalized in December 2016. Three IDA18 special themes were retained from IDA17— climate change; gender and development; and fragility, conflict, and violence—and two new themes were introduced—governance and institutions, and jobs and economic transformation—which align with the overarching theme of "Toward 2030: Investing in growth, resilience, and opportunity." Internally at the WB, there was also a focus and discussion on harnessing technology for development and yet limit the related risks.

There had been a doubling of World Bank resources allocated to fragility, violence and conflict, from USD7 million to USD14 million. This echoes the call made by others in the meeting on the need for peaceful societies to support development institutions. The examples were provided of the World Bank's work in Yemen and Somalia, as well as the introduction of a new refugees funding sub-window under IDA.

Another challenge already mentioned was how to best to support the LDCs move onto a development growth path to leverage and catalyze financing and crowding-in private sector financing. Over the past year, the World Bank had come up with the "Maximizing Finance for Development" approach, which represented a fundamental rethink of how the World Bank used its ODA and concessional finance in a way that is catalytic for other investments, such as FDI and domestic private sector, together with upstream reforms. An example of this was the new Private Sector Window (PSW) from the International Finance Corporation and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency established as part of IDA18.

**Mr. Wasiq Khan, the representative of WHO,** noted that health was considered as a resource for development. WHO had physical presence in all LDCs or was covered from a neighbouring country. WHO's focus was on building health systems and universal health coverage, emergency support, and partnerships for health and development. Conflict was also an emerging issue at WHO. For example, in Yemen, human resources on the ground had been tripled and investments doubled. With the new administration at WHO, a new 5-year programme of work had been agreed by the membership which focussed on universal health coverage, particularly on LDCs and on emergencies. Health profiles has been produced on LDCs as a block, which were made available to the meeting and would be updated annually. The WHO emergency programme had been ramped up, with most resources going to LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, and, under the new model, 70% of resources to be invested in-country. Ongoing cross-cutting challenges included the weaknesses of health systems (e.g. Ebola), vulnerability from economic, political, social, climate change related factors. A special initiative for SIDS had just been launched. There was also a shift to addressing specific needs of groups of countries. Domestic financing for health was a major objective. There had been progress - albeit slow - thanks to the efforts of development partners such as the Global Fund and GAVI.

**Mr. Frank Van Rompaey, the representative of UNIDO,** noted that UNIDO's focus was on SDG9, and that progress in LDCs was lagging. As the Secretary-General's report on the UNDS repositioning had noted, UN support for SDG9 and other SDGs related to economic transformation was also lagging. He referred to the joint meeting with OHRLLS in late November 2017 in Vienna, including the request made by Ministers to UNIDO and its partners to expand its model of country-level engagement. The model is country-driven, with high-level political commitment, priority sector-focussed, and seeks to mobilize investment, both FDI and public resources, including from IFIs. The pilot in Ethiopia had resulted in USD300 million being mobilized while that in Senegal had focussed on reform of the conducive environment including Special Economic Zones. UNIDO, ECA and AUC has been asked to lead the Industrial Decade for Africa, and in this regard UNIDO had reached out to all key partners, and would soon convene a meeting.

**Mr. Gustavo Katz Braga, the representative of CFC,** recalled that the Common Fund for Commodities was created to deliver practical solutions to the problems of commodity dependence. With its market oriented approach, the Fund invests in the development of small-holders commodity producers, contributing to the implementation of several key priorities of the IPoA. Addressing vulnerabilities was at the root of structural transformation required for graduation from the LDC status. CFC recognized from experience that commodity dependence was a particular source of vulnerability where a country could not convert its natural endowment into sustained economic development. This condition, common among the LDCs, led to macroeconomic instability, income inequality and other challenges hindering economic development. The CFC believed that the private sector can be a valuable partner in overcoming commodity dependence. He noted that the CFC acts as impact investor in small and medium-sized enterprises which generate development gains for primary producers. The CFC focus was on initiatives that could generate a high impact, reducing smallholder producer's dependency on and vulnerability to the commodities market. The adoption of the SDGs provided a common ground for public-private investment in development, and the CFC was working to implement a portfolio-wide SDG impact framework.

The LDCs had been recognized as an especially priority group in the operations of the CFC since 1998. Continuing on this commitment, the Operational Programme of the CFC directed the Fund to provide financial instruments tailored to the needs of, inter alia, enterprises engaged in commodity value chains in the LDCs. The target volume of commitment of CFC's own resources is up to USD 12 million per year including development partnerships with impact investment funds. During the period 2011 - 2016, the CFC, within its modest resources, had approved 34 regular projects and 16 smaller projects with a total value of USD 143 million of which about USD 24 million had been contributed by the CFC. These covered commodities such as cereals, pulses, edible oil, cassava, coffee, horticulture and floriculture, timber etc. of social, economic and environmental interest to LDCs. These projects developed new opportunities for smallholder producers in LDCs through increases in production and productivity, horizontal and vertical diversification, value-addition, increasing access to markets, capacity building and risk management. Over the course of 2017, the CFC considered 78 project proposals originating from LDCs and 3 projects had been taken for further consideration of CFC financing with the total amount of USD 13 million and CFC contribution of USD 4 million. Additionally, the CFC had supported four impact investment funds with activities in LDCs. Through these investments, the CFC helped to strength the impact investment industry, attracting more capital for the LDCs. At the same time, this was a great way to share experiences and gain valuables insights from partners who share similar goals and principles with the CFC.

He highlighted the relevance for the IPoA of the experience of the SME Impact Fund (SIF), which was a small fund with initial size of EUR 4 million, targeting investments in SMEs operating in commodity value chains in East Africa, mainly Tanzania. This was likely the only fund of its kind which is entirely based and operating in LDCs. The fund's impact monitoring was done using impact assessment checklist incorporating priorities for action under the IPoA such as market linkages, value addition and employment creation. The CFC acted both as investor and Member of the Advisory Committee of the Fund. The fund operated in the niche of SMEs delivering exceptional outreach to the most vulnerable and was now financing 9,900 farmers in 11 value chains, reaching the total of 52,000 beneficiaries. He emphasized that continued and sustained progress of LDCs towards graduation and beyond was unthinkable without investments in their productive sectors, taking advantage of their commodity endowment and supporting the emergence of a diversified economic system by strategically reinvesting commodity derived incomes. Investment in commodity driven development was a prerequisite for sustainable economic development in LDCs and it was a shared interest of producing and consuming countries alike. He called on the group to reflect on the need for a global commodity agenda for development which could become a stepping stone for graduation for all LDCs.

**Ms. Hong Nguyen, the representative of WCO,** noted that since the last IACG meeting on the IPoA, there had been considerable progress on WCO's contribution on the SDGs. She shared a recent WCO document entitled "Customs and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" as well as some of its findings. She provided information on four WCO strategic packages, including on economic competitiveness aimed at enhancing security and promoting facilitation of international trade, including simplification and harmonization of customs procedures, the second one on revenue, the third on compliance and enforcement, and the fourth on organizational development. Trade facilitation and international trade in general can improve employment, income, conditions of women and their empowerment, and sustainable development. She shared a presentation linking IPoA priorities to the WCO strategic packages. Addressing the priorities for actions of the IPoA, the WCO could provide supports to LDCs not only in Trade area (Priority C) but also in enhancing the Productivity capacity (Priority A) and Agriculture and Food Security (Priority B). Finally, she gave an illustration of how the WCO and the customs administrations could support LDCs' efforts to integrate into global value chains by facilitating trade, promoting free trade agreements, securing supply chains and protecting IPRs, and promoting integrity and good governance.

**Ms. Linnéa Van Wagenen, the representative of UNSSCO,** noted that the principles of the IPoA were closely aligned with UNSSCO's work, and that South-South and triangular cooperation played a complementary role. In general, South-South Cooperation was being increasingly recognized as an integral tool for achieving the SDGs. An increasing number of UN entities were contributing to the Secretary-General's report on the state of South-South Cooperation and developing strategies for South-South and triangular cooperation.

Regarding the funding gap previously mentioned, UNSSCO noted that the resources and dimensions of South-South Cooperation had grown in recent years. Financial flows from China rose from USD 1 billion in 2002 to USD 10 billion in 2004 and USD 25 billion in 2017. India has also allocated increasing amounts and has adopted some innovative lines, such as cooperation on solar energy and cooperation directed especially at civil society in partner countries. Brazil focused on sharing success stories from its own development process, using public officials and institutions. India had recently set up a USD 100 million fund with the UN, managed by UNSSCO, while new funding paths were opening up, such as the Beijing Qiaonyu Foundation funded USD 13.5 million climate and nature conservation fund, the first major non-State pledge of contribution following the entry-into-force of the Paris Agreement.

The first volume of the "Good Practices in South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Sustainable Development" was launched during the Ninetieth Session for the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation in May 2016, and a second volume would be prepared, once again featuring Southern good practices that are relevant to SDG implementation. These best practices would also be shared on the South-South and triangular cooperation portal. UNSSCO and UNDP had launched the South-South Global

Thinkers, a global coalition of think tank networks to facilitates the sharing of knowledge, expertise, and perspectives from the Global South to inform policy dialogues.

As the first such event of its kind, the “South-South Investment for Sustainable Development Goals: Policy and Legal environment in Asia” was held in Bangkok, Thailand, in August 2017, under the umbrella of the South-South Global Thinkers: the Global Coalition of Think Tank Networks. Other events and studies have been carried out including the recent UN Global South-South Development Expo, in Antalya, Turkey, which provided a solid base for the discussions that will be held at the Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation in Buenos Aires in March 2019, for which UNSSCO has been designated as the secretariat.

**Mr. Paul Desanker, the representative of UNFCCC,** recalled that support had been provided to the LDCs since 2001 with four major modalities: first, a specific work programme for the LDCs (including institutional capacity building, support for technology transfer, support for systematic observations and research, and the preparation of adaptation plans that can be then funded); second, support for National Adaptation Programmes of Action for LDCs; third, an expert group to support the capacity to access adaptation finance; and fourth, a LDC Fund managed by the GEF which has disbursed USD 1.2 billion to date. The LDCF funding has dried up and may be replaced with funding from the Green Climate Fund, although there is no special window for the LDCs in the latter. The LDC Expert Group continued to seek ways to help overcome capacity bottleneck to develop bankable projects. Climate change affects many other SDGs and the UNFCCC is working closely with other agencies. He noted that at the upcoming UNFCCC session, the issue of smooth transitions was on the agenda, and the LDC Work Programme was up for review this year, which could provide a number of opportunities. He suggested the creation of a proposal writing facility to help LDCs prepare funding proposals, as they currently had little support for this, especially on issues such as separating the climate and development impacts of the project.

**Ms. Meena Singalee, the representative of IAEA,** noted that IAEA’s mandate went beyond verification included also a development component. Its Technical Cooperation Programme was the main channel for this, and included 214 projects with participation of LDCs. Thirty-five of the 169 IAEA Member States were from LDCs (26 Africa, 8 from the Asia Pacific and 1 from Latin America and the Caribbean). 20 percent of the Technical Cooperation Fund went to LDCs (or approximately USD17.2 million). She provided information on a recent technical cooperation conference, which shared lessons learned and best practice. She noted that there was ongoing cooperation with many UN entities, especially FAO and WHO. Among the challenges faced by IAEA was the sustainability of long term training, for example on cancer control and human health issues, including retaining trained experts nationally.

**Mr. Orhan Osmani, the representative of ITU,** noted that ITU provided support to the LDCs in a range of areas, including emergency communication, cybersecurity, policy and regulation development, review of existing policy, and concentrated assistance to LDCs.

Following graduation of the LDCs, ITU does not stop its support but continues to support member states following requests for assistance if any. ITU continues to monitor ICT development indicators for all and specifically on LDCs provides individual country profiles which are available on its website. Cooperation had taken place with OHRLLS on various reports, and with the WTO on the Aid for Trade report. He, also recalled that ITU and OHRLLS have collaborated in preparation of a report focused on LDCs in 2017, "ICTs, LDCs and the SDGs: Achieving universal and affordable Internet in the LDCs". Despite progress on ICT development, the challenge remains that although access is available, not many people are making use of it, which also discourages private sector organizations to invest in upgrades of the networks to the latest technologies. ITU itself provides technology and knowledge transfers and capacity building through conformity and interoperability technology labs and centres of excellence established regionally, aiming for enhanced human and institutional capacity building. ITU also provided assistance in building regional broadband networks. ITU also implemented a project supported by the Government of Japan on big data in 3 countries – Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone – aiming to build a foundation of big data infrastructure, and, for solutions, developed and shared the source code with the beneficiaries. Big data can be a useful source to deal with emergency challenges as well as to provide required information for national development planning and implementation. He noted that ICTs remain cross-cutting. ITU was seeking to promote access, literacy, online training, and use of big data.

**Mr. Hugo Beteta, the representative of ECLAC,** offered to provide support for the Technology Needs Assessment of Haiti carried out by the Technology bank for LDCs. He noted that extensive work had been carried out by ECLAC on inequality, but that there were no targets in the SDGs either within or between countries, but that this was an important issue to track within this group. The discussion on "leaving no one behind" was focussed on people and groups, but should not forget to consider which countries were left behind, which calls for policies on global governance rather than only national policy. For example, the issue of fiscal paradises was unlikely to be resolved through national policy alone. In today's interconnected world, addressing "leaving no-one behind" also had regional implications for example through political stability, migration and refugees. He noted the merit of growth strategies that are consistent with poverty reduction, as well as policies that influence the pattern of growth, and informed the meeting of the ECLAC Structural Gaps Methodology.

**Mr. Celso de Carvalho, the representative of FAO,** noted that the food and agricultural sector was important source of income for LDCs, amounting to 25 percent of the GDP, but at the same time LDCs have a huge and rapidly increasing agricultural trade deficit of USD23 billion per year. LDCs have high population growth with largely rural populations, and are highly exposed to weather and climate change. Agricultural growth is held back by poor infrastructure, weak institutions, underdeveloped markets, broken value chains and poor integration in global markets. FAO's work contributes to different priority areas of the IPoA.

Examples of activities include policy coherence between trade and agriculture, support to regional economic communities on trade and sanitary and phytosanitary measures, food safety, food losses, capacity building in the public sector and value chain actors, agricultural PPPs schemes, institutional support, conservation agriculture, and inclusive extension approaches.

## D. The role of international trade in the implementation of the IPoA

**Mr. Sandagdorj Erdenebileg, Chief, Office of the High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS,** introduced the agenda item. He noted that the purpose of the session was to take stock of efforts to support LDCs in harnessing the potential of international trade for sustainable development, and to discuss what could be done to further support them reap the benefits of trade. He noted that international trade remained a key driver of economic growth and sustainable development in LDCs. However, in 2016 the share of LDC exports of goods and services continued to decline to 0.89% of world exports, down from its peak value of 1.04% in 2013, therefore moving further away from the target of 2 percent of global exports called for in the IPoA and SDG 17.11. It was important to arrest that trend. He noted that this trend was due to falling commodity prices, especially fuels. He also recalled the point made by the representative of the WTO in the morning session, that LDC trade had expanded at a slower rate that of the rest of the world, thereby contributing to a decreased share.

He noted that the composition of LDC exports continued to change. In 2016, exports of primary products accounted for just under half of LDC merchandise exports (down from 73% in 2005), while manufactured products accounted for 40% (up from 21 % in 2005), with clothing products accounting for 29%. Agricultural products accounted for 13% in 2016. The only group of LDCs to achieve export growth in 2016 were exporters of manufactured goods, which increased by 9%.

Following a decade of sustained growth, LDCs exports of commercial services began to slow in 2014. In 2016, services exports fell by 4% as compared to 2015. Exports of African LDCs accounted for more than half of LDCs total commercial services exports, mainly in transport and tourism. In Asian LDCs, 85% of tourists originated from neighbouring countries, while the number was 63% for African LDCs.

While preferential treatment of LDCs exports had improved since 2011, obstacles remained, including administrative requirements to use trade preferences and other non-tariff barriers. The IPOA calls for “favourable market access conditions for all products originating in least developed countries”. The developed countries had provided either full or significant DFQF access to LDCs, and increasingly developing countries were doing the same, with. in particular, Chile, China and India having reached comprehensive DFQF access. In 2016, the product coverage of duty free coverage for LDCs increased by 10 percentage points as compared to 2010. In 2015, average tariffs facing LDCs were 6.5% for clothing, 3.3% for textiles, with 1% for other product groups, and zero tariff for fuel and minerals. Positive developments were registered on rules of origin as per the Nairobi agreement on preferential rules of origin for LDCs.

The WTO Committee on Rules of Origin adopted the template for notification in March 2017 to enhance transparency. Several countries have expanded cumulation possibilities including China, Canada, EU, Norway and Switzerland on self-certification on rules of origin.

Another notable new development that could impact the international trade landscape for LDCs over the coming years was the adoption of the Trade Facilitation Agreement under the WTO, which entered into force in February 2017, under which the LDCs have been granted additional time for implementation.

He noted that there were positive intergovernmental agreement and preferential arrangements for LDCs. He noted that the UN's effort should focus on helping the LDCs to fully utilize the benefits accorded to them. He recalled that this morning's discussion had highlighted supply side capacity constraints for export, and limitations on productive capacity. Also important were capacity building and negotiation capability for effective participation in international trade. The UN and WTO had excellent comparative advantage to support the LDCs in this manner. The noted the session should come up with tangible proposals of how the UN could increase support and improve coordination.

**Mr. Taufiqur Rahman, the representative of WTO** noted that trade was a powerful tool for development, which was explicitly recognized in the IPoA. He noted that the latest available was for 2016, and 2017 data would be available in a few months. As noted in the morning session, the share of LDCs in world exports of goods and services had declined to 0.91 per cent in 2016. When disaggregated into goods and services, the share in goods exports was 0.99 % in 2016 and world commercial services declined from 0.7% down to 0.66%. The underlying reason was continued primary commodity dependence, and thus susceptibility to primary commodity prices. The trade deficit has grown to a new high of USD93 billion in 2016, more than 9 times higher than in 2005. Looking to trends in the composition of exports, he noted that the share of manufacturing had increased to 40% of overall merchandise trade. The share of primary products went down from 73% in 2005 to 49% in 2016. However, fuel dominated primary products, accounting for 50%. The top three LDC exporters and top three LDC importers were the same, namely Bangladesh, Angola and Myanmar. The EU had replaced China as the top market destination for LDC exports, which moved to second place, followed by the US. On service, LDCs suffered from a low domestic supply base. The global share has remained static at 0.6%-0.7%, primarily composed of travel and tourism at 50% of totals, and has been concentrated in a few LDCs (Ethiopia and Myanmar).

The WTO has sought to help LDCs with market access, but positive developments have not been translated into an improvement in the share. Several decisions have been taken at Ministerial sessions starting with DFQF access at the Hong Kong Ministerial meeting. The WTO monitors the implementation of this producing an annual report. All developed country members now provide full or nearly full DFQF access, but the extent to which this can be used depends on an LDC's productive capacity. He noted that the case of the US had been discussed in the morning.

A second topic was Rules of Origin, to which WTO members had given increased attention, adopting Multilateral Guidelines on Rules of Origin in 2013 and 2105, and a template for notification. The LDC Group in Geneva was broadly happy with progress, although these measures benefit primarily the manufacturing nations among them. Trade in services was more complicated. In 2011, a services waiver was agreed upon under which members could grant preferential treatment to LDC service providers. 24 Members had submitted information on preferential treatment provided to LDCs, and the challenge was now to review how LDCs could take advantage of those notifications and penetrate into these markets.

Regarding the SDGs, average tariffs are used to measure DFQF access. Looking at averages for LDCs, positive duties only remain in manufacturing, especially clothing. Agricultural products had an average tariff of less than 1%, while clothing was at 6.5%. He noted that developing countries were also assisting the LDCs - China, India, Korea, Thailand, Chile and turkey all provide significant degrees of market access to LDC products.

**Mr. Francesco Geoffroy, the representative of ITC** noted that there had been progress in the delivery of ITC's work in LDCs; in 2011 at the time of IPoA, it comprised 60% of ITC's expenditures but today it had risen to 80% in LDCs and LLDCs. There has been a trend of growing contributions from certain donors, which had allowed an increase from USD50 million to USD90 million in 2018, with further growth projected until in 2021. He noted that there was appetite in both donors and beneficiaries for direct assistance to micro and SMEs. ITC had been prioritizing the agriculture, green economy and the services sector. ITC's primary clients were micro and SMEs, with nearly 50% of enterprises either female owned or operated. Last year, 15,000 enterprises had been reached, connecting 3 million people to markets, reaching 100,000 youths and catalysing USD 100 million dollars. Based on various evaluations, in LDCs, small businesses made up more than 90% of all enterprises and were responsible for 80% of jobs. He noted that all ITC activities were extrabudgetary funded, with only staff costs financed from the regular budget. The ITC's Strategic Plan had just been approved containing 6 main priorities all of which were derived from LDCs priorities. ITC participated actively in several initiatives that aimed at coordinating and synergizing LDC assistance. He referred to the presentation by the representative of the EIF and initiative mentioned, and cited the cluster on trade, on LDCs, the Steering Committee on Tourism for

Development, and the recently-launched multi-donor trust fund for trade. There had been increasing interest among donors in this type of cooperation.

**Mr. Moritz Meier-Ewert, a representative of UNCTAD,** agreed with the analysis from the WTO that market access conditions for LDCs had improved. He noted that were still some areas for improvement such as DFQF access in services and the removal of agricultural subsidies. He noted that variations in shares were sometimes simply a result of price changes rather than shifts in volumes. To take advantage of these conditions, UNCTAD was focussing on assisting LDCs in building their productive capacity, and was preparing a measurable index of productive capacity in countries and to help domestic policy-making including on energy, transport, etc. He noted that while a doubling of the share of exports could be achieved simply by the doubling of the price of commodities, a more meaningful improvement in trade should be sought, that would benefit other goals of the IPoA, such as poverty reduction, or health improvements, or that brought about expansion in specific sectors, productivity gains. UINCTAD had been focussing on the fisheries sector for the wider development benefits that it brought, such as nutritional benefits, coastal development, etc. While many LDCs were large producers of fish, exports were hampered by their ability to meet SPS standards, for example in the EU and US. UNCTAD was working with the FAO and others to assist LDCs overcome these barriers. He referred to a tool that UNCTAD had developed on gender-mainstreaming in trade policy, especially as there were LDC export products in which mainly women were employed, such as textiles.

**Mr. Ahmad Mukhtar, the representative of FAO** noted that in agriculture market access was increasing was for LDCs but its utilization was decreasing. He noted that developed countries were opening their markets but that many developing countries were still protectionist. He noted that bar of standards was rising, for example sustainability standards. He noted that a protectionist mindset often prevailed in the agricultural sector, this was not always the case in trade ministries, and thus there was a need for greater policy coherence between the two communities. He noted that PPPs had been very successful in the agricultural sector. However, large investments were still needed in the agricultural sector in LDCs.

FAO had developed a flagship on Aid for Trade for Developing Countries in Agri-business and Sustainable Agriculture Trade Development, which had several guiding principles. Firstly, it was important to encourage the establishment of value chains at the national level and to link them to the regional and global value chains. Secondly, the recent Trade Facilitation Agreement held enormous potential for overcoming LDC challenges; for example, in many African countries, intra-African trade was more cumbersome than exporting to the US or EU. FAO was working with regional partners such as the AUC to build capacity in trade facilitation. Thirdly, protectionist mindsets were often found in the agricultural sector, while services were often more liberal. Combining the service sector -such as logistics, IT or finance – into the agricultural sector often yielded positive results especially smaller countries and LDCs. Fourthly, the compliance with standards was challenging as mentioned in earlier presentations – while there were zero tariffs on agricultural products, the tariff equivalence of non-tariffs measures had been estimated at 17% by UNCTAD.

Regarding the CEB cluster on trade and productive capacity, he felt this mechanism had huge untapped potential since it had all the necessary ingredients to be effective, such as senior-level buy-in and linkage with UNDAFs.

**Ms. Hong Nguyen, the representative of WCO,** reiterated that trade facilitation is the prominent role of the WCO. The organisation has been working closely with the WTO on implementation of the TFA, and had launched a strategic programme – the Mercator programme – and was engaging with donor countries and funds and partners, such as the World Bank, WTO and UNCTAD, to support LDCs and developing countries to implement category B and C notifications of the TFA. Moreover, the WCO, with its key functions including standard setting, capacity building and cooperation with other stakeholders on customs matters, could provide supports to LDCs on four areas: promoting trade facilitation, promoting market access, increasing the share of agricultural exports by utilizing preferential mechanisms, and increasing value added in the global value chain. On market access, WCO also had the mandate to support its members on revenue collection, HS classification, rules of origin, and implementing the WTO valuation agreement. In 2018, WCO plans to help LDCs in implementing the WTO valuation agreement which addressing the challenges in informal trade, and to develop tools on preferential market access for LDCs. On the issue of increasing agriculture share in exports, from the customs functions perspective, the WCO provide supports members to implement the free trade agreements, rules of origin and to potentially improve the productivity by preventing from the importation of counterfeiting fertilizers and pesticides. Activities were also underway on increasing the value added in the global value chain by involving upstream activities, such as protecting IP and branding and facilitating logistics services.

**Ms. Nara Luvsan, the representative of UN Environment,** noted that there was a dedicated Environment and Trade Hub located in Geneva that worked closely with partners around the table and country representatives, and had developed toolkits and guidelines, for example a Sustainability Toolkit for Trade Negotiators, a Toolbox for Green Industrial Policy and Trade, an online and face-to-face training course on Green Economy and Trade, a Handbook on Trade and Green Economy and a Guide for the Assessment of the Costs and Benefits of Sustainability Certification. UN Environment has also prepared reports on trends and opportunities among developing countries on trade in selected environmental goods to assess the contribution of trade to the green economy transition, and South-South trade in renewable energy. At the country level, awareness and capacity building for sectoral strategies in Burkina Faso, Mongolia and the Pacific islands

**Mr. Andrey Kuleshov, a representative of the CFC,** noted that commodities were a substantial component of LDC exports. There were many projects dealing with the production process and value addition. However, trade was concerned with the relationship between different players, and therefore needed to be analysed in a dynamic context, between North and South and increasingly between South and South. He noted that a concept paper on the subject would be included in the forthcoming Annual Report and also as a stand-alone publication, and he would welcome further feedback on the subject and discussion.

## E. Conclusions and next steps

**Ms. Heidi Schroderus Fox**, **the Director of OHRLLS,** highlighted the following key points from the discussion.

1. Recognizing that there were some positive developments, overall, we were lagging behind in reaching most targets set in the IPoA. The UN system entities should refocus their collective activities and build further partnerships in the last 2 and a half years of the IPoA. It was important to build better linkages and coherence on the work done at country, regional and global levels.

2. The interlinkages between and coherence in the implementation of the IPoA and the SDGs was crucial. There should be further work on this, possibly through an expert meeting or a joint publication, which OHRLLS could take the lead on.

3. As the Technology Bank for LDCs was being inaugurated and would start its first year of activities, all members were encouraged to continue supporting the substantive work and programme, while avoiding duplication and yet bringing in respective areas of expertise. OHRLLS invited all to provide their partnership and contribution to make this a real success for the LDCs.

4. Access to finance remains crucial. Providing support, training and capacity building for the LDCs towards this objective should be amplified. Efforts should be made to look for further opportunities for increasing South-South and triangular cooperation.

5. There had been considerable discussion on graduation and the need to support smooth transitions. A draft list of international support measures would be circulated for comment and additions from the United Nations system and other international organizations, and would be available for their use. The issue of vulnerability criteria and graduation remained a difficult one which required further clarification. This was a critical issue for some graduating LDCs, especially the SIDS.

6. There was a need to continue to focus on all LDCs – those who were the furthest behind, those emerging from conflicts and those embracing graduation. All needed the UN's targeted support and collaboration.

7. On international trade, three possible topics for further UN system joint action were identified:
    a. a joint study on how to increase the value chain for LDCs;
    b. capacity building for the LDC's participation in trade negotiations; and
    c. ways to strengthen activities on investment promotion.

## Annex I: List of participants

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**Annex II: Agenda**

## Sixteenth Inter-Agency Consultative Group Meeting on of the United Nations system and international organizations on the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020

**10 April 2018**
**Conference Room S-4, Palais des Nations, Geneva**

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| **10:00 – 10:15** | Opening session<br><br>• **Opening remarks by Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox, Director, Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS)** |
| **10:15 – 13:00** | Update on the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) and outcome of the Mid-term Review and on efforts to build synergies and coherence with the 2030 Agenda<br><br>• **Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox, Director, UN-OHRLLS (moderator): remarks on status of implementation of the IPoA**<br>• **Presentations by participating organizations on their activities towards implementation of the IPoA and building synergies and coherence with the 2030 Agenda** |
| **13:00 – 15:00** | *Lunch break* |
| **15:00 – 17:15** | The role of international trade in implementation of the IPoA and areas for enhanced cooperation by the UN system<br><br>• **Mr. Sandagdorj Erdenebileg, Chief, UN-OHRLLS (moderator): remarks on the status of international trade for LDCs**<br>• **Presentations by participating organizations on the issue of international trade** |
| **17:15 – 17:30** | Conclusion<br><br>• **Summary of discussion and concluding remarks by Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox, Director, UN-OHRLLS** |