



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

**(UN-OHRLS)**

**Report of the Seventeenth 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 11**

**United Nations secretariat building, New York**

**13 November 2018**

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## Acronyms

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

## **A. Introduction**

The Seventeenth meeting of the Inter-Agency Consultative Group of the United Nations system and international organizations on the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 was held in New York on 13 November 2018. The meeting was organized by the United Nations Office of the High-Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS). The IACG meeting provided a platform for the participating 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, and discuss areas for further action.

## **B. Opening session**

The meeting was opened by Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS); she also chaired the session. Ms. 'Utoikamanu welcomed participants to the seventeenth session of the IACG on the IPoA. She also welcomed to the meeting the Chair of the Global Coordination Bureau for the LDCs, represented by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Malawi. To the entities of the UN Systems, the Under-Secretary-General expressed her appreciation for their strong commitment and continuous support to accelerate the implementation of the IPoA and to promote the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in the LDCs. Ms. 'Utoikamanu underscored that the LDCs rely on the support from the UN system to meet their global commitments and the UN system's coordinated effort is critical to address their challenges and achieve sustainable development, stability and prosperity. She noted that leaving no one behind also means keeping up with change and not falling further behind. She noted the importance of electricity access, computer literacy, and highspeed internet access for providing an enabling environment for countries to succeed in building productive capacity. She also provided an update on progress on the Technology Bank for LDCs. Ms. 'Utoikamanu noted further that 12 LDCs were currently in the graduation pipeline. She informed the meeting that the ECOSOC resolution on the CDP validated the recommendation to graduate Bhutan in 2023, and both the Solomon Islands and Sao Tome in 2024, and to consider both Kiribati and Tuvalu not later than 2021. She highlighted that the ECOSOC resolution requested the UN systems to provide assistance to graduating countries in the formulation and implementation of their national transition strategies and to consider country-specific support for graduated countries for a fixed period of time and in a predictable manner. In addition, she drew attention to the Secretary-General's report, prepared by OHRLLS, on the "Implementation, effectiveness and added value of smooth transition measures and graduation support," which proposes several options for supporting graduating countries. She called on the IACG to step up efforts to support the LDCs to graduate with momentum and in a sustainable manner.

**H.E. Mr. Lot Thauzeni Pansipadana Dzonzi**, Chair of the Global Coordination Bureau of the LDCs and Deputy Permanent Representative of Malawi, highlighted the invaluable role of the IACG and its member organizations in supporting the LDCs to eradicate poverty, build productive capacity, enhance resilience and achieve the SDGs. He noted that there had been mixed results on the implementation of the IPoA. On the positive side, average economic growth across the LDCs was picking up - but it was still far from the 7 percent target. Poverty had been declining – but not fast enough to achieve SDG1. The decline in the LDC’s share of global exports has been reversed in 2017. Mobile cellular subscriptions had increased. There was progress on internet penetration, access to electricity, school enrolment rates, and several other key social development indicators. He highlighted that there has been little progress in structural transformation in LDCs. Despite some increase in ODA, the share remained at 0.09 percent of the donors’ GNI. Foreign direct investment flows to LDCs had contracted by 17 percent. He noted that the IPoA had helped the LDCs advance on several key fronts, but it was not enough. He called on all stakeholders to step up their efforts and work together in the implementation of the IPoA and that it was also the time to reflect on collective next steps beyond 2020. This was of critical importance to the LDCs. He updated the meeting on intergovernmental consultations on the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. He shared that it is timely to begin the reflection on how the UN system could contribute to the process. He encouraged the UN entities to take an ambitious view on the scope of a new programme of action, including new directions, taking into account the recent evolution of the international sustainable development agenda, the rapidly shifting global landscape, such as new technological advances, and also the challenges facing the LDCs – both long-standing and new ones. He urged all UN entities to give priority to supporting LDCs and to work on concrete initiatives and deliverables that would help LDCs to overcome their challenges. He also requested substantive support in preparing for and participating in relevant UN meetings, including, COP24, the Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, and the Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. He provided assurances of his full commitment in ensuring that the LDCs were active participants in this process.

### **C. 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**

**Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox**, Director of OHRLLS welcomed the participants and noted that a key question was what the UN could do over the next two years to accelerate efforts in the implementation of the IPoA. She briefed the meeting on highlights from Secretary- General report on the implementation of the IPoA. She underscored that results were very mixed; progress had been made on some aspects, but on others, the LDCs lagged behind. Consequently, without decisive action, the LDCs would not reach the IPoA targets by 2020. She urged the IACG to do more to help LDCs in the final two years of the IPoA. She reiterated that economic growth had picked up, but not fast enough to achieve the poverty eradication targets contained on the IPoA and SDGs. Progress in enhancing and diversifying productive

capacity had been limited. On technology and R&D, there were positive trends. The Technology Bank for the LDCs had been fully operationalized, with the first SDG target achieved (17.8). OHRLLS had started implementing the work programme of the Technology Bank in collaboration with UNCTAD and UNESCO on Science, Technology and Innovation reviews and Technology Needs Assessments. The Technology Bank would be carrying out work on digital access to research in selected LDCs with Research4Life, a consortium formed by WHO, FAO, UNEP, ILO and WIPO. The Director also updated the meeting on the administrative details of the Technology Bank and reiterated the importance of secondments and further collaboration with the Technology Bank. She informed the meeting that progress was needed on social indicators in the LDCs, particularly given the high projected population growth rates. Maternal and infant mortality rates remained high, while youth unemployment was a major cause of concern in all LDCs. On climate change, she noted the strong impact on the LDCs. Natural disasters had affected 23 million people in LDCs over the past year and had claimed at least 1,400 lives. To cope with this, international support was critical for the LDCs, as they had the least capacity themselves to deal with these challenges. In 2017, bilateral aid had increased by 4% in real terms, reversing several years of decline. FDI flows had increased and stood at only 2% of global FDI for the 47 LDCs. She noted that the Secretary-General's report called on LDCs and UN system and all other actors to intensify efforts to implement commitments in the IPoA. She noted that the LDC Ministerial Declaration had expressed concern about the decline of resources towards UN operational activities in the LDCs, and had urged the UN development system to prioritize allocation to LDCs by developing operational guidance. She also highlighted the importance of graduation and smooth transition measures. The ECOSOC resolution on the CDP this year requested the entities of the UN development system to provide assistance to graduation countries in the implementation and formation for national transition strategies and considering extending support during the transition phase in a predictable manner. She noted that OHRLLS has worked on investment promotion in collaboration with UNCTAD. OHRLLS was working with the International Development Law Organization (IDLO) on an initiative to support LDCs in their efforts to increase foreign investment and the benefits that they derive from such investment and to provide legal support to LDCs on investment negotiation and dispute settlement. She invited members of the IACG to share their experience and suggestions on how IACG entities can do more to make sure that the last two years of implementation successful.

**The representative of the secretariat of the CDP, DESA,** provided an update on recent developments and noted that the CDP's current work programme would include a detailed review of the LDC criteria as well as inputs to LDCs V. The CDP had developed an electronic platform called GradJet, a toolkit to help graduating LDCs to understand the graduation process better and collect information on graduation. The CDP was also mandated to carry out a review of the UNDS and its LDC-specific support. This was first carried out in 2016 and would be carried out again for the 2019 plenary. The representative expressed appreciation for the work of the IATF on LDC graduation. He underscored that it helped UN entities to collaborate and promote information-sharing and proposed to discuss how to link the work of the UNDS on the ground with agencies at HQ. He also informed the meeting that the CDP had begun carrying out an enhanced impact assessment on Bangladesh as a pilot.

**The representative of UNCTAD** informed the meeting that UNCTAD would soon launch the *Least Developed Countries Report 2018*, which would address the issue of entrepreneurship and the role it plays in the process of structural transformation and sustainable development in LDCs. UNCTAD had also produced a compendium on policies on LDCs, a summary of work done over the last 10 years, launched by the Deputy Secretary-General in Geneva. This year, UNCTAD's Africa Report had focussed on migration, which highlighted that migrants were not a burden, but could benefit both sending and recipient countries. UNCTAD had carried out a comprehensive analysis of the state of investment in the LDCs. On technical assistance, UNCTAD was developing an index on measuring productive capacity, currently testing the indicators in Botswana, Lao PDR and Rwanda. UNCTAD had also been working on upgrading LDC's capacity for fisheries exports. Two centres of excellence in Vietnam and Mauritius have been established, and a training manual had been published on trading and export capacities on fisheries. Progress was made on the EU-UNCTAD joint Programme for Angola: Train for Trade II. Science, Technology and Innovation Policy (STIP) reviews were being carried out in Rwanda, Ethiopia, and Uganda. E-Trade readiness assessments had been carried out or were underway in several LDCs - Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Liberia, Myanmar, Nepal, Samoa, Senegal, Solomon Islands, Togo, Uganda, Vanuatu and Zambia. Within the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF), UNCTAD had developed a project on the Djibouti City – Addis Ababa Transit and Transport Corridor. UNCTAD has provided specific assistance on the WTO TFA to 15 LDCs, and 17 investment policy reviews.

**The representative of UNIDO** underscored the need to integrate the IPoA priorities in the UNDAF at the country level to advance the implementation of the IPoA over the next two years. He highlighted the need to ensure that focal points in the countries were engaged. He informed the meeting that UNIDO's mandate was critical to the overarching objective of the IPoA on poverty reduction and addressing the structural achievements. The 7th LDC Ministerial Conference organized by UNIDO in 2017 brought together participants from 60 Member States including 33 LDCs, UN agencies, development cooperation agencies, civil society and academia. The aim was to provide strategic guidance for the implementation of inclusive and sustainable industrial development through building global partnerships for LDCs within the framework of IPoA, the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and resulted in adoption of a Ministerial Declaration. UNIDO continued to pursue technical cooperation programmes with the LDCs on building productive capacities. In South Sudan, UNIDO implemented an EU-funded project to enhance local value addition and strengthen the value chain with the overall objective to build productive capacities and improve post-harvest management capacities and storage. UNIDO was providing assistance on renewable energy systems, for example on hybrid mini-grid systems in Guinea-Bissau and small-hydro rural electrification programmes in Burundi. In Tanzania and Myanmar, UNIDO had contributed to improving the analytical capacity of the government in the areas of industrial development. UNIDO was actively fostering the inclusion of women and youth in several countries. Projects also addressed conflict mitigation and resilience-building.

**The representative of ECA** noted that 33 of the 47 LDCs were in Africa, and 61% of African countries are LDCs. In the near future, as many countries in the graduating pipeline were Asian, with a few exceptions, LDCs would be largely an African phenomenon. ECA provides research support on macroeconomic forecasting models, governance, and social development policy and produces an annual progress report on the priority areas of the IPoA. The 2017 report noted that African LDCs were making progress, although at a slower pace than desired. African LDCs most likely to reach graduation would be Djibouti, Lesotho, and Togo, if progress continued. In March 2018 in Kigali, 44 Member States created the African Continental Trade Area. ECA was working actively on African integration, which held potential for African countries to work together to overcome their challenges. He also provided information on the afternoon's item which is reported in that section, below.

**The representative of EIF** recalled that the EIF provided support to LDCs for a full 5 years after graduation to ensure predictability. EIF was providing support to graduated LDCs including Equatorial Guinea, Samoa and Cabo Verde, including through e-trade readiness assessments conducted by UNCTAD. EIF was also providing support on building productive capacities in various LDCs. For example, based on the e-trade readiness assessments in Bhutan, EIF had strengthened farmers' capacities to sell online through an e-auctioning system, which allowed increased revenue generation. The success of this programme had prompted the government to open similar facilities across the country. EIF had provided support to help graduated countries continue to benefit from trade, for example sensitization regarding the implementation of the REX system of the European Union which would enable export to the EU market. On graduating LDCs, EIF was working in partnership with the WTO, the CDP, the Commonwealth secretariat and Pacific Island Forum to carry out assessments of the impact of graduation. EIF was doing analytical work in Bangladesh, Bhutan and Cambodia where graduation is featuring as a major theme. In 2018, EIF had provided support close to USD 11 million on productive capacity development as of 13 November 2018. He noted that many countries in Africa would not reach the threshold for graduation in the coming years and increased support in those countries was needed. Some LDCs faced serious constraints due to fragility and peace and security issues. These countries need special support and EIF had designed specific programmes for such countries which will benefit LDCs such as Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Yemen, and the Central African Republic to assist them in their efforts. EIF was working closely with the World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies (WAIPA) to develop a tailored investment promotion capacity building programme for LDCs and expected to roll out the programme by the second quarter of 2019. Emphasizing the value of regional integration, he mentioned there were possibilities to enhance South-South cooperation particularly in relation to trade given that share of such trade in the global trade has recently cross the 50% mark, but also in the areas of investment and technology transfer.

**The representative of OECD** underscored the need to ensure that ODA was increased in volume but also better targeted to meet the need of countries. OECD had also carried out work in response to requests from LDCs to avoid cliff edges, especially on external concession



finance when countries graduate. Case studies had been carried out in Cabo Verde, Uganda, and Zambia. In 2018, OECD and UNCDF had launched a major piece of analytical work on blending finance, which was important since only 7% of blended finance actually ended up in LDCs. The OCED Global Outlook on Development had just been launched, looking at the full range of financing available to developing countries, including FDI. More work was needed on tax, where LDCs had the lowest tax to revenue ratios. OECD was working with UNDP on a programme called Tax Inspectors Without Borders to provide capacity development to 30 developing countries, many of them LDCs. Finally, work was underway with ECLAC and the EU on an initiative called development in transition, which was of relevance for graduated countries.

**The representative of WTO** drew attention to a recent WTO publication *Mainstreaming Trade to attain the SDGs*. On trends, he noted that after three years of negative growth, LDCs exports rebounded growing by 13%, mainly driven by an increase in LDC goods exports. However, the share of LDCs in world exports increased only slightly from 0.88% in 2016 to 0.90% in 2017, far from the IPoA and SDG targets. LDCs continued to face a high trade deficit, totalling USD 93 billion in 2017, of which close to two thirds (USD59 billion) was in goods trade. Graduation has become an important issue for the LDCs at the WTO. In 2018, the WTO LDC Group initiated a discussion in the General Council requesting that graduated LDCs should continue to benefit from the exemption of the prohibition of non-agricultural export subsidies if they fulfil the income requirements laid out in Annex VII of the Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (SCM). The LDC Group has also introduced graduation in negotiations on fisheries subsidies, and has requested the Secretariat to provide technical assistance on graduation and its trade-related implications. In response, the WTO was developing a project with the EIF to help LDCs better understand graduation by looking at WTO agreements and erosion of preferences. Work on preferential market access continued, with a focus on transparency. He noted that improvements on DFQF access not only related to coverage but also to utilization, and in this regard rules of origin played an important role. The next Global Review of Aid for Trade would take place from 3-5 July 2019, on the theme of “Supporting Economic Diversification and Empowerment for Inclusive, Sustainable Development through Aid for Trade”. Lastly, he noted that research work was underway on natural disasters and trade, including symposia and a high-level event in 2019.

**The representative of WCO** provided an update on the four Strategic Packages, namely the Revenue Package, Economic Competitiveness Package, Compliance and Enforcement Package (ECP) and Organization Package. On ECP, the June 2018 meeting of the WCO Council adopted two important instruments, the 2018 *Revised SAFE Framework of Standards* and the *Cross-border E-commerce Framework of Standards*. The latter aimed at the exchange of advance electronic data for effective risk management and enhanced facilitation of growing volumes of small and low-value shipments by adopting simplified procedures with respect to clearance, revenue collection and return. In addition, many new technical guidelines were developed to support Customs administrations in improving the security of the global supply

chains, facilitating further legitimate trade flows of Authorized Economic Operators (AEO), enhancing Integrated Supply Chain management and signing the AEO Mutual recognition agreements with other trading partners. The issues and comprehensive approach introduced in the WCO SAFE Package were highly relevant to LDCs to help reduce the economic vulnerability and instability of exports of goods. On the Revenue Package, with a view to facilitating market access for LDCs provided under non-reciprocal trade arrangements, the WCO Secretariat had developed a *Practical Guide to the 2015 Nairobi Ministerial Decision on Rules of Origin for LDCs*, which aimed at contributing to facilitating preferential market access for LDCs, as well as the *Guide to Practical Implementation of the WTO Customs Valuation Agreement. A Brief Guide for the LDCs*, both which were adopted by the WCO Council in June 2018. The WCO was currently organizing two regionally focused security projects - both of which were funded by the Government of Japan - in Asia-Pacific and West and Central Africa. Their aim was to increase customs capacity in the area of border security. The Asia-Pacific project delivers capacity building and awareness-raising activities on passenger controls, detecting the explosive precursor chemicals and components that are used to manufacture IEDs, and small arms and light weapons. The West and Central Africa project was active in tackling the increase in attacks that use improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in the region. On capacity building activities, among many programmes and capacity building projects, the Mercator Programme was the most important WCO strategic initiative which aims to achieve harmonized implementation of the TFA, to provide “tailor-made” technical assistance, and to coordinate effectively amongst all stakeholders. During the previous financial year, over 150 TFA-related missions under the WCO Mercator Programme were carried out. She also highlighted the Gender Equality and Diversity, where progress notable includes the Gender Equality Organizational Assessment Tool (GEOAT), the WCO Virtual Working Group for Gender Equality and Diversity, and a blended training package on Gender Equality and its links to customs reform and modernization.

**The representative of WIPO** noted that intellectual property was relevant to SDG 9 on innovation, but was also a key cross-cutting element for several other SDGs. WIPO had provided technical assistance on the development of IP policies and strategies, including legislative advice on IP laws tailored to the specific needs of the LDCs and their needs. WIPO had also engaged in skill development and capacity building projects, and in facilitating access to technical information and knowledge in support of innovation processes. WIPO had established technology and innovation support centres in a number of LDCs, which also required modernization of IP offices. WIPO had several activities that aimed at supporting the automation of these offices through software solutions that increase access to technical information. WIPO had engaged in enhancing the value of traditional knowledge processes and the regimes that enable the protection of indigenous knowledge. WIPO had assisted LDCs in the formulation of IP policies and strategies, and implementation of action plans. WIPO’s cooperation with LDCs had also included advice to LDCs on modernizing their IP legal and administrative frameworks. WIPO had facilitated access to several platforms including access

to research and innovation for development and access to specialized patent information. WIPO had undertaken a wide range of capacity building activities and trainings organized by its various sectors and divisions. WIPO had continued to play an active role in cooperation with other UN institutions with the aim of fostering innovative and technological capacity in the LDCs. WIPO expressed its willingness to engage constructively to move forward on the implementation of the IPoA.

**The representatives of WHO** noted that WHO has been supporting LDCs in strengthening health systems, prevention and control of NCDs and non-NCDs, prevention and management of health emergencies, maternal and child health, health at all stages life, partnerships, health sector governance, and access to health technologies and medicines. In total, 24 LDCs had a valid CCS while 21 LDCs were in the process of developing CCSs as of February 2018. Within CDs, the most prioritized programmes were HIV, TB, malaria, sexually transmissible infections (STIs), vaccine preventable diseases and polio. Within NDCs, nutrition was most included programme in LDC CCS, reflecting the burden of mortality and morbidity caused by malnutrition in many LDCs. Between 1 January 2016 and 31 December 2017, WHO distributed US \$1.2 billion in LDCs. LDCs received almost half of all distributed funds worldwide for outbreak and crisis response and over 20% of funds for polio eradication and communicable diseases. LDCs received a total of 2039 backstopping mission between January 2015 and 31 October 2016, the largest proportion of which were related to communicable diseases followed by health emergencies. The WHO country offices had conducted a Strategic Risk Assessment in 14 LDCs. WHO's Early Warning, Alert and Response System (EWARS) is in place in 22 LDCs. Currently WHO was supporting the DRC in combating the Ebola outbreak. WHO supports the donor coordination mechanisms in the health sector. WHO Country Offices cooperate with the UN system including on the UNDAF.

**The representative of UNOPS** reiterated UNOPS continuous support in the priorities areas of the IPoA. UNOPS had been working closely with UN-OHRLLS in the operationalization of the Technology Bank for LDCs by providing a range of services, including human resources, logistical support, and procurement services and supporting the Programme work streams including collaborating with lead UN agencies. Most of UNOPS activities and delivery were in LDCs. For example, a renewable energy project in Sierra Leone was providing sustainable, low-carbon energy to rural communities across the country through solar power stations, benefitting 360,000 residents, including local businesses, and providing essential services. In 2017, solar power stations were installed across 12 districts of Sierra Leone. In 2017, UNOPS began activities aimed at strengthening Somali government institutions in the public works sector through a project funded by the African Development Bank. The project aimed to enhance the capacities of state authorities to independently plan, manage and oversee infrastructure construction projects and maintenance works.

**The representative of ITU** informed the meeting that in order to address their special requirements, ITU had a dedicated programme for LDCs which provided catalytic assistance on infrastructure development, capacity building, emergency telecommunication, ICT, e-infrastructure, e-waste and climate change. ITU has provided assistance with rural infrastructure, build institutional and human capacity, regulatory reform, e-waste, and more. She gave several country examples of work. She noted that several resolutions had been adopted by ITU on LDCs. She provided examples of joint activities between ITU and UN Women, and noted that ITU and UNIDO had signed an agreement to facilitate a public-private partnership in the area of telecommunications, and joint activities with OHRLLS.

**The representative of UNFPA** noted that UNFPA had engaged in the Sahel Women Empowerment and Demographic Dividend Initiative which focuses on access of women to reproductive health. UNFPA supported midwives to assist women that had been subject to gender violence. UNFPA was heavily involved with the campaign to end child marriage and FGM. UNFPA also contributed to the work on the LDCs on preparations on the 2020 census report, on strengthening of statistical offices and work on disaggregation of data to better assist young people and address youth employment. There was merit in proposing potential new areas of support for LDCs but also focusing on persistent problems faced by the LDCs.

**The representative of ITC** highlighted the importance of engaging on UNDS reform and on implementation on the ground. The representative noted that 70% of ITC's work focused on LDCs and used a market-driven approach. She highlighted the importance attached by ITC to looking at vulnerable communities within this group of vulnerable countries. Poor communities and youth were critical constituencies. There was a growing demand for youth entrepreneurship and empowerment programmes. The ITC programme in Gambia attempted to address the root causes of migration through the diversification of industries, and to improve skills, market demand, entrepreneurship and employment opportunities for young Gambians. ITC not only focused on national development plans but also on the aspirations of young people. This project has been so successful in the first year that it had been extended to Guinea and Senegal. In Myanmar, ITC had supported migrants to develop export strategies, provided advisory support to implement the strategy, and supported inclusive community-based tourism, focussing on the global value chain, particularly in relation to marginalized communities, international tourism network. On South-South cooperation, ITC was focussing on support LDCs to increase trade and investment with China and India, as well as helping Myanmar take advantage of the Belt and Road Initiative.

**The representative of ICC** noted that ICC was part of the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation, and initiative being implemented together with WEF and the Center for International Private Enterprise to help implement the TFA. She gave the examples of Zambia, where the ICC was developing a project to implement a framework for customs. In Bangladesh, Malawi, and Rwanda, and Vanuatu. ICC activities ranged from building trust and strengthening dialogue,

to developing data tools to measure the direct and indirect costs of trade, and understanding trade rules.

**The representative of UNAIDS** stated that UNAIDS was engaged on three tracks in LDCs. The UNAIDS strategy running until 2021 identified 35 “fast-track” countries, accounting for 90% of new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths, of which 14 were LDCs to provide targeted support. UNAIDS had in addition launched in 2016 the West and Central Africa catch-up plan where there were significant lags. And thirdly, a targeted initiative was tackling the AIDS epidemic in 250 “fast-track cities” and municipalities, many of which were in LDCs. There also was a thematic focus on topics such as maternal and child health, girls and women and young people.

**The representative of UNESCO** noted that UNESCO was the convener of multi-stakeholder 2030 Education Steering Committees to support Member States to achieve SDG4. Several consultations had been organized in LDCs. In addition, the UNESCO programme for capacity development for education was active in 25 LDCs. Further, UNESCO had worked with over 20 LDCs on science, technology and innovation. In July, an agreement was signed between UNESCO and the Technology Bank for the LDCs to work on the preparation of STI/TNA in four LDCs. UNESCO experts would participate in all phases for the preparation of the reviews. UNESCO and the World Academy of Sciences had 5 targeted programmes in LDCs. In addition, a number of activities were being implemented to support LDCs build their AI capacity, such as training at the Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics, a hub developed through a partnership with IBM and Google, and a series of conferences on transparency and multi-stakeholder dialogue. Activities were also underway on South-South and triangular cooperation. The usual set of activities on hydrological systems continued to be implemented, well as on disaster risk reduction, both in relation to climate change and post-conflict settings.

**ESCAP** submitted a written statement noting that the LDCs of Asia and the Pacific had registered significant progress despite their structural challenges, surpassing the aim of enabling half of them to meet the criteria for graduation by 2020, with 10 of the region’s LDCs fulfilling the criteria, three for the first time, four being recommended for graduation and three meeting the economic vulnerability threshold. ESCAP has accorded high priority to assist the region’s LDCs in implementing the IPoA through analytical products, capacity building workshops and ensuring that the voices of the LDCs are heard in international fora. Capacity building initiatives include regional workshops, on strengthening development of the LDCs in Asia-Pacific to support implementation of the 2030 Agenda, on formulating national policies and strategies in preparation for graduation from the LDC category, and on using evidence-based trade policy for achieving the SDGs in LDCs and LLDCs. A Development Account project has been launched to “support the Countries with Special Needs in Asia-Pacific in meeting the challenge of resource mobilization for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” targeting Bhutan, Cambodia and Vanuatu, with scoping missions, national workshops and analytical inputs being prepared so far. ESCAP will highlight issues

that are relevant to the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS of Asia-Pacific through its annual flagship publication, the “Countries with Special Needs Development Report”, in 2018 focusing on “Sustainable Development and Sustaining Peace”, and forthcoming in 2019 on “Structural Transformation and its role in Poverty Reduction”, which will touch on several priority areas such as productive capacity, rural development, human and social development and trade.

In conclusion, **Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox, Director**, expressed appreciation for the work of the agencies in support of the LDCs. She highlighted that these meetings allow the office to make linkages and follow-up to build stronger partnerships among the organizations. Linking up on the UN reform was crucial. How to connect global, regional and country-level work to ensure coherence and make sure that it reinforced the UN’s work was important. She noted the important work of UNDP at the country level and underscored the need for coherence between the implementation of IPoA and SDGs. She also highlighted the need to focus on SDGs 17 on partnerships, especially building better partnerships, avoiding duplication, and adding value to our common efforts to move forward collectively to make a difference at the country level. She encouraged the group to share views and ideas, particularly on the way forward to the next Conference and think about the key priorities for the new programme of action, including new areas that should be included in the new programme of action?

#### **D. Enhanced support for LDCs in the period beyond 2020 – Preparations for LDC V Conference**

**Mr. Sandagdorj Erdenebileg**, Chief, Office of the High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, introduced the agenda item. He noted that today’s world was very different to that of 2010. The intergovernmental development landscape had evolved considerably, with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, Addis Ababa Action Agenda, Sendai and Paris Agreement. Thus, action for the LDCs beyond 2020 needed to go beyond support for LDCs to implement the SDGs. He noted further that the international trading system was changing. China had become a major trading partner for the LDCs and was the largest foreign investor in the LDCs with 11% of FDI, totalling USD 34 billion. He noted that the new African trade agreement would have an impact on the LDCs. The issues of immigration and climate change were also emerging issues for the LDCs. He informed that meeting that the General Assembly was considering the draft LDC resolution, where G77 and China had proposed to convene 5-day LDC V Conference in 2021, with 2 preparatory meetings in 2020 and 2021. The draft proposed that the LDC V Conference would undertake a comprehensive appraisal of the implementation of IPoA, identify effective international and domestic policies and new and emerging challenges and opportunities, and the means to address them, including reaffirming the special needs to the LDCs and mobilizing additional international support measures for the LDCs for the next decade. The draft resolution requested the UN system to provide substantive and organizational support to the conference and its regional preparatory review meetings. He underscored the importance of joint support for the success of the LDC V

Conference, including the role of publications from UN agencies that would set the substantive agenda for the next Programme of Action to be adopted by the Conference. The Programme of Action should address actions need to be undertaken beyond 2020, new areas of support and cooperation in favour of LDCs, and new initiatives required to support the implementation of the agenda for LDCs. The new Programme of Action ought to be different and comprehensive as it would be the only agenda solely dedicated to the LDCs. It needed to draw lessons from the IPoA to respond to challenges faced by LDCs in this rapidly changing world.

**The representative of ECA** noted that Agenda 2063 developed by the AU was crucial for African LDCs. ECA had developed an integrated toolkit to showcase the linkages between 2030 Agenda and 2063 Agenda. This work could be extended in the future to include the IPoA as well as its successor agreed at LDC V. Any future Programme of Action should look at existing frameworks and assess what more needs to be done. It should also look at how LDCs differ and what support the international community could provide to address these gaps. Discussions should address whether support provided is adequate. Africa was especially concerned. Thinking would be needed on how existing support measures, such as on trade, could be better used by LDCs. South-South cooperation could be reinforced in the new Programme of Action.

**The representative of IAEA** noted shared that IAEA was focusing on expanding the use of the peaceful application of nuclear science and technology for development, which had a bearing on 9 of the 17 SDGs. A total of 138 countries benefitted from IAEA technical cooperation programme and 38 were LDCs. He cited examples on human health, agriculture, water resource management and oceans. The representative stated that the IAEA had decided to develop a series of inter-regional projects for LDCs on their priority needs. It was anticipated that the IAEA Board of Governors would approve the projects by the end of the year, which could allow the projects to be further elaborated next year, as well as into the 2020 period.

**The representative of WTO** noted that LDCs were an important category and priority for the WTO as well as the Secretariat in terms of technical assistance. There had been significant changes in the trade landscape, including increasing volumes of South-South trade, e-commerce and other trade policy developments at the regional and multilateral level. Trade and WTO-related issues would likely remain a key pillar for the next Programme of Action. WTO would engage and participate actively in the processes leading to the LDC V.

**The representative of UNCTAD** noted that UNCTAD XV would take place in 2020 and suggested using its preparatory meetings to complement and inform the LDC V Conference. She noted that her colleagues in the Technology Division had been requested to prepare for HLCV a report on frontier technologies for developing countries. She highlighted several issue that could be worth exploring in more detail, namely: the conditions to enable leap-frogging, especially on electricity in rural areas and agriculture; identifying digitally-enabled innovation, especially pro-poor bottom-up technologies; and big data for better policy-

making. She noted that the trade regime and investment regime needed to be realigned with the SDGs, starting with the LDCs. She called for the next Programme of Action to be bold. She suggested to delegate different topics to different agencies as no agency could do everything, and to work as one United Nations.

**The representative of ITU** noted that the most important challenge LDCs faced were access and connectivity. Digital literacy and required skills would also be required to make proper use of connectivity. Emerging technologies - AI, internet-of-things, nanotechnologies - also presented good opportunities for LDCs to overcome their challenges and push forward.

**The representative of UNDP** noted that many of the IPoA's priorities would remain relevant in the future, since many challenges were structural. There was also the need to expand the priorities based on the needs of the time and changing landscape. Building resilience to shocks was especially important, as evidenced by the impact of Ebola, climate change and political crisis. Key areas and challenges going forward were: infrastructure development, financing – including sources other than ODA, human development, youth empowerment in Africa.

**The representative of the WCO** suggested formulating a work plan, with a lead agency on each of the key topics, especially on policy priorities, and governance or human development issues. She noted that the June 2018 WCO Council also decided that the WCO would start the comprehensive revision of the WCO's Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC) to ensure that this Convention continued to be the blueprint of modern customs, to further simplify and harmonize customs procedures, take the security protection role of the Customs into account, while improving the effectiveness of risk management and the application of modern technology.

**The representative of UNAIDS** stated that the issues in the IPoA were still relevant. She noted that there were no or few measurable targets in IPoA and called for more ambitious measurable targets in the next round of negotiations.

**The representative of WIPO** noted that improving innovation capacity was crucial. This would not only support the IP framework, but also human resource development, facilitating access to knowledge platforms and technology platforms for LDCs, and skills in patent drafting and using IP titles in the public domain to increase the technological base and access to technological information.

## **E. Conclusions and next steps**

In his concluding remarks, **Mr. Sandagdorj Erdenebileg**, Chief, Office of the High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, highlighted that the meeting had underlined more than ever that the UN system played a critical role in the implementation of the IPoA. He noted that progress has been made towards the IPoA targets, but not enough, nor fast



enough and that the Secretary-General's report called on Member States to step up their efforts in the last lap of the IPoA. He called on the participants to ensure that the UN system was better coordinated, more effective and more innovative, and to step up support to graduating LDCs. He recalled that the 2018 ECOSOC resolution on LDCs expressed serious concern at the declining share of expenditure for operational activities for development of the United Nations system in the LDCs and urged the United Nations development system to continue to prioritize allocations to the LDCs by developing operational guidelines. He appealed to the members of the IACG to report this to their political leadership and urged them to accord high importance to the LDCs. He noted that the upcoming LDC V Conference would present a unique opportunity to craft a modern, relevant, updated, ambitious and powerful new Programme of Action for the LDCs. The new Programme of Action would play an important role in achieving the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, especially in "leaving no one behind". It would go beyond that taking the discussion to a level higher on how to build productive capacity, and achieve the graduation targets, which themselves may be further refined over the coming months and years. Once a decision regarding the LDC V was made by the General Assembly, it would be time to begin preparations in earnest.

## **Annex I: List of participants**

### **Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)**

Mr. Roland Mollerus, Secretary, Committee for Development Policy

### **Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF)**

Mr. Ratnakar Adhikari, Executive Director

Ms. Daria Shatskova, Programme Officer

### **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)**

Mr. Xolisa Mabhongo, Director, IAEA Office in New York

Ms. Aleksandra Pyra, Associate Liaison Officer, IAEA Office in New York

### **International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)**

Ms. Valérie Picard, Deputy Director, Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation

### **International Labour Organization (ILO)**

Ms. Nathalie Wilson, ILO Office in New York

### **International Organization for Migration (IOM)**

Mr. Chris Richter, Associate Migration Officer

### **International Trade Centre (ITC)**

Ms. Riefqah Jappie, ITC Representative in New York

### **International Telecommunications Union (ITU)**

Ms. Kadiatou Sall-Beye, Liaison Officer, ITU Office in New York

### **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)**

Mr. Robin Ogivly, Special Representative to the UN

### **Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA)**

Mr. Ben Idrissa Ouedraogo, Economic Affairs Officer

### **Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL)**

Mr. George Hampton, Special Advisor to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General

### **United Nations – Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)**

Ms. Marine Davtyan, Senior Adviser, New York Office

### **United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)**

Ms. Chantal Line Carpentier, UNCTAD Representative in New York

### **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**

Ms. Eunice Kamwendo, Strategic Advisor

### **United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)**

Mr. Ben McCarthy, Associate Economic Affairs Officer

### **United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)**

Mr. Fabio Weikert, Infrastructure Services Unit

### **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**

Ms. Maaïke Jansen, Senior Programme Management Officer

**United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**

Ms. Hellin Brink, Liaison Officer

**United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)**

Ms. Petal Thomas, Multilateral Affairs Specialist

**United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)**

Mr. Nicolas Rees, Policy Specialist

**United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)**

Mr. Paul Maseli, Director and Representative of UNIDO in New York

Ms. Claudia Linke-Heep, Industrial Development Officer

**United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)**

Ms. Elle Wang, Partnerships Specialist

**United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC)**

Mr. Tarik Iziraren, Deputy Director for Policy and Strategic Partnership

**World Customs Organization (WCO)**

Ms. Hong Nguyen, Technical Officer, Compliance and Facilitation Directorate

**World Health Organization (WHO)**

Ms. Angelica Spraggins, WHO Office at the UN in New York

Ms. Eva Kiegele, WHO Office at the UN in New York

**World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)**

Ms. Ola Zahran, Head, Coordination Office in New York

**World Trade Organization (WTO)**

Mr. Rainer Lanz, Economic Affairs Officer, Development Division

**International Think Tank for LLDCs**

Mr. Erdenetsogt Odbayar, Executive Director

**Permanent Mission of Malawi to the UN**

H.E. Mr. Lot Thauzeni Pansipadana Dzonzi, Deputy Permanent Representative

Ms. Tamanda Tina Chibwana, First Secretary

**UN-OHRRLLS Secretariat**

Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox, Director

Mr. Sandagdorj Erdenebileg, Chief

Ms. Susanna Wolf, Senior Programme Officer

Mr. Aniket Ghai, Senior Economic Affairs Officer

Ms. Yuxin Ai, Programme Officer

Mr. Abdul Alim, Senior Economic Affairs Officer

Mr. Tomas Gonzalez, Programme Management Officer

Mr. Yeshey Dorji, Programme Officer

Ms. Miniva Chibuye, Economic Affairs Officer

Ms. Dagmar Hertova, Programme Management Officer

Mr. Damien Sass, Public Information Officer

Mr. Gaël Adrien Mbama, Economic Affairs Intern

## Annex II: Agenda

### Seventeenth 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

Tuesday, 13 November 2018, Conference Room 11, UN secretariat building, New York

<b>10:00 – 10:30</b>	<b>Opening session</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Opening remarks by Ms. Fekitamoeloa 'Utoikamanu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States</li><li>• Remarks by Chair of the Global Coordination Bureau of the Group of LDCs</li></ul>
<b>10:30 – 13:00</b>	<b>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</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chair: Ms. Fekitamoeloa 'Utoikamanu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS</li><li>• Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox, Director, UN-OHRLLS: presentation on the status of implementation of the IPoA</li><li>• Presentations by participating organizations on their activities towards implementation of the IPoA and building synergies and coherence with the 2030 Agenda</li></ul>
<b>13:00 – 15:00</b>	<i>Lunch break</i>
<b>15:00 – 17:30</b>	<b>Enhanced support for LDCs in the period beyond 2020 – Preparations for LDC V Conference</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chair: Mr. Sandagdorj Erdenebileg, Chief, UN-OHRLLS</li><li>• The IPoA will come to an end in 2020. The LDCs Ministerial Declaration adopted in September 2018 calls for a comprehensive appraisal of the IPoA and identification of effective international and domestic policies in the light of this outcome. Participating organizations are invited to propose potential new areas of support for LDCs, including new initiatives, beyond the IPoA end-date of 2020.</li></ul>
<b>17:30 – 18:00</b>	<b>Conclusion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Concluding remarks by Sandagdorj Erdenebileg, Chief, UN-OHRLLS</li></ul>