



**Least Developed Countries**  
**Landlocked Developing Countries**  
**Small Island Developing States**

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

**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 Eighteenth 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 XXV**

**Palais des Nations, Geneva**

**9 April 2019**

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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 Eighteenth meeting of the Inter-Agency Consultative Group (IACG) 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 Geneva on 9 April 2019. 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 made some initial proposals on their contributions towards the preparations for the Fifth UN Conference on LDCs.

## **B. Opening remarks and Update on the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) and Antalya Midterm Review outcome as well as on efforts to build synergies and coherence with the 2030 Agenda**

The meeting was opened by Mr. Sandagdorj Erdenebileg, Chief, Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), who also chaired the session. He noted that we had reached a key juncture in the IPoA decade, with only a year and a half left in its implementation. He noted that the General Assembly resolution in December had launched the preparation of the Fifth UN Conference on the LDCs (LDC V), which would take place in 2021, and so now work needed to begin in earnest. He noted there would be several key high-level events in 2019 that would provide the opportunity to highlight the LDCV.

He highlighted key findings from the recently published Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the IPoA, including some trends that were starting to emerge for the Programme as a whole. He noted that there had been mixed performance by donors - with only 5 DAC countries reaching the ODA targets in 2017 as compared to ten in 2011. GDP growth had picked up slightly, but in 2017 only seven LDCs exhibited rates of 7% or more. The share of LDC exports in the world total remained below one percent for the third consecutive year, far from the IPoA target of doubling this share to 2 percent in 2020. FDI to LDCs also dropped sharply for 2 consecutive years – by 13% in 2016 and by 17% in 2017. DESA's recent World Economic and Social Prospects report projected that around 30 per cent of the LDC population would remain in extreme poverty by 2030.

Over the past seven years (2010-2017), the share of manufacturing and of services had both increased only marginally, suggesting limited progress on productive capacity. Internet access and mobile broadband subscriptions have remained low, although mobile cellular subscriptions have risen. Access to electricity had increased, although rural areas were lagging behind. Some progress has also been registered on primary and secondary school enrolment, including on gender indicators, but overall literacy rates remain low, and youth unemployment will be a growing challenge.

Slum populations had decreased slightly, but remained a huge challenge in LDCs, as did basic sanitation and access to drinking water. Vulnerability – both economic and environmental - remained a source of concern, as evidenced by the devastating impact of the recent Cyclone Idai in Southern Africa.

On graduation from the category, he noted the progress had been made with the GA deciding on the graduation of 3 additional LDCs, Bhutan, Solomon Islands and Sao Tome & Principe, while the need to ensure smooth transitions was becoming increasingly important. He recalled that the UN development system entities had been requested by ECOSOC 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. The Interagency Task Force on LDC Graduation was seeking to provide support in a coordinated manner and would pilot a joint UN mission to Sao Tome and Principe later this year.

He then opened the floor for discussion.

**The representative of the secretariat of the CDP**, DESA, provided an update on DESA's recent activity on capacity building on graduation from the LDC category, in particular on the tool Gradjet ([www.gradjet.org](http://www.gradjet.org)) and the LDC Portal ([www.un.org/ldcportal](http://www.un.org/ldcportal)), and invited agencies to submit information on their LDC-specific support measures. He noted that the report of the recent meeting of the CDP was now available. The CDP had continued to work on the comprehensive review of the LDC criteria, which would be finalized next year; it had recommended strengthening the graduation process on the application on of the criteria, as well as earlier involvement of the UN, and would continue to work on the ongoing review of additional or alternative indicators. The CDP recommended further to improve graduation support, by strengthening the smooth transition process; creating a new country task team on graduation (UNTT), preparing a consolidated graduation assessment by DESA and UNCTAD with input from the IATF and the new UNTT. It also recommended improved in-country coordination, better involvement of development and trading partners, and dedicated capacity-building for graduating and graduated countries. There was no major risk of graduated countries falling back into the category. On the review of the use of the LDC category by UNDS entities, there was no major change since 2017. There was almost universal recognition of LDC as a priority group, but there were very few concrete and specific funding provisions. The CDP had reiterated the call for common guidelines on how to apply LDC support.

**The representatives of WHO** noted that the WHO had developed the Country Cooperation Strategy (CCS) to guide WHO's work in LDC countries, which was in line with the priority areas of IPoA. He noted that the CCS strategic priorities varied, although there were some commonalities between countries. Within communicable diseases, the most prioritized programs were HIV, TB, malaria, sexually transmissible infections (STIs), vaccine preventable diseases and polio. Within NCDs, nutrition was most included program in LDC CCS, reflecting

the burden of mortality and morbidity caused by malnutrition in many LDCs. All the CCS included access to medicines, health technologies and strengthening regulatory capacity in LDC CCS, with Universal Health Coverage (UHC) prioritized in 90% of cases.

WHO had provided US\$1,284 million to LDCs over the 2-year period 2016-2017, primarily from specified voluntary contributions (84%), with the remainder from assessed contributions, programme support costs, and core voluntary contributions. 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, while smaller proportions were distributed for health systems and NCDs. WHO enhanced its personnel in LDC country offices, now totalling 1749 personnel. Furthermore, the LDCs had received a total of 2039 backstopping mission from different levels of WHO staff in the two years 2015-2016.

WHO continued to provide health emergency response support to the LDCs. The WHO country office has identified a readiness focal point in 29 LDCs and had conducted a Strategic Risk Assessment in 14 LDCs, the latter helping to identify, classify, and perform a risk assessment of all identified problems to inform preparedness and response plans. WHO's Early Warning, Alert and Response System (EWARS) was in place in 22 LDCs. A donor coordination mechanism for health was present in 85% of LDCs. Of these, 38% of WHO country offices act as co-chairs with the Ministry of Health, 40% are chairs or rotational chairs, and 35% are the Secretariat. All LDCs except Vanuatu are eligible for grants from GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance.

WHO country offices are active in supporting grants from the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, for which all LDCs are eligible. WHO LDC country offices have also acted as sub-recipients for Global Fund grants in the HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health, and health system strengthening programmes. There was a Joint National/UN Steering Committee in 28 LDCs, with WHO Country Office participation in 27 LDCs, and Ministry of Health participation in 16 LDCs. Both the WHO Country Office and Ministry of Health are involved with the Joint National/UN Steering Committee in 15 LDCs.

**The representative of WTO** noted that next year was the last year in the implementation period of the IPoA. He noted that last week WTO has released its first estimates for trade in 2018. Global trade had grown more slowly than expected in 2018 due to rising trade tensions and increased economic uncertainty. However, the LDCs could continue their positive trend from 2017, also thanks to a continuing rise in prices of energy and minerals. On the positive side, the value of LDC exports of goods and services increased by 13% in 2018, reaching US\$239 billion. The growth of LDC exports was faster than the growth of world exports (10%) – but their share remained insignificant at only 0.95% in 2018. This was even below the share the LDCs registered in 2011 at the launch of the IPoA, and thus far from the target in the IPoA of doubling their export share by 2020.

Since trade growth was even stronger on the import side, the trade deficit of the LDCs continued to increase, from US\$93 billion in 2017 to US\$103 billion in 2018. This was more than three times higher than the deficit in 2010. So, while there had been an upward trend in LDC trade in the last two years, the stylized facts of LDC trade remained unchanged: narrow export base, low level of productivity, reliance on commodities, chronic trade deficit, lack of ability to enhance trade in services, etc.

Since 2006, LDCs received US\$105 billion in aid for trade. In 2017, LDCs received disbursements of US\$12.2 billion, representing a third of country specific AFT disbursements in 2017, and a 22% increase compared to 2016. While LDCs continued to face formidable supply-side constraints, there had been significant developments in helping LDCs with improved market access as well as in allowing them necessary policy flexibilities to integrate into multilateral trading system. Regarding, duty-free and quota-free market access, new developments had been limited but a large number of WTO Members provided already comprehensive DFQF coverage to LDC products.

Regarding services, LDCs only accounted for 0.7% of world commercial services exports. This was an area worth revisiting to see how LDCs could benefit more from the LDC Services Waiver. There had been incremental progress in the implementation of decisions relating to preferential rules of origin. Progress has been made in increasing transparency on origin requirements as well as on the utilization of preferences. It is important to keep this issue on the agenda at major conferences.

There were other areas where work was continuing, for example annual workshops on Article 66.2 of the TRIPS Agreement to better understand the issues relating to technology transfer. In this area, the LDCs were contemplating to submit specific proposals for the Twelfth WTO Ministerial Conference next year.

Eight LDCs were at various stages of accession to the WTO. There was hope that Comoros could advance to the final stage by the next WTO Ministerial Conference. South Sudan had had its first Working Party meeting in March, and Ethiopia and Timor-Leste had signalled their renewed engagement.

Preparations were well underway for the Aid for Trade Global Review 2019, which would take place on 3-5 July 2019, on the theme "Supporting Economic Diversification and Empowerment for Inclusive, Sustainable Development through Aid for Trade". 38 LDCs, more than ever before, have completed the questionnaire for the OECD-WTO monitoring and evaluation exercise. He underscored the importance of collaboration and coordination work between the UN system entities, and stated willingness to work on the LDCV conference. He noted that graduation had become an important issue for the LDCs at the WTO. He noted that several activities had been organized or were planned on the topic, in cooperation with EIF, the CDP secretariat, ESCAP and others.

**The representative of UNCTAD** provided an update on recent activities in support of the IPoA. He noted the recent publication of UNCTAD's *Least Developed Countries Report 2018* which focussed on entrepreneurship. The report stated that for LDCs to make progress towards achieving the SDGs, they needed to transform the structure of their economy, which required "transformational entrepreneurship". UNCTAD had also released the 2019 issue of the series *Selected Sustainable Development Trends in the Least Developed Countries*. He noted that UNCTAD was providing support on technical cooperation to LDCs in several different areas. He highlighted that UNCTAD had recently convened e-Commerce week, and had prepared eTrade readiness assessments to help LDCs take stock of their e-commerce development along seven key policy areas. Between 2018 and early 2019, UNCTAD released 13 assessments for LDCs, with more in the pipeline. In 2018, UNCTAD supported 16 LDCs in relation to trade facilitation, especially through the roll-out of the UNCTAD Empowerment Programme for National Trade Facilitation Committees, including developing road maps for the implementation of trade facilitation. In 2018, UNCTAD assisted the regional economic communities of the Tripartite (COMESA, EAC and SADC). UNCTAD provides support to the African Union Commission, African regional economic communities and African countries in developing and implementing a framework to report, eliminate and monitor non-tariff barriers and increase regulatory transparency among African countries under the African Continental Free Trade Area. The Debt Management and Financial Analysis (DMFAS) Programme of UNCTAD continued to lend support to the 21 LDCs that are using DMFAS software to strengthen their capacity to effectively manage central-government and government-guaranteed debt and to achieve sustainable debt levels. He noted that this was an area of particular concern for LDCs.

**The representative of WIPO** noted that WIPO had continued its efforts to support LDCs develop national capacity in the implementation of the recommendations of the IPoA relevant to WIPO's mandate and areas of expertise. Activities focussed on areas such as development and implementation of national innovation policy and strategy, building technical skills capacity, strengthening of technology and innovation support infrastructures and institutions, facilitating LDCs access to global innovation and knowledge databases including patent information, and capacity building in the area of appropriate technology. Capacity building activities were undertaken at the national, sub-regional, regional and inter-regional level and sought to capture needs from awareness building to that of technical training and intensive skills development program. Beneficiaries of such programs included policy makers, senior government officials, academia, researchers, entrepreneurs, business and industry representatives.

More than 1700 participants from the LDCs in Asia and the Pacific, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean benefitted from WIPO capacity building and skills development training programmes in 2018. Theory and practice of various IP disciplines as well as training on how to use IP system for building national knowledge base in science and appropriate technology, access to and use of global patent information, technical skills development of entrepreneurs

of the IP tools for business purposes were captured in the capacity building programs. In 2018, WIPO continued to implement the Advanced Training and Advisory Programme on Intellectual Property Rights for the LDCs in cooperation with Sweden, which addressed training needs in areas such as general IP disciplines, and copyright for Development, and Technology. Six training programmes were held in 2018, in Stockholm, in LDCs in Asia and Africa, and one in Malaysia. In the context of regional cooperation programmes, WIPO in cooperation with the Moroccan Intellectual Property Office, organized a workshop on the theme of strategic use of intellectual property system to facilitate technological, social and cultural development in Casablanca for French-speaking LDCs. WIPO also organized another regional programme on innovation and technological capacity building in Addis Ababa in cooperation with the Government of Ethiopia for the African LDCs. Two national programmes took place in Laos and Myanmar in cooperation with the Ministry of Science and Technology, Ministry of Education and national chamber of commerce and industry. The national programmes addressed the country specific institutional policy, IP capacity needs of the business sectors, SMEs, entrepreneurs, researchers and innovators and contributed to build enhanced technical knowledge about the innovation system and commercialization of innovation through efficient use of intellectual property IP system and tools. WIPO also organized a national cooperation programme for Haiti.

Capacity building for the transfer of appropriate technology continued to receive high and enhanced support in 2018, with activities implemented in Ethiopia, Rwanda and Tanzania focused on accessing patent information for building national capacity to use the information in the patent system for innovation and technological solution to address development needs. The project facilitated strengthening national capacity in the area of need analysis, transfer, development and adaptation of appropriate technology to address nationally identified development challenges in areas such as renewable energy, clean water, aquaculture and agro-processing. In 2018, in response to requests, preparations were made to implement projects in two more LDCs, namely Senegal and Uganda. A project was also launched in Mozambique. WIPO's LDCs cooperation programs were implemented in areas such as science, innovation and technological capacity building, human resources skills development that are also major areas of focus of the IPoA and the WIPO deliverables for LDCs.

**The representative of WCO** indicated that, out of the list of LDCs, only 3 were not Members of the WCO. However, an important development was the June 2018 accession of Kiribati, a non-WCO Member, to the International Convention on the Harmonisation and Simplification of Customs Procedures, as amended (Revised Kyoto Convention - RKC). Kiribati was the first non-WCO Member that had acceded to the RKC. It was also reported that Vanuatu, a WCO Member and LDC, had also acceded to the RKC in June 2018.

The WCO continued to provide support to LDCs for effective and harmonized implementation of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation of the World Trade Organization

(WTO TFA). The support was being provided under the WCO Mercator Programme, which had an overall track compiling all WCO instruments and tools supporting the harmonized implementation of the WTO TFA and a tailor-made track that was aimed at offering tailor-made support to Members that had requested assistance.

The WCO had issued two documents providing guidance specifically to LDCs in the areas of valuation and origin (*Practical Implementation of the WTO Valuation Agreement: A Brief Guide for LDCs* and *Practical Guide to the 2015 Nairobi Ministerial Decision on Rules of Origin for LDCs*).

An area of focus for the WCO were the needs of Small Island Economies (SIEs), a number of these being also LDCs. The WCO was providing assistance in the area of transit to LLDCs – another category comprising a number of LDCs.

Under the Climate change and environmental sustainability and Disaster risk reduction priority areas of action, the WCO was providing assistance to its Members under the WCO Environment Programme and assistance for facilitating the Customs clearance of relief consignments.

**The representative of the World Bank** noted that the WBG continued to work with LDCs providing financial support and advisory services. The main channel for its work with LDCs was the International Development Association (IDA). In fiscal year 18, USD24 billion had been committed to IDA countries. IDA18 was focusing on 5 themes: Climate; Gender; Fragility, Conflict and Violence; Jobs and Economic Transformation; and Governance and Institutions. In fiscal year 18, IDA lending was distributed to the following sector: 32% for infrastructure; 30% for social services; 21% for public administration and law; 8% for industry and trade; 6% for agriculture; and 2% for finance. IDA18 had introduced flexibility and new windows to respond to specific contexts and needs of some countries. This included a USD 2 billion refugee sub-window, a USD2.5 billion joint IDA-IFC-MIGA window for mobilizing private sector investment in challenging markets, and the new Pandemic Emergency Financing Facility, the first grant of which was approved last year for Ebola response in DRC. Discussions on IDA19 replenishment had already started for the financial package fiscal years 2021-2023. There would be a continuation of the broad priorities of IDA18. There also was a request from World Bank shareholders to do more on disruptive technologies and human capital. He noted that during the Spring Meetings an LDC ministerial breakfast will be hosted jointly with OHRRLLS which would focus on resilience to debt vulnerability in the LDCs.

**The representative of ECA** provided a brief update on the discussions on LDCs in ECA, including the standing item on implementation of the IPoA. He noted that some of the issues that had been raised included refugee flows, debt, limited access to finance, human capital, productivity and capital addition. He noted that recommendations had been made on several areas for future work.

**The representative of UNFPA** noted that UNFPA was committed to providing reproductive health services for LDCs. She noted the particular importance of migrants, refugees and IDPs who had difficulty in accessing service. She noted that work was underway to harness the demographic dividend. She expressed UNFPA's willingness to work on LDC-V preparations, noting that the UNFPA Executive Director had recently met with the High Representative.

**The representative of ITC** recalled its focus on SMEs and smallholder farmers, and the use of SMEs as vehicles to move up the value chain. Over 80 per cent of ITC's resource were allocated to LDCs. Priority was being given to the agricultural sector, including on green economy and services owing to the high employment creation potential. Attention was also being paid to the role that women could play, which thus far had not received the attention warranted. High emphasis was placed on jobs and employment creation especially for youth. Examples were provided of Guinea, Mali and Burkina Faso. In LDCs, SMEs comprised a huge part of the private sector, and were often in the informal sector. ITC's efforts focused on helping LDCs move up the value chain and become more productive. ITC was also active on institutional capacity building, including investment promotion agencies. ITC was seeking to help attract FDI since it was through FDI that LDCs could move up the ladder.

**The representative of ESCAP** noted that a resolution entitled "Supporting the smooth transition of the least developed countries in Asia and the Pacific towards a sustainable graduation" was adopted by ESCAP at its Commission Session in May 2018. It recognized that the graduation process of LDCs should be coupled with an appropriate package of incentives and support measures. It invited graduating countries in the region to start the preparations for their graduation and transition strategy and underscored the importance of coordinated, integrated UN system support to them. A Development Account project (tranche 11) is being implemented by ESCAP, which aims at strengthening the capacity of policymakers in three LDCs – Bhutan, Cambodia and Vanuatu, (a fourth country is being considered), to effectively allocate and utilize existing financial resources, as well as to mobilize additional financing, for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Another Development Account project on "Demographic Dividend with a Gender Dimension: Entry points for Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals in Africa and Asia and the Pacific" will jointly be implemented with ECA. Another, implemented jointly with UNCTAD, plans to offer capacity building and training opportunities in four countries, including Cambodia and Nepal, for government officials to improve the overall business and investment environment, raise the competitiveness of SMEs and help their integration into global and regional value chains, and promote FDI for sustainable development. In 2019, ESCAP plans to organize a series of capacity building activities to support LDCs in formulating national policies and strategies for graduation and beyond. The planned activities include, among others: a regional workshop on graduation from the LDC category in late April in Bangkok and, subject to additional consultations, national workshops in 5 LDCs in the region. As indicated in the recent GA resolution on the follow-up to the LDC IV Conference, ESCAP and OHRLLS plan to co-organize a regional final review of IPoA's implementation during the ESCAP's Commission Session in

2020. The results of the regional final review would feed into the preparation of the LDC V Conference.

**The representative of EIF** noted that the Year 2019 had marked a significant milestone for the EIF – the start of the new EIF Strategy (2019-2022) whose vision was "Inclusive trade for better lives". It was underpinned by an increased focus on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, the EIF Value for Money Framework and new thematic funding windows. Recognising that the global landscape poses challenges for LDCs while acknowledging opportunities that exist, the EIF would focus on empowering LDCs to use trade and investment to integrate into global trade for sustainable development and poverty reduction. The main goals were a) improved trade environment conducive for inclusive and sustainable growth of LDCs and b) increased exports and access to international markets. Three strategic priorities – economic empowerment of women and youth; better support to micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises; and new ways of working in fragile contexts would shape EIF investments in the future. A major thrust worth mentioning was the continued support to LDCs for five years after graduation to support smooth transition. EIF was still focused on leaving no country behind.

During 2018, investments worth \$24million were undertaken leading to cumulative investments of over \$200m. Since the start of 2019, US\$7.6 million of new investments had been allocated to building LDC capacity to trade. In addition to boosting productive capacity, a growing demand from the LDCs to address the services dimension, strengthening e-commerce and supporting women economic empowerment was defining the direction of EIF investments. Some highlights included the following. On services, Liberia and Uganda were now strengthening their tourism sectors. While Liberia was focusing on surf tourism, Uganda was supporting craft- and souvenir-producing enterprises to boost the quality of souvenirs, thereby increasing sales and reaching new export markets. On e-commerce, greater attention to e-commerce opportunities had led to an e-commerce strategy in Cambodia and a productive capacity e-commerce project in Rwanda since the start of 2019. The active participation of the EIF partners in UNCTAD's eCommerce Week had served as a tangible contribution for a greater understanding of challenges and opportunities that the LDCs were facing in reaching the digital space. The EIF's new initiative on women economic empowerment would further contribute to ensuring that 50,000 women entrepreneurs in the LDCs realize the full potential of new trade opportunities. However, the biggest highlight of EIF investments over the reporting period was the WTO-led analysis on trade-related implications of LDC graduation. The results of this work would serve as a tangible contribution towards greater integration of graduating countries into the multilateral trading system. Recognising that the LDC needs far exceed the resources that the EIF could provide, EIF was leveraging financial and technical resources, and partnerships with UN agencies such as ITC and UNCTAD to deepen impact.

**The representative of FAO** noted that its work programme was aligned with the SDGs and supporting the IPoA, including many extra programmes exclusively for LDCs support. In recent years, there have been some factors that negatively affected the food security and hunger. Climate change and conflict had affected most of the LDCs more proportionately. Business-as-usual was not an option. There was a need to focus on resilience and conflict prevention. However, there were significant resource constraints, which implied the need for greater cooperation. Priority focus areas included resilience, gender inclusion, rural development, family farming and support to subsistence farmers. Other niche areas in LDCs included aquaculture and fisheries. Technology could also play an important role in increasing food security.

**The representative of IAEA** noted that the IAEA Board of Governors, the highest decision-making organ, had adopted a resolution on addressing the challenges facing LDCs in the Peaceful Application of Nuclear Energy through the Technical Cooperation Programme. As of 2019, 35 Member States of the IAEA are LDCs of which 26 in Africa, 8 in Asia and the Pacific and one in the Caribbean. The Guiding Principles governing the provision of technical assistance note, inter alia, that the provision of technical assistance constitutes a major, high-priority function of the Agency, and requires that the IAEA's resources for technical assistance are primarily allocated to meet the needs of developing countries. Least developed countries share a number of characteristics and challenges with respect to the peaceful application of nuclear technology. These can be grouped and summarized as safety infrastructure, human and technical capacity, and financial limitations. Within the framework of the implementation of the IPoA the support offered through the IAEA TC programme to Member States is related to IAEA mandate. It is tailored to their needs and priorities, and thus the programme contributes to addressing the sustainable development needs of LDCs. LDC priorities for support through the TC programme focus on food and agriculture to contribute to food security focusing on drought-resistant crops through a rational soil and water management, developing new crop varieties through mutation breeding and food safety. In health and nutrition, IAEA assistance is focused on the fight against cancer through assistance to Member States to establish their radiotherapy centres for cancer treatment and fighting malnutrition and obesity among children. The focus area that underpins IAEA's assistance is on legislative assistance to help Member States formulate a Nuclear Law and establish a national regulatory body for the safe use of radioactive sources. The delivery of the TC programme in LDCs is tailored according to situation and context and includes focusing TC support in the most relevant thematic areas including building human and institutional capacity; and facilitating partnerships, including TCDC and resource mobilization. In this context, a series of activities have been implemented in support LDCs' needs in the areas of human resources development, assistance to develop or strengthen national infrastructure for radiation protection and building capacities to mainstream nuclear science and technology in LDCs' socio-economic development. The target beneficiaries are policy-makers, managers, heads of technical

institutions and scientists. Synergies were built and enhanced with sister UN agencies including FAO, WHO, UNICEF, UNIDO and UNCCD.

**The representative of ILO** noted that the ILO supports the implementation of the IPoA by providing enhanced financial and technical support to LDCs to develop productive capacities. This entailed a range of interrelated policies from access to social protection, elimination of child and forced labour, tackling discrimination in employment, enhancing skills, creating an enabling environment for sustainable enterprises especially small businesses, and promoting social dialogue based on respect for fundamental principles and rights at work. ILO's primary programming tool for such policy packages was a Decent Work Country Programme, which was integrated into overall national strategies and UN support mechanisms such as UNDAFs. ILO works together with the UN system and IFIs to support LDCs in the making progress to SGDs among which SDGs 8 on Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. For example, the ILO had been promoting employment-intensive methods of infrastructure development for over 40 years and at present, the ILO supported 17 employment-intensive investment programmes for rural infrastructure development in a range of LDCs. Investment in renewable energy – specifically hydropower, solar photovoltaic, wind, and biofuels - was of key importance in LDCs. ILO was providing skills development and policy advice. For example, the Green Jobs Programme in Bangladesh was highlighted as a good practice. About 60 per cent of the population was not connected to the national grid, and 40 of those with access lived mostly in urban areas. Due to the acute shortage of energy, particularly electricity, and heavy reliance on imported raw materials like fossil fuels, the Government of Bangladesh had accorded high priority to alternative energy sources, such as solar energy. There had been a sharp increase in demand for solar home systems creating opportunities for the promotion of green jobs in the renewable energy sector, particularly in rural areas.

The ILO played a key role in supporting member States in improving their statistical systems and fundamental data in order to understand progress and guide policies on the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the IPoA in the case of LDCs. ILO had contributed to the development of internationally agreed methodologies to measure progress in the ongoing global SDG monitoring process. In Zambia, the ILO had been supporting the local national statistical office improving their national accounts and include “green sectors” to identify and measure the economic and employment effects of conventional and green policies. The recent participation in the newly-established Inter-Agency Technical Committee on investments promotion for the LDC was cited. ILO was also working with EIF, UNIDO and UNCTAD on a project on investment facilitation and sustainable development which would provide capacity building for IPAs including peer learning, community integration, and training courses related to the MNE Declaration. LDCs had been provided scholarship for participating to the training. ILO promoted the ratification of conventions covering

fundamental principles and rights at work through programmes and advocacy campaign which are also of high importance in LDCs.

**The representatives of UNIDO** emphasized that its expertise and experience was in supporting LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS in the area of productive capacity and trade capacity building, renewable energy, environment, agribusiness, investment promotion. With regard to the SAMOA Pathway, the Pacific Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (PCREEE) was inaugurated in 26 April 2017 in Tonga with the support of UNIDO, the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) DOCK sustainable energy initiative, and the Government of Austria. The partnership contributed to the SDGs – particularly SDG 7, SDG9 and SDG13 – and to the Regional Framework for Action on Energy Security in the Pacific. UNIDO highlighted the Programmes for Country Partnership (PCP) approach, which piloted a new model of country-level engagement premised on partnerships and aimed at leveraging private investment. The PCP was UNIDO’s innovative model for accelerating industrialization in Member States and meeting SDG 9. This was particularly relevant given the current de-industrialization trends in many developing countries – notably in LLDCs and in most of sub-Saharan Africa. The PCP was based on a multi-stakeholder partnership led by the host government. The PCPs were focused on a limited number of industrial sectors with high growth and development and is specifically designed to leverage private investment in these priority sectors. For example, the assistance to develop Industrial Parks had great potential to accelerate LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS industrialization (e.g. UNIDO work in Ethiopia, Senegal etc.), as well as create jobs for youth and women. He stressed that UNIDO was identifying the next round of PCP beneficiary countries, including Zambia and Rwanda. He underscored that UNIDO was working on the operationalization (funding and buy in) of the Third Industrial Development Decade for Africa 2016-2025 (IDDA3). Indeed, the resolution calls for the advancement of “sustainable industrialization” to reduce poverty and help implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in line with Agenda 2063. UNIDO counted on OHRLLS to support this endeavour.

**Mr. Sandagdorj Erdenebileg, Chief**, Office of the High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, concluded the session by expressing appreciation for the work of the agencies in support of the LDCs.

### **C. Preparations for the Fifth UN Conference on LDCs (LDC-V)**

**Mr. Sandagdorj Erdenebileg, Chief**, Office of the High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, noted that this next session would explore how organizations could contribute to the process, including through: views on lessons learned to date and possible elements or areas of focus of the new Programme of Action; thematic assessments or publications organizations could contribute; pre-conference events, including during from UN entities’ intergovernmental meetings; and side events during the LDC-V conference itself.

**Mr. Aniket Ghai, Senior Economic Affairs Officer**, provided an overview of the preparatory process to date. He referred to General Assembly resolution A/RES/73/242 by which member States decided to convene the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries at the highest possible level, including Heads of State and Government, in 2021. He summarized key provisions of the resolution related to the preparatory process, including Preparatory Committee Meetings, regional review meetings, country level preparations, and UN System support. He also highlighted the guidance provided in the resolution on mandate and scope of the Conference.

He noted the LDC-V period would coincide with the last decade of the 2030 Agenda, and thus could be expected to contribute to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in LDCs. In addition, there would likely be “unfinished business” of the IPoA, and thus efforts were needed to continue to help LDCs reach the graduation thresholds, for example on trade, FDI, ODA, energy, ICT, infrastructure, human development, and resilience. The new Programme of Action could also take into account the shifting global landscape to ensure that LDCs take advantage of new opportunities and cope with emerging challenges, and avoid falling further behind, for example through the digital revolution, AI, automation, new materials and biotech, and big data. The increasing adverse impacts of climate change also needed to be taken into account.

On national level reviews of the implementation of the IPoA in each LDC, he highlighted the importance of evidence-based assessment, and noted that guidelines and a template for the preparation of national reviews had been conveyed to all LDCs. Resident Coordinators and UN country teams had been requested to provide support for their preparation. Based on the findings and recommendations of the national reports, OHRLLS would prepare a synthesis report to inform the substantive preparations for the Conference.

Two regional review meetings were planned, one for Asia and the Pacific LDCs and another for Africa plus Haiti. The ECA has already taken a decision to hold the African regional review meeting in 2020. ESCAP was also expected to take a similar decision at its upcoming annual session in May 2019. The two regional review meetings would also consider the national reports of the respective regional LDCs. Based on the national and regional review outcomes, inputs from the UN agencies, and OHRLLS’ own facts-based analysis, OHRLLS would prepare a 10-year appraisal of the implementation of the IPoA.

The first Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) meeting was expected to take place towards the end of 2020, when preparations for the draft outcome document would also begin. The process of identifying a host country for the LDC-V Conference had begun, with an invitation to all member States to express their interest. As next steps, a modalities decision by the GA would set the dates of the various meetings.

**The representative of WHO** expressed the hope that health issues would continue to be one of the key areas of support to LDCs beyond the IPoA end-date of 2020. He noted that South-

South and Triangular cooperation would continue to be an important means of implementation in LDC's development in health areas.

**The representative of WTO** interest in contributing to LDC-V, including through the organization of a side-event at the Conference. He indicated WTO's interest in thematic assessments on an appraisal of the last 10 years in LDCs and on a collaborative effort on a comprehensive study on graduation, with EIF. He noted that priority areas for LDCs included enhanced market access, flexibility with the WTO rules, and enhancing productive capacity for trade.

**The representative of the CDP secretariat** noted that at its recent meeting, the CDP had made proposals for the next PoA, including aligning it with the 2030 Agenda, integrating "leaving no-one behind" including monitoring and review of the new PoA, using productive capacity for sustainable development as an organizing framework. The new PoA should reflect changes in composition of the category. It should include additional measures to expand their productive capacity. In addition, there was recognition of the need to support enhanced support for addressing vulnerability and resilience. There was a need for further support to LDCs upon graduation.

**The representative of UNCTAD** noted that, as documented in UNCTAD's *The Least Developed Countries Report* series, the key to responding to LDCs' development challenges was the development of productive capacities and the structural transformation of LDC economies. He highlighted that transitioning to higher value-added and higher productivity economic activities was the condition to reach LDC's development goals – whether those contained in the IPoA or the SDGs. This should be the focus of the Plan of Action for the next decade. UNCTAD was discussing internally organizing two events related to the LDC V process. The first was a High-Level Policy Dialogue among LDC policymakers to discuss successful experiences as well as challenges experienced by LDCs in the development of productive capacities. The event would not only promote policy dialogue and peer learning, but also provide elements useful for the preparatory process of LDC V and for the design of the new Plan of Action. UNCTAD planned to hold this event during its next Ministerial Conference, i.e. UNCTAD XV, which was scheduled to take place in 2020.

A second was a parallel event during LDC V, on priorities for structural transformation of LDC economies in the 2020s. It would likely focus on new modalities and priorities of a new generation of STI policies and industrial policies, taking into account the changing international technological landscape and its rapid evolution (e.g. digital technologies, artificial intelligence, big data, but also the challenges that climate change puts to LDC rural economies). The event would focus both on domestic policies and on possible new international support measures in the field of STI. The event was therefore expected to provide inputs into the process of implementation of the new Plan of Action for LDCs.

UNCTAD had carried out in-depth research on different aspects of the development of productive capacities and of structural economic transformation, reflected in its annual *The*

*Least Developed Countries Report*. In preparation of the LDC V Conference, UNCTAD would publicize and disseminate the *Compendium on Policy Options for the LDCs* which synthesized the policy recommendations contained in the different report in the series. It was an action-oriented, user-friendly and visually enhanced tool for the use of policymakers in LDCs and their development partners. It identified possible types of instruments in various policy areas that would foster development progress, enhance growth and support poverty eradication and structural transformation. It had been prepared mainly for the use of policymakers of LDCs, of LDC development partners and of the international community at large.

Secondly, *The Least Developed Countries Report 2019* would analyse current trends and policy options of financing for development in the LDCs in the post-AAAA context. Financing was a critical pillar for the development of productive capacities and the changing international environment and conditions in which LDCs are mobilizing financing for development at present poses new challenges and required these countries to adopt innovative policies and institutions. The Report would therefore provide policy inputs and suggestions which could be taken up in the preparatory process of LDC V.

Thirdly, UNCTAD was finalizing its *Productive Capacities Index (PCI)*, which is a measurement tool for the state of development of productive capacities in individual countries, to assess progress in the development of productive capacities, as well as an indicative diagnostic of which factors were driving forward – or, alternatively, holding back. It could become a diagnostic tool not only in the run-up to the Conference, but also in the implementation of the new Plan of Action.

**The representative of ESCAP** recalled that ten of the 12 LDCs in Asia and the Pacific had already met the criteria for graduation from the LDC category and within the next 10 years most would graduate. Therefore, ESCAP was particularly interested in provisions concerning post-graduation conditionality/period within the new PoA for LDCs and how to assist countries which have just graduated. ESCAP highlighted that new emerging issues worth considering in the next PoA for LDCs could include: climate change mitigation, addressing pollution (incl. plastic), and environmental sustainability. In terms of supporting publications, ESCAP indicated that the *Countries with Special Needs Development Report 2020* will partially focus on LDCs and could perhaps serve as an input to LDC-V. The representative of ESCAP posed a question on how ESCAP and other RCs can be better engaged in the preparation of the Fifth UN Conference on LDC, in addition to providing regional inputs and possibly organizing side events during the conference.

**The representative of EIF** noted that EIF was keen to collaborate and engage at various levels of preparation. This year, EIF was commissioning a meta-evaluation looking at its productive capacity work and institutional strengthening in various LDCs with a view to learning lessons on what has worked well, which could be relevant to LDC-V. Initial thoughts for thematic sessions (which could involve other partners) included women economic empowerment, and - in conjunction with WTO - graduation. Last year, EIF organized a Global Forum on Inclusive Trade bringing together all the LDCs and which resulted in a Global Call to Action calling for

more resources, and thus a key consideration for the next IPOA was the topic of mobilizing Aid-for-Trade resources exclusively for LDCs.

**The representative of WIPO** recalled its own preparations for LCD-IV, and noted that it would seek to build upon this. Interaction had already begun with the LDC Group in WIPO, including preparatory meetings in Asia and Africa. Preliminary issues included innovation, institution building and policy development. Broad areas would be carried over, while new areas could also be considered, such as AI and big data, which were already being considered in the WIPO.

**The representative of IAEA** noted that it intended to continue its assistance to LDCs through its Technical Cooperation Programme. It would pursue a thematic assessment to ensure that the delivery of the Technical Cooperation programme was tailored to address the specific needs and priorities of its Member States including LDCs. As part of the run-up to the Fifth UN Conference on LDCs, proposed suggestions for the new PoA could include Science and Technology to ensure that innovative technological developments in the 21st century contribute to LDCs' development and climate change focusing on soil erosion, ocean acidification, marine pollution and more.

**The representative of UNIDO** recalled the upcoming Eighth UNIDO LDC Ministerial Conference which would take place on 2 November 2019, in Abu Dhabi, noting it could provide an input to the LDC-V Conference. The theme was yet to be defined. OHRLLS cooperation would be sought as per the usual arrangement, including consultation on the theme of the Ministerial event. UNIDO stated its interest in strengthening its partnerships with other institutions as well as the private sector and noted that OHRLLS could play a key role in this regard, especially in view of its convening role and comparative advantage on advocacy.

**The representative of ECA** noted the need to be mindful of “international agenda fatigue”, give the many different frameworks already in place – the 2030 Agenda, IPoA, VPoA, AU's Agenda 2063 and SAMOA pathway for a few African countries. He noted that the 2030 Agenda already had broad recognition, and thus the new PoA needed to differentiate itself from that by avoiding duplication and overlap, as well as be additional.

**The representative of UNFPA** called for the new PoA to recognize women empowerment, and also health, human mobility, including related humanitarian situations, and climate change. She noted the value of partnerships. She recalled the cooperation between UNFPA and OHRLLS during the Antalya mid-term review, noting this would be a point of departure for the LDC-V preparations.

#### **D. Conclusions and next steps**

In his concluding remarks, Mr. Sandagdorj Erdenebileg, Chief, Office of the High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, noted 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.

With regard to the discussion on LDC-V preparations, he thanked those organizations that had expressed interest in organizing pre-conference events, side-event during LDC-V, and thematic publications related to the conference, which would play a critical role in the preparatory process. He noted that, in terms of priority areas for the next programme, agencies had suggested a broad range of issues: productive capacity, structural transformation, industrial development, trade, market access, good governance, social issues, health, women's empowerment, climate change, oceans, science and technology, innovation, emerging areas such as AI and big data, and innovative ways of mobilizing finance, including through new partnership models. He invited agencies to send confirmation of the details of their thematic assessments and pre-conference events, including dates, as soon as possible with a view to finalizing the list by the next meeting of the IACG in October 2019. In this regard, he encouraged agencies to partner with each other on specific thematic areas. He thanked all participants and declared the meeting closed.

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

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

Mr. Matthias Bruckner, Senior Economic Affairs Officer, Committee for Development Policy Secretariat

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

Ms. Annette Ssemuwemba, Deputy Executive Director

### **Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO)**

Mr. Ahmad Mukhtar, Economist, FAO Office in Geneva

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

Mr. Mickel Edwerd, Head of Africa Section I, Division for Africa, Department of Technical Cooperation

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

Mr. Massimiliano La Marca, Senior Economist, Multilateral Cooperation Department

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

Mr. Ruben Phoolchund, Chief, Office for Africa

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

Mr. Rolf Traeger, Chief, Least Developed Countries section, Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special programmes  
Mr. Moritz Ewert-Meier, Programme Officer, Landlocked Developing Countries section, Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special programmes,

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

Ms. Luisa Bernal, Policy Specialist, Geneva Office

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

Mr. Zhaocan Li, Geneva Liaison Office

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

Mr. Ben McCarthy, Associate Economic Affairs Officer

### **United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP)**

Mr. Andrzej Bolesta, Economic Affairs Officer, Countries with Special Needs Section  
Macroeconomic Policy and Financing for Development Division

### **UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)**

Mr. Guillaume Durand, Partnerships, Inter-governmental process and Inter-agency cooperation Branch

### **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)**

Ms. Petal Thomas, Multilateral Affairs Specialist

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

Mr. Manuel Mattiat, Programme Officer, Regional Division - Africa

**World Bank**

Mr. Ferran Pérez, International Affairs Officer, World Bank Group Geneva Office

**World Customs Organization (WCO)**

Ms. Vyara Filipova, Technical Attaché, Compliance and Facilitation Directorate

**World Food Programme (WFP)**

Ms. Meghan Sullivan, External Relations

**World Health Organization (WHO)**

Mr. Bo JIA, Technical Officer, Department of Country Cooperation and Collaboration with UN System, Office of the Director General

**World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)**

Mr. Purevdorj Vaanchig, Senior Counsellor, Division for LDCs

Mr. Md. Daniul Islam, Counsellor, Division for LDCs

**World Trade Organization (WTO)**

Mr. Shishir Priyadarshi, Director, Development Division

Mr. Taufiqur Rahman, Head of the LDCs Unit, Development Division

Mr. Rainer Lanz, Economic Affairs Officer, Development Division

**Office of the High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS (UN-OHRLLS)**

Mr. Sandagdorj Erdenebileg, Chief

Mr. Aniket Ghai, Senior Economic Affairs Officer

Ms. Dagmar Hertova, Programme Management Officer

## Annex II: Agenda

### **Eighteenth 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, 9 April 2019, Conference Room XXV, Palais des Nations, Geneva**

<b>10:00 – 12:00</b>	<p><b>Opening remarks and Update on the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) and Antalya Midterm Review outcome as well as on efforts to build synergies and coherence with the 2030 Agenda</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mr. Sandagdorj Erdenebileg, Chief, UN-OHRLLS: remarks on 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>12:00 – 13:00</b>	<p><b>Preparations for the Fifth UN Conference on LDCs (LDC-V)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Briefing by Mr. Aniket Ghai, Senior Economic Affairs Officer, UN-OHRLLS, on LDC-V, including General Assembly resolutions, roadmap and pre-conference events</li><li>• Presentations by participating organizations on substantive preparations, including thematic assessments and pre-conference events</li></ul>
<b>13:00 – 13:15</b>	<p><b>Conclusions and next steps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Summary of discussion and concluding remarks by Mr. Sandagdorj Erdenebileg, UN-OHRLLS</li></ul>

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