



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 Twentieth Inter-Agency Consultative Group Meeting of the United Nations
system and international organisations on the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme
of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020**

Virtual Microsoft Teams meeting

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Table of Contents | 2 |
| Acronyms | 3 |
| Introduction | 4 |
| Aim of the meeting | 4 |
| Opening | 5 |
| Update on the status of preparations for the Fifth UN Conference on LDCs (LDC5) and Impacts of COVID-19 on LDCs and UN response | 6 |
| Introduction | 6 |
| Presentations by participating organizations..... | 6 |
| Strengthening the working methods of the IACG | 26 |
| Presentation..... | 26 |
| UN System Best Practices Report on LDCs | 26 |
| Presentation..... | 26 |
| Discussion..... | 27 |
| Closing remarks | 27 |
| Annex I: List of participants | 28 |
| Annex II: Agenda | 32 |

Acronyms

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| AAAA | Addis-Ababa Action Agenda |
| CDP | Committee for Development Policy |
| CFC | Common Fund for Commodities |
| ECA | Economic Commission for Africa |
| EIF | Enhanced Integrated Framework |
| ESCAP | Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific |
| IACG | Inter-agency Consultative Group |
| IATF | Inter-agency Task Force on Least Developed Country Graduation |
| ICT | Information and Communications Technology |
| IFAD | International Fund for Agricultural Development |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| IPoA | Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 |
| ITC | International Trade Centre |
| ITU | International Telecommunications Union |
| LDC | Least Developed Country |
| LDC5 | Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries |
| ODA | Official Development Assistance |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goal |
| STI | Science, Technology and Innovation |
| UNCTAD | United Nations Conference on Trade and Development |
| UNESCO | United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNIDO | United Nations Industrial Development Organization |
| UNOSSC | United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation |
| UN-OHRLS | United Nations Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States |
| WIPO | World Intellectual Property Organization |
| WTO | World Trade Organization |

Introduction

Aim of the meeting

The Twentieth meeting of the IACG of the UN system and international organizations on the Implementation of the IPoA was held virtually on 16 June 2020, organized by UN-OHRLLS. The IACG meeting provided a platform for the participating agencies, funds and programmes and other international organizations to share an update on the status of preparations for LDC5 including the participants' contributions and to discuss the impacts of COVID-19 on LDCs as well as the response of the United Nations System. Additionally, two presentations were delivered by Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox, Director, UN-OHRLLS, on strengthening the working methods of the IACG and on a UN System Best Practices Report on LDCs.

Opening

The moderator, **Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox, Director, UN-OHRLLS**, welcomed all participants, stressed the importance of supporting LDCs in this challenging time. She invited Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative, UN-OHRLLS to deliver opening remarks.

Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative, UN-OHRLLS, warmly welcomed all participants to the Twentieth meeting of the Inter-Agency Consultative Group, in particular the recently appointed members who were new to the IACC – the representatives of the Common Fund for Commodities, of FAO and of WIPO. She noted that while the world was facing several crises in 2020 unveiling deep inequalities and fragilities, the principles and values contained in the United Nations Charter and Declaration of Human Rights were as relevant as 75 years ago as at the United Nations' founding. She expressed concern that development gains in LDCs – including graduating LDCs - could be undermined by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic which disproportionately affects LDCs and whose response to the pandemic was constrained by limited fiscal space and structural constraints.

The COVID-19 outbreak had come in the midst of the preparatory process for LDC5 which was likely to be rescheduled for December 2021/ January 2022, with the Preparatory Committee meetings likely to take place in May 2021 and July 2021. A General Assembly Resolution would set the final dates. The academic conference in preparation of LDC5 which was to be hosted in Helsinki, Finland, originally planned for October 2020 had been postponed to May 2021. The High Representative stressed that while a new timeline for LDC5 has had to be adopted, the Office was undertaking efforts to ensure momentum would be maintained and an ambitious new Programme of Action for the LDCs for the next decade would be crafted, in spite of delays caused by the pandemic. She provided updates on the situation of the LDCs which were being posted on the OHRLLS website, OHRLLS' advocacy work and several events organized by the Office such as a number of Ambassadorial-level meetings with the LDC Bureau and the full LDC Group, a virtual meeting of the national focal points of the African LDCs including the participation of Resident Coordinators and representatives of the Permanent Missions in New York, a briefing of the Deputy Secretary-General to the LDC Group and a meeting of the Friends of LDCs. These events had helped the Office to assess the situation, mobilize global support and identify key challenges in LDCs for coping with the pandemic.

Additionally, progress had been maintained on the Office's analytical work through reports and publications. Recently published reports include the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the IPoA and the 2020 Policy Brief on Advancing SDG 7 in LDCs. Preparations were underway for a study of the UN Systems Best Practices on Supporting the LDCs which would be discussed later in the meeting, as well as a lessons learned report from implementing the IPoA in LDCs for the Decade 2011-2020 which was based on the national

reports submitted by 27 LDCs. Advocacy work included the USG's engagement in the Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation as a member of the Secretary-General's Broadband Commission and in the June Momentum meetings on climate change in her capacity as UNFCCC National Adaptation Plan Champion.

She concluded by encouraging everyone to work together in line of the spirit of the 75th UN anniversary, citing the inspiring joint briefing of the Office with FAO and WFP as an example. She thanked all participants for their continuous efforts in support of these countries and the strong cooperation and stressed that this IACG meeting contributes to sharing information on support measures to LDCs addressing COVID-19 and to promoting joint work and strengthened cooperation.

Update on the status of preparations for the Fifth UN Conference on LDCs (LDC5) and Impacts of COVID-19 on LDCs and UN response

Introduction

Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox, Director, UN-OHRLS, moderator of the session, welcomed all participants, especially the new members of the IACG community, and expressed her appreciation for the high level of participation. She briefed the participants on the revised agenda under which two items would be taken up together, namely updates on preparations for LDC5 as well as the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on LDCs and related support measures for LDCs. Due to time constraints, she invited participants to convey only key messages and to send full statements UN-OHRLS for inclusion in the final report of the meeting.

Presentations by participating organizations

The representative of UNDP noted that the COVID-19 pandemic had brought to the fore the vulnerabilities of our societies and economies and the cost of inaction. Analysis by UNDP showed that for the first time since the publication of the Human Development Report in 1990, there was a regress in terms of human development. The pandemic was pushing 100 million people and potentially more into extreme poverty, calling for urgent action in solidarity to redress the course and build resilience. The LDCs had been severely impacted by the pandemic. While the direct health impact had been relatively less severe than in the most affected countries around the world, the socio-economic consequences had hit the developing world in full force. The fall in tourism receipts, remittances, exports, supply chain disruptions, financial markets volatility and others, put the recent significant development gains made by LDCs at risk.

LDC5 provided a window of opportunity to help galvanize and strengthen commitment by the international community towards the LDCs. Such commitment must be reflected in both the content and quality of partnerships to be formulated, as well as the resources it helped mobilize to make them operational. UNDP through its integrated policy response

to COVID-19, was working within the broader UN system to support LDCs and chart the way for a sustainable recovery in line with the SDGs.

UNDP had moved quickly to repurpose funds and mobilize additional resources from partners to be able to support vulnerable countries and communities in face of the crisis. UNDP had paid special attention to the needs of LDCs: out of the 130 countries benefiting from the USD30 million Rapid Response Facility of UNDP, close to 80% of funds were for LDCs. Working closely with UNCTs, IFIs and other partners, UNDP had contributed to more than 70 socio-economic impact assessments helping partner countries to understand implications and devise sound policy responses. UNDP was providing support to strengthening health systems, including procurement of personal protective equipment and medical supplies to more than 88 countries. Djibouti, Eritrea, Madagascar, South Sudan were among the LDCs that have benefited from this support from early on in the crisis. UNDP had also supported 47 countries to maintain business continuity through effective crisis management.

UNDP believed the pathway to a green, inclusive and resilient recovery should be built along four critical areas and opportunities brought to the fore by the pandemic:

- i) building a new social contract grounded in stronger solidarity;
- ii) protecting the most vulnerable and uprooting inequalities by strengthening capabilities;
- iii) Investing in a green economy by promoting climate and nature-based solutions, decoupling growth from carbon emissions;
- iv) embracing digital disruption as a lever for sustainable development.

UNDP stood ready to continue working with the OHRLLS and the UN system as a whole in the preparation of the LDC5.

The representative of the Common Fund for Commodities stressed the important role of science, technology and innovation, digital assets as well as the collaboration with the private sector in least developed countries. The Common Fund for Commodities (CFC) was aiming to reduce the negative impacts of commodity dependence in LDCs, similarly as outlined in the “LDC IV Monitor” in 2014, and is dedicated to impact investing. Therefore, CFC was providing financial support for innovative projects targeting small holder farmers and SMEs engaged in commodity production, processing and trading in developing countries. This approach contributed to the implementation of several key priorities of the IPoA by having 27 projects operating in LDCs with a total value of USD 63.9 million. To gain benefits from their projects, CFC was urging the remaining 8 LDCs and 27 LLDCs to join CFC. COVID-19 was revealing the vulnerabilities of the smallholders of the agricultural value chains and was impacting their economic livelihoods. As mitigation support for projects affected by the pandemic, CFC was working on an emergency liquidity facility. Drawing on their experiences, CFC was proposing several suggestions: (i) The IPoA was likely the only framework to bridge the digital divide and technology gap by supporting acquiring new technologies, building domestic capacity and a knowledge base, promoting indigenous capacity for research and

development; (ii) Actions to achieve the goal of doubling LDC's share of world merchandise exports and competitiveness-driven export diversification had to be accelerated, including the urgent implementation of market access of LDC goods and services; (iii) The urgency of bridging the digital divide was one of the most painful lessons of the pandemic, therefore an urgent reinvigorated framework of "Technology Bank" was needed; (iv) Mainstreaming science and technology into LDCs' national development and sectoral policies; (v) Priority in budget allocation for development of science, technology and innovation; (vi) Promoting investments in innovative solutions in agriculture, fisheries, mining etc.; (vii) Collaboration of private sector, government and business. Furthermore, national risk mitigation strategies for LDCs had to address their vulnerabilities to economic shocks. CFC stressed the importance of a good ecosystem of business support actors with shared objectives and complementary strengths focusing on the more vulnerable and to deploy solutions for resilience and recovery.

The representative of the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) noted EIF had responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by assessing and monitoring the effects on the LDCs, updating the entire EIF Constituency as the situation evolved and offering the required support based on individual LDC needs. A survey tool was launched to understand the challenges faced by the EIF National Implementation Units and the macro-level impacts at the project and country levels. Subsequently, Risk Management Action Sheet templates were deployed to understand the specific impacts on the implementation of EIF projects. Based on the analysis of these Action Sheets, the Country Coordinators at the Executive Secretariat for the EIF and the Regional Portfolio Managers at the EIF Trust Fund Manager were continuously engaged with individual LDCs and offering the required tailored support.

EIF was currently tracking 41 risk factors of reputational, political, fiduciary, policy, operational and global natures. The project-level risks are also aligned with these broad categories, with most of the risks falling within the operational category. Impacts at the macro level include: expected decline in world which will likely have an even greater effect on LDCs, as well as impacts of border closures; increased public spending on public health at a time when sources of revenue have shrunk considerably, compounded by steep commodity price shocks and potential currency depreciation; anticipated drop in remittances, which are a vital source of income in the LDCs and which could heighten economic, fiscal, and social pressures; expected declines in FDI as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic; and the possibility of LDC graduation delays for the LDCs in the pipeline.

A Guidance Note on the revision of project work plans and budgets in the context of COVID-19 had been sent to the LDCs and other implementing partners on the reallocation of project budgets to address challenges related to COVID-19. A proposal to provide flexibility in granting No-Cost Extensions (NCEs) was being discussed. Flexibilities had been provided with respect to national consultations on project development considering COVID-19 restrictions. A commissioned survey had established that, irrespective of COVID-19, all projects in the EIF pipeline were relevant and feasible. However, adjustments to some projects would be

required to ensure that the current and future impacts of COVID-19 are well articulated. EIF was working with partners to address key challenges within their areas of expertise. EIF was also organizing digital events, with three dedicated COVID-19 webinars exploring themes such as Fragility and Conflict, LDC Graduation and Tourism having already been completed. EIF had also reporting on the trade impacts of COVID-19 in the LDCs through a dedicated section available on the EIF's Trade for Development News platform, which can be accessed at <https://trade4devnews.enhancedif.org/en/covid-19>.

Despite the challenges, the COVID-19 pandemic was also creating opportunities. On e-commerce, LDC governments were increasingly exploring opportunities that could reduce the impacts of the crisis on brick and mortar businesses. On trade facilitation, a number of LDCs were reviewing cross-border trade strategies, engaging in bilateral and regional trade dialogue, and providing support to virtual markets. On investment, tailor-made training programmes were planned for the LDCs to attract and retain FDI in the context of COVID-19, particularly in manufacturing, supporting services and infrastructures. As countries move towards promoting trade and investment ties with their regional partners in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic, regional integration is likely to receive a much-needed boost. On graduation, Diagnostic Trade Integration Studies (DTIS) would integrate COVID-19 impacts, and could serve as an input to LDC5

The representative of the Technology Bank for LDCs explained that most of the Technology Bank's activities had to be revised due to the pandemic, and alternative approaches, such as virtual consultations, were now in place. While still facing many challenges, some initiatives of the Technology Bank had also been implemented towards the realization of the IPoA for LDCs. He highlighted that the Technology Bank itself was not only an achievement of the IPoA but also one of the first SDG targets to be met, namely target 17.8 of Goal 17. The basis for the Technology Bank's work was to advance efforts in LDCs in enhancing their STI capabilities and integrate those capacities into their sustainable efforts and the structural transformation of their economies. Their work focused on four key pillars: (i) technology transfer; (ii) establishing and strengthening academies of science; (iii) enhancing innovation capacity in LDCs; and (iv) enhancing STI capacities in LDCs. Based on these pillars, several initiatives had been implemented. Firstly, technical needs assessments and academies of sciences including the creation of their own needs assessments template ensuring that STI address both the needs of societies and support a sustainable development. Secondly, establishing and strengthening academies of sciences in several LDCs. This measure aims to facilitate building bridges between science and policy, and between countries, to support the achievement of sustainable development. Thirdly, innovation labs are established in collaboration with UN Office of Information and Communications Technology to support the innovation, adoption and implementation of technological solutions to address challenges in LDCs. Fourthly, to support gender and inclusiveness challenges, the Technology Bank collaborating with the International Development Centre of Canada aims to increase access of women led SMEs to finance. Fifthly, in collaboration with other UN specialized agencies, the Technology Bank is

working on capacity building in STI policies. For instance, a recent research training program in collaboration with FAO and the Tech Access Partnership with UNDP, UNCTAD, WHO which provides via a technology transfer platform support to manufacturing entities in LDCs to manufacture products, such as PPEs, ventilators and oxygen concentrators, themselves to overcome difficulties in buying PPEs and diagnostics during the pandemic. However, access to finance is a crucial part for the success of the latter, therefore collaborations with financial institutions are needed. Furthermore, an entity in Hong Kong provided 5 factories that can be set up overnight and produce a million and a half masks daily. Lastly, the Technology Bank is promoting open science and technology.

The representative of FAO informed the meeting that a new Office for Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) had recently been established aiming to support the priorities and special needs of these vulnerable populations and countries. She was looking forward to work with all participants on these matters. She focused her presentation on food insecurity. She explained that hunger was already on the rise prior to COVID-19 with 135 million people in 55 countries experiencing acute food insecurity, 183 million borderline food insecure, 75 million children under age 5 are stunted; 17 million wasted. The effects of COVID-19 along with other emergencies, such as the desert locust, would exacerbate this difficult situation. In contrast to the 2007-2008 food crisis, today's challenge was not food availability but food access due to food supply chain disruptions. For now, these disruptions have been resolved. But as economic contractions threatened progress towards ending hunger and malnutrition, FAO was estimating a rise in undernourishment, especially in LDCs and net food importing countries. She stressed that there was no one-size-fits-all approach but addressed several measures needed such as meeting the needs of the most vulnerable people with stimulus measures through emergency food assistance, open global trade, access to markets by smallholder farmers, and strengthening the resilience of food systems to withstand future shocks. She provided a description of FAO's recent work including nearly 40 policy briefs, numerous webinars, the use of big data to monitor trade and to collect information on logistical issues. In order to boost production, FAO was working on crop calendars, based on the agro-ecological conditions of the countries, which could be overlaid with information on COVID-19 outbreaks at the subnational level. Furthermore, FAO hosts the Agricultural Market Information System, a G20 initiative, where FAO provided more transparency and information on market conditions — from production and consumption to stocks and prices — to countries and investors.

The representative of WTO noted the pandemic has increased the importance of LDC5 and the need to deliver a strong Programme of Action for the LDCs at that meeting. He emphasized the WTO's commitment to LDC5 and its preparatory process. He noted the WTO would prepare a dedicated report on LDC issues in the multilateral trading system, which would take into account the trade-related implications of the current pandemic. WTO would also share, at LDC5, the work carried out on graduation. The first part which focuses

on all 12 graduating LDCs and entitled "Trade Impacts of LDC Graduation" had already been released, with country-specific market access analyses to be released later in June. These studies are intended to complement the work on graduation being done by other agencies and to serve as useful inputs for the LDC5. The WTO's 12th Ministerial Conference had to be postponed, with a new proposal by the Government of Kazakhstan for June 2021. He invited OHRLLS to brief WTO Members on the preparations for LDC5 at a meeting of the Sub-Committee on LDCs. The WTO have just released an Information Note on the COVID 19 pandemic and trade-related developments in LDCs. The note found that the pandemic had struck LDCs against the backdrop of a subdued trade performance in 2019. The value of LDC exports of goods and services had already declined by 1.6% in 2019; and the decline in 2020 would be much greater. The LDCs will have moved backward with regard to the IPOA target of doubling their share in global exports by 2020. Their share in global exports was 0.91% in 2019, which was already below their share at the beginning of the decade, in 2011. Their trade balance had widened further reaching a new high of US\$113 billion in 2019, up from US\$97 billion in 2018. The LDCs were likely to be hit hard as their ability to respond to the current pandemic was extremely limited due to a lack of resources to support the rebound from the ongoing slump. This vulnerability was further compounded by their overwhelming dependence on a limited range of products exported to a few markets, some of which have been the worst-affected countries by COVID-19. All groups of LDC exporters are expected to see a plunge in their export earnings because of the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic had accentuated the negative trend in commodity prices; in particular for fuels and mining products - a predominant source of LDCs export earnings. COVID-19 had also led to supply-chain disruptions and order cancellations for textile and clothing products worth billions of USD. LDCs were at risk that bankruptcies of retailers in export destinations might lead to the cancellation of existing contracts. The scenario was equally grim for LDCs relying on services exports. Two of main services sectors, i.e. tourism and travel were experiencing large disruptions because of the travel bans taken to prevent the spread of the virus. In addition to this drop in export earnings, remittances had also dramatically dried up. Given the widening trade deficit over the past years, this put the LDCs in a dire financial situation.

The ongoing pandemic also threatened to derail the development gains in LDCs that were on the path to graduate from the United Nations category of LDCs. LDCs on the path of graduation, for instance Angola, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Vanuatu, had been experiencing unavoidable contractions of their export earnings and economic growth. Socio-economic indicators were also likely to worsen. The ongoing pandemic therefore could constrain the prospects of their graduation in the near term. The WTO had been monitoring the trade-related measures that Governments have introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. A significant number of these measures are temporary export restrictions imposed on medical goods. However, there have also been trade-facilitating measures, including by several LDCs, to facilitate imports of medical goods. A number of WTO Members had also adopted measures to temporarily restrict exports of food and agricultural

products, an issue of major concern for the LDCs, as many of them are net food importers. The LDCs have taken an active role in the COVID-related discussions in the WTO. In May, the LDC Group issued a communication calling on other WTO members to refrain from imposing export restrictions on medical goods and food, and to facilitate the flow of these goods to the LDCs. So far, the LDCs appeared to be more heavily affected by the economic downturn in their export markets than the trade-related measures taken by other countries. WTO Members were making proposals to keep trade flowing, in particular to ensure open and predictable trade in food products and medical supplies. COVID-19 had diverted attention from some LDC issues such as the implementation of LDC Decisions on duty free and quota-free market access, preferential rules of origin and the LDC services waiver.

The representative of UNCTAD stated that the UNCTAD XV conference has been postponed to April 2021. UNCTAD XV would be one of the major conferences discussing empirical evidence investigating the impact of COVID-19. The outcomes of UNCTAD XV would also contribute to the preparatory process and LDC5 itself. Work on contributions to LDC5 has begun. He stressed the important role of coordination, and the need to focus on building resilience through a holistic approach. Building new and enhanced productive capacities at the national level and utilizing and maintaining existing ones provides the essential framework for achieving resilience, structural transformation and the SDGs. The 2020 UNCTAD Least Developed Countries Report would focus on the productive capacities needed for the development of a new Programme of Action for LDCs. He stressed the importance of having a holistic approach by providing the example of e-commerce which was providing many opportunities, but required the energy systems to run the internet. UNCTAD was engaged in a number of activities helping LDCs to cope with COVID-19 including issues related to debt, financing, remittances and labor migration (for more information: <https://unctad.org/en/Pages/coronavirus.aspx>). One needed to go beyond assessing the impact of COVID-19 and other challenges in LDCs and provide them with the tools to manage and deal with these impacts. For this purpose, UNCTAD would be launching a Productive Capacity Index (PCI) which identifies areas where policy interventions were needed, and based on this, an analysis of productive capacities would be included in the CDP's graduation assessment. The PCI and a socio-economic assessment of the pandemic's impact would be incorporated into the new generation of General Assembly-mandated vulnerability profiles for graduating LDCs, and into considerations of the possible impact of graduation on LDCs. LDC5 needed to be a game changer focusing on resilience building. Lastly, he emphasized the importance of regional integration.

Regarding preparations of LDC5, **the representative of the CDP Secretariat** informed the participants that CDP has finalized its multi-year programme on the comprehensive review of LDC criteria which would be applied in the 2021 triennial review. Their work on supporting graduating and graduated countries included an improved monitoring mechanism which would also be an input for LDC5 as well as joint work with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and OHRLLS on financial support to graduating and

graduated LDCs. The CDP Secretariat was recommending that LDC5 adopt the theme “Expanding productive capacity for sustainable development” as an organizing framework for the new programme of action. Concrete inputs to the preparatory process of LDC5 were a survey of possible new support measures and graduation support. With regard to the impacts of COVID-19 on LDCs and UN response, he pointed the participants to DESA’s policy brief (see <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/un-desa-policy-brief-66-covid-19-and-the-least-developed-countries/>) as well as CDP’s statement on COVID-19 and graduation (see <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/CDP-Covid-graduation-statement.pdf>). Regarding COVID-19 and graduation, he noted that LDC criteria scores reflecting the latest data available at the end of 2020, i.e. data up to 2019, would not show the impact of COVID-19. Therefore, CDP would not only consider the LDC criteria scores, but also additional information in the form of supplementary graduation indicators and country-specific analysis including COVID-19 and its impacts. Furthermore, CDP is undertaking a comprehensive study of the COVID-19 impact on the LDC category and was monitoring the extent to which COVID-19 had spread in LDCs assessing the actual and anticipated impact (see <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/least-developed-country-category/covid-19-and-the-lDCs.html>).

The representative of the IMF noted that debt relief was a crucial issue and highlighted that emergency financing had been provided on an unprecedented scale by the IMF. Concerning support to LDCs, IMF was providing real time policy advice and capacity development to address urgent issues, such as cash transfer, cash management and financial supervision. Furthermore, the IMF was focussing on governance and fiscal transparency to ensure that the provided resources were being well spent. With the support of bilateral donors and funders, IMF had provided immediate debt relief including to 29 LDCs. Other debt relief measures had been requested by 37 LDCs and IDA eligible countries. He noted that these measures might not be sufficient to support the health crisis and minimize bankruptcies. He called for the private sector to step up its debt relief and welcomed the recent recommendations of the Institute of International Finance that private creditors voluntarily grant debt forbearance. Looking forward, in order to recover and to achieve progress towards the SDGs, spending would need to increase. Therefore, the necessary fiscal space needed to be created by boosting domestic revenues and cutbacks in areas such as poorly targeted subsidies. Policies must encourage private sector investments to ease the immediate financing crisis and drive longer term growth. Furthermore, IMF’s support for capacity building was also targeting various long-term goals such as climate change and inclusive growth. Keeping the SDGs alive and supporting a green recovery comprised a global challenge requiring collective and exceptional actions from both public and private sector. IMF’s contribution to LDC5 was expected to emerge out of the many ongoing policy activities, such as debt, liquidity, climate and green recovery.

The representative of ESCWA noted that ESCWA was planning to organize a regional meeting in preparation of a regional report covering the four LDCs of the Arab region. This meeting would cover several objectives such as the understanding Arab flow of ODA, lessons learnt on the support provided to Arab LDCs in the last decade, engaging in a mutual exchange of experiences, and best practices of the IPoA in facing structural and emerging challenges in ensuring early recovery and resilience in particular for Yemen and Somalia. This meeting would also bring together the LDCs with donor countries and relevant stakeholders, especially the United Nations system and other regional organizations, who could use this platform to assess and elaborate how they could support Arab LDCs adapting and absorbing ODA and other support programmes. Resilience building for Arab LDCs over the next decade would be a focus of the meeting as well as addressing the severe impacts of COVID-19. Based on discussion with the countries and their national reports on IPoA implementation (Yemen and Somalia had not yet submitted a report), ESCWA was planning to draft a regional report focusing on an in-depth analysis of the implementation of the IPoA and was aiming to identify structural challenges and emerging issues from the last decade including lessons learnt. A further goal would be to identify how to build back better over the Doha cycle.

The representative of WIPO highlighted that the focus of WIPO's cooperation with LDCs for the period 2011-2020 was premised on building the technological capacity of public and private sectors in LDCs through providing access to scientific and technical information, support for the formulation and implementation of innovation and IP policies and strategies, the establishment of technological centers, the transfer of appropriate technology, branding, strengthening of managerial and technical capacities, as well as the provision of IP service infrastructure. He elaborated on the contribution provided by WIPO's projects on transfer of appropriate technology to addressing development needs in LDCs. In preparation for LDC5, WIPO planned to organize two Regional Forums for LDCs in Africa and Asia-Pacific, respectively, and one Inter-Regional Forum in Geneva to review the implementation of the "WIPO Deliverables for LDCs for 2011-2020" and to discuss and take inputs from relevant stakeholders of LDCs on identifying key areas of deliverables of WIPO to implement in the years ahead after LDC5. The identified deliverables would be presented during LDC5. For the review meetings of the IPoA and WIPO Deliverables, WIPO plans to present a number of publications related to its technical assistance provided to LDCs. He highlighted that to address the COVID-19 crisis innovation activities could be encouraged through increased public research funding, scientific collaboration and the sharing of scientific results, public-private partnerships and the use of market incentives to attract investment in relevant innovation. WIPO had been undertaking a number of measures including the establishment of a clearing-house or policy tracker, which provides information on measures undertaken by intellectual property offices to contribute to innovation by addressing distressed economic actors; the provision of access to a database, PATENTSCOPE, with over 80 million technology disclosures, including specially developed

COVID-19 search facility for enhancing access to technological information on inventions relating to the detection, prevention or treatment of COVID-19. Furthermore, WIPO is continuing to provide online access to major scientific and technical journals through Access to Research and Development for Innovation (ARDI,) a partnership with scientific, medical and technical publishers, as well as provides access to patent and scientific data and publications and ancillary facilities through Technology and Innovation Support Centers. As STI could offer effective and sustainable solutions to a number of important social and economic challenges of LDCs, WIPO suggested two substantive areas of focus for the upcoming LDC5: (i) institution building for science, technology, innovation and intellectual property in LDCs; and (ii) technology for development of LDCs.

The representative of the World Bank described some outcomes of the recently published World Bank Global Economic Prospects Report including the increase of the global poverty rate for the first time since 1998. Furthermore, he noted many were facing workplace disruptions with severe constraints for informal workers, disproportionately impacting women. East African LDCs were facing a triple crisis – health emergency, global recession and locust swarms threatening food security and livelihoods. To tackle the latter issue, the World Bank had begun the implementation of a regional program. To help LDCs, among others, to cope with the crisis and achieve the SDGs, the World Bank had taken fast, broad-based action in mobilizing its resources including \$160 billion of financing over the next 15 months including \$50 billion of grant and highly concessional credit terms provided by IDA. Emergency support operations were in place in over 100 countries including all LDCs. To support the private sector, IFC was providing fast-track financial support to private companies through an \$8 billion package. Still more had to be done to tackle the challenges of the pandemic. As half of IDA countries were assessed to be at high risk of, or already in, debt distress, the pandemic was likely to overwhelm fragile health systems, increasing suffering from poverty and deprivation. Even those able to access financial markets were facing increasing borrowing costs. This was why the World Bank and IMF had welcomed the G20 debt moratorium and were welcoming commercial creditors participation on comparable terms. Already half of all IDA countries were proceeding with the moratorium. He stressed the importance of debt sustainability which was why IDA has automatically adjusted the terms of assistance enabling countries to continue to access further funds and technical assistance without increasing their debt. Focusing on positive net flows rather than debt relief for LDCs was crucial to maximize the finance needed. He highlighted some of World Bank's cooperation with other agencies, like WFP (to deliver procured medical supplies and equipment), UNICEF (on digital connectivity and learning) and WHO (on the development, production and equitable access to COVID diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines). He underlined World Bank's commitment to LDC5.

The representative of United Nations Office for South South Cooperation (UNOSSC) stressed its close collaboration with OHRLLS and noted it was considering preparatory meetings to discuss how to use South South cooperation as a modality to advance the

interest of LDCs. Last year's High-Level United Nations Conference on South South Cooperation outcome document highlighted many aspects central for LDCs' development such as technology, science, trade, investment and poverty eradication. UNOSSC noted that it was managing some of the South South funds which could be used by LDCs to respond to the pandemic – the Indian Fund and IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa) Fund. In addition, UNOSSC had organized many webinars focusing on the immediate response and the socio-economic impact of the pandemic. UNOSSC was committed to working very closely with the IACG members and stressed the role of the South South triangular cooperation in helping LDCs move forward with regard of the attainment of SDGs, LDCs objectives and other international agreements.

The representative of IAEA echoed the importance of South South and triangular cooperation. During the COVID-19 pandemic, IAEA continued to deliver assistance to LDCs, providing training on the peaceful uses of nuclear sciences and technologies, e.g. for socio-economic development, with a revised work plan focusing on virtual trainings and webinars. IAEA was also ensuring that useful analytical equipment for laboratories and research institutions would be delivered to LDCs. Synergies were being built and enhanced with sister UN agencies, including FAO, WHO, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNCCD, and the Islamic Development Bank. IAEA's support measures to cope with COVID-19 included the provision of diagnostic kits and equipment including PPE to 26 African LDCs, 7 Asian LDCs and 1 Caribbean LDC. IAEA continued to deliver its Technical Cooperation Programme for LDCs through a thematic approach defined in the Country Programme Frameworks maximizing the benefits of the peaceful use of application of nuclear science, technology and innovation addressing LDCs' specific needs and priorities. Looking forward to LDC5, IAEA proposed to include STI focusing on the peaceful contribution of nuclear science and technology contributing to LDC's development in the new programme of action. The latter could address a number of priority areas in LDCs, including fighting cancer and malnutrition, increasing food production, food preservation, climate change focusing on soil erosion and water management, marine pollution and ocean acidification. He stated that one of the lessons learnt of the pandemic was that LDCs needed to be better prepared and stressed the importance of human resources capacity building through graduate and postgraduate training.

The representative of ESCAP recalled that 10 of the region's 12 LDCs were on track to graduate and three already had dates for graduation. Yet, the impact of the pandemic was likely to unravel years of hard-earned development gains. While it was early days to quantify the impact of COVID on these economies, the impact would be significant but also varied among the LDCs in the region. The direct human cost of the pandemic has fortunately been rather limited so far in the SIDS in the ESCAP region, but the economic and social impact of closing borders and the resulting collapse of tourism certainly has had far reaching consequences, particularly on rates of poverty. This was in contrast to some of the other

LDCs where closing borders and reducing flows of people was much more difficult with likely high human cost.

The Special Body on LDCs, LLDC and SIDS was organized as part of the 76th Commission session of ESCAP in May 2020 and was held entirely virtually and included a pre-recorded message from the USG and High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS. During the Special Body, ESCAP presented the preliminary results of the Asia-Pacific final review of the IPOA implementation, highlighting (a) the threat that the COVID-19 pandemic poses to derailing the socio-economic progress made in LDCs; (b) that early preparation is essential for graduating LDCs; (c) and that productive capacity development remains critical for sustainable development of LDCs, as noted by the colleague from UNCTAD. At the Special Body, ESCAP also presented the findings of the forthcoming edition of the Asia-Pacific Countries with Special Needs Development Report and discussed how the Asia-Pacific SIDS, including five LDCs, could leverage their vast ocean resources for sustainable development, in particular, on how to leverage their tourism and fisheries sectors to foster their development. The complete report would be launched virtually on 26 June 2020. This annual publication tracks progress of the Asia-Pacific LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS towards implementation of their respective global programmes of action. One outcome of the 76th Commission session was a resolution on “Strengthening cooperation to promote the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific”. This resolution requested ESCAP to strengthen partnerships for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources, recognizing the importance of the support needed for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS to enhance cooperation for ecosystem restoration and sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism.

Earlier this year, ESCAP also organized a regional consultation with the UN Technology Bank for LDCs in Bangkok, Thailand, on Strengthening National Academies of Science in least developed countries in support of the 2030 Agenda. This examined the role of science in supporting global and regional sustainable development agendas and I think pursuing this will be an important element of the LDC-V discussions. In addition, ESCAP had recently published several policy briefs on the impact of COVID on LDCs in the region as well as working papers examining the implications of graduation for Bhutan, which is due to graduate in 2023, and a paper that examined some of the potential implications and issues for consideration for the graduation of Nepal. ESCAP would publish soon the Review of Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action in Asia-Pacific LDCs and Way Forward, which was briefly presented at the 76th Commission Session and was initially meant as an input for the Asia-Pacific regional preparatory meeting for LDC5. An online tracker had been launched which provides information on policy responses that cover containment policies, fiscal and monetary policies, measures taken for SMEs, trade measures and transport measures to COVID-19 in Asia and the Pacific, also covering the LDCs in our region.

In terms of upcoming activities, a number of capacity building activities were planned for the LDCs in our region, although virtual meetings may not always be the best way forward for some of these countries. ESCAP continued to look forward to organizing with OHRLLS the Asia-Pacific regional final review of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the LDCs for the Decade 2011-2020. ESCAP hoped to continue its support to enhance the capacity of South Asian LDCs to implement SDGs and sustainably graduate from LDCs status and are also targeting some of the LDCs in south-East Asia, including Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Timor-Leste. A development account project was also being implemented which focusses on mobilizing resources for sustainable development and will be specifically targeting Solomon Islands and Vanuatu in the second half of 2020.

The representative of OHCHR stressed the commitment of the High Commissioner to contribute to the process of LDC5. With regard to support to cope with COVID-19 in LDCs, OHCHR was engaged in several activities related to global solidarity to LDCs including sanctions, debt, ODA and access to medicines and PPE. The OHCHR had also prepared thematic guidance on COVID-19 and other human rights themes, including emergency measures, civic space, detention, children in detention, migrants, minorities, women, LGBT people and persons with disabilities (<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/COVID-19.aspx>). Concerning preparations for LDC5, this year's joint report of the Secretary General and the High Commissioner on the right of development is focussed on specific recommendations and address challenges related to LDCs (available here [A/HRC/45/21](#)). This report presented messages for LDC5 while trying to align these messages with those of other UN agencies, while also highlighting some of their activities. The activities part of the report also included OHCHR's work in LDCs which was present in approximately 30 LDCs. Further activities include OHCHR's Treaty Body Capacity Building Programme to support LDCs in drafting inputs to human rights treaty bodies and OHCHR's Voluntary Technical Assistance Trust Fund supporting the participation of LDCs and SIDS in the work of the Human Rights Council. The latter also aimed to increase their governance capacities to understand human rights policies and mainstream these policies throughout their work. The report also focused on challenges to the realization of the right to development in LDCs using the graduation criteria as partial indicators of the realization of the right to development, while referencing further human rights standards and guidance.

The representative of UNCDF confirmed that UNCDF had planned to participate in the regional reviews, especially sessions on financing, and stood ready to fully engage in the rescheduled process. Further, publications were being prepared to help raise awareness on key financing issues to inform the LDC5 discussions. The forthcoming third report in the series on "Blended finance in the LDCs", published with OECD and other partners, would contain updated data on blended finance in LDCs, a chapter on the role of blended finance to rebuild from COVID-19 crisis, several expert contributions and a proposed action agenda. Reports on "Building Inclusive Digital Economies in LDCs" and "Subnational finance in LDCs" would also be useful contributions to LDC5. UNCDF was also in the process of establishing

and mobilizing support for investment vehicles targeting last mile investments in LDCs, such as the third-party managed blended finance investment fund targeting “missing middle” SMEs, named BUILD Fund, with Bamboo Capital, the third-party managed blended finance fund on municipal infrastructure investments, (the International Municipal Investment Fund), and efforts to strengthen UNCDF’s LDC Investment Platform and a UNCDF on-balance-sheet LDC Investment Fund targeting smaller, riskier projects.

The UNCDF COVID-19 offer was aligned with and based on its core mandate to make finance work for the poor and to build stable and resilient local economies in LDCs, and in line with the UN Framework on socio-economic impacts of Covid-19. Support was being provided to [digital innovations](#) in areas such as digital payments, e-commerce, education and contact tracing. Building on experience from digitizing payments to Ebola Response Workers, UNCDF was supporting several governments and private sector partners to provide cash transfers to hard-to-reach populations through digital payments technologies. Secondly, efforts were underway to channel finance to local governments for quick local response and recovery, and a Guidance Note on Local Government Finance for COVID-19 Emergency Response was regularly updated. Thirdly, UNCDF was providing targeted funds into small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to stabilize local economies and accelerate recovery, including through short term loans, or for example the use of guarantees. UNCDF is unique in the UN system in being able to provide debt and guarantees on our balance sheets. UNCDF was offering restructured or deferred loan repayments for companies that are already in its loan portfolio, as well as finance support to companies to adjust business models to survive the crisis.

The representative of WHO stressed that WHO was present in all LDCs countries and was providing support to everybody leaving no one behind based on identified needs in discussion with the countries’ governments. WHO’s country offices were working closely together with the UN country teams and other UN agencies. A main concern were disruptions of essential services within the context of COVID-19. Examples included cancer cases not being diagnosed, reduced mental health support and increased domestic violence. One of the key issues WHO was looking at was therefore to ensure that essential services were able to continue. Regarding LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, the WHO had the practice of presenting every two years a report on these specific country groups to the WHA and the next one would be next year. WHO was working at the forefront to respond to COVID-19 collaborating with many other agencies on the ground. The WHO Foundation had been set up providing fundraising to fill in the necessary gaps, not only in terms of the procurement of essential medicine and PPE, but also in every other aspect which arose due to the pandemic. For many countries, WHO had been the first agency to provide necessary testing kits and was also leading the contact tracing work in the field.

The representative of ITU elaborated on ITU’s initiatives in support of LDCs during COVID-19. The pandemic had underscored (i) the need and importance of connectivity, (ii) the

critical role of broadband, (iii) affordability and (iv) the importance of information and technology skills. To help LDCs respond to the pandemic, several actions had been undertaken and guidelines had been provided. ITU had focused particularly on partnerships between the private sector, especially the mobile operators, the regulator and the concerned ministries. ITU's activities included partnerships with many organizations such as the World Bank, World Economic Forum, WHO and UNICEF contributing to several of ITU's actions and objectives. These included, for example: the Global Network Resilience Platform to promote network resilience; efforts to ensure access and affordability of digital services; support for social distancing measures through technical applications; leveraging e-health, telemedicine and big data; promoting cyber security and dealing with COVID-19 fake news strengthening the policy and regulatory framework and standard operating procedures in using and deploying these technologies; and providing statistical measurement in terms of ICT statistics and indicators. Capacity building webinars had also been organized. Regarding LDC5 preparations, ITU expressed appreciation for OHRLLS guidance and leadership and was ready to contribute as in the previous years.

The representative of UNESCO stressed the commitment to play an active role in the preparatory process leading to LDC5 and informed that UNESCO had appointed a focal point for the LDCs. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, UNESCO highlighted some targeted initiatives focusing on African countries and LDCs. Firstly, in the area of education, UNESCO was ensuring inclusive access to means of distance learning and is highlighting the impact of school closures. UNESCO had established the [Global Education Coalition for COVID-19 response](#) supporting the scale up of best distance learning practices and reaching out to those most at risk. Secondly, in the area of culture and beyond, UNESCO was protecting the hardest-hit sectors and professionals and had established [ResiliArt global movement](#) to support artists, creative professionals and to reflect on the future of culture. As the pandemic had also demonstrated the crucial importance of international cooperation in science and research, UNESCO was supporting open science, the principles of ethics, openness, transparency and inclusiveness in scientific research and cooperation. Furthermore, initiatives for freedom of press, and support of media and journalists to provide quality information were being supported. These activities had been emphasized in several global online meetings of education ministers, of ministers of culture and of ministers of science and technology allowing to establish high-level global dialogue and the sharing of best practices on COVID-19 response. To support access to information and inform policy development, data had been generated and analyzed. Lastly, activities included advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns. Regarding publications, UNESCO highlighted a joint policy brief with UNICEF, WFP and the World Bank on [Preparing the reopening of schools](#) as well as its policy brief on [Socio-economic and cultural impacts of COVID-19 on Africa](#).

The representative of ECA noted that the postponed African Regional Review Meeting would have been an important step towards LDC5 and highlighted some of the areas ECA

was working on with LDCs, especially focusing on the impact of COVID-19. ECA had prepared a report analyzing the impact of COVID-19 on African countries in March and brought together the ministers of finance to find a common position in terms of the asks for development partners with two main outcomes (i) the need for debt standstill and (ii) the need for support in the amount of \$100 billion. This report had contributed to the G20 debt moratorium and stressed the vulnerabilities with respect to their commodities dependence and import dependence of pharmaceuticals presenting not only a challenge but also an opportunity for economic diversification. Another report investigated the impact of the lockdowns and noted the high socio-economic impact of the vulnerable with SMEs operating far below their capacities. Since then, ECA had carried out analysis on the impact of the planned stimulus measures targeting African countries and LDCs. While the debt standstill was an important component of the fiscal response, some concerns remained, for instance, that those accessing these resources will be constrained in capital markets in the future. This is why ECA has brought together the development partners, credit rating agencies and private lenders to assess the implications in terms of access to these resources. ECA was furthermore tracking the stimulus funds ensuring that resources reach the intended beneficiaries linking technology to governance. Another important area was access to PPE which was constrained due to high market competition. Therefore, together with WHO, ECA has developed a digital platform to facilitate pooled procurement. Lastly, ECA has been supporting the mobilization and repurposing of African factories to produce testing kits, masks and hand sanitizers themselves. Regional markets were important to facilitate the scale up of these production facilities in order to reach a scale at which production makes economic sense.

The representative of UNFCCC thanked the USG and High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS for her participation in the June Momentum events on climate change. He noted that 2020 is a “super year” for climate change, with countries putting forward more ambitious climate action plans through revised NDCs, the scaling up of climate finance to USD100 billion per year, and also the vision for LDCs and other developing countries to have their NAPs in place to inform adaptation action and resilience-building. He outlined a 5-point strategy for supporting adaptation in the LDCs and SIDS during the pandemic. The first point was to maintain key deliverables, and not accept delayed delivery and the shifting of outputs, including on implementation of adaptation projects, since peoples’ lives were at stake and so our credibility. A second point was to be creative and innovative in addressing old and new obstacles and challenges faced by LDCs and SIDS in accessing support. LDCs and SIDS already faced many challenges and obstacles to access support and address climate change effectively. Further supporting these countries would require innovating, not simply going back to business as usual. Given the urgency, a more creative and different approach to providing support was needed. His third point was on the need to bridge the digital divide. While the internet offered remote-working solutions and the means of streamlining our processes, we needed to make sure that we bridged the digital divide and did not allow

it to stifle what we could do. Fourthly, he highlighted the need to build essential analytical tools and models to inform integrated climate risk management from assessment to implementation. We needed to learn from collective global experience and put in place essential data and analytical tools to support decision-making and integrated risk management, using best available systems science and frontier technologies. Finally, he noted the need to agree on concrete targets and get to work to meet them. To do so we had to promote collaboration to do this together and to work with all countries to make real progress during recovery (immediate term) and in building forward resilience towards 1.5 degrees (in the medium- and long-term). Some concrete next steps included: submitting NAPs by 2020 or soon after; implementing NAPs – the projects, programmes and policies immediately upon ranking; continuing to address priority climate risks associated with climate extremes and other slow-onset events already in progress; and in the long-term, work towards zero risk under the 1.5 degree target by 2030/40 o Optimize full risk management along the P-C-L continuum.

The representative of ITC focused her presentation on the role of the business sector, with MSMEs playing a crucial role in many LDCs and being severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. ITC was supporting LDCs to cope with the pandemic by offering concrete solutions helping SMEs to keep their businesses running. She highlighted that four out of five SMEs may go out of businesses based on a survey of ICT in April in LDCs. While SMEs represent 80 per cent of the businesses in LDCs, only 20 per cent of them were operating in the formal sector. ICTs interventions had been rearticulated around 4 pillars to help SMEs to cope with the challenges of this pandemic: (i) youth employment; (ii) women economic empowerment; (iii) improving the business ecosystem for more predictable and secure commercial transaction; and (iv) regional integration especially in Africa and in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area where African LDCs must be also able to take full advantage of the establishment of the single market. Furthermore, ITC's projects included many LDCs including work on the graduation process for some LDCs. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, capacity building workshops were currently on stand-by, but ITC was working with MSMEs in LDCs through one-to-one technical support, webinars, provision of market information and facilitation of virtual connections between buyers and sellers. Additionally, ITC has launched a 15-point plan to help small businesses survive the pandemic with key recommendations from the private sector, trade promotion organizations and governments. This plan was currently being disseminated in all LDC partner countries. Regarding ITC's contribution to LDC5, ITC has created an internal working group organizing ITC's contribution to the meeting focusing on youth and entrepreneurship in the areas of skills development, digital trade and market access. ITC would share their proposal roadmap in the future.

The representative of OSAA noted that OSAA was supporting the preparatory process of LDC5 through its contributions to the African Regional Review Meeting leading preparations for a session on building peaceful, just and inclusive societies. OSAA was furthermore

planning a pre-conference event on the interlinkages among development, humanitarian, peace and security, promoting an integrated approach to LDC development in collaboration with OHRRLLS, ECA and other partners. OSAA's response to COVID-19 focused on the three pillars of their mandate, namely policy analysis, interagency coordination and global advocacy. With respect to its first pillar, OSAA has been responsible for leading the drafting the Secretary-General's policy brief on the impact of COVID-19 in Africa with many UN entities contributing. This brief examined the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Africa from a peace, security and development nexus perspective and highlighted Africa's swift response and calls for a strong global solidarity for Africa. Concerning its second pillar, it had convened 3 meetings of the Interdepartmental Taskforce on African Affairs (IDTFAA) resulting among others in the launch of the Africa Knowledge Hub on COVID-19 developed by ECA in collaboration with other UN entities and presenting a platform for sharing information, data and knowledge on COVID-19 among IDTFAA entities. Further, based on the Secretary-General's policy brief, a strategic narrative and key messages were developed and disseminated through the UN Communication Team at the country level. Concerning its third pillar, OSAA organized the 2020 Africa Dialogue Series focusing on COVID-19 and the silencing of guns in Africa. Two key outcomes were that peacebuilding and conflict-sensitive approaches have to be included in a COVID-19 response and that leveraging the potential contribution of the CFTA towards silencing the guns was needed through strengthening productive capacities of key products, including essential medical goods.

The representative of UNIDO noted that the Organization expanded its policy advisory services and technical cooperation activities in LDCs following the 8th UNIDO Ministerial Conference of the LDCs, last November. This included the Programme for Country Partnership (PCP) as well as the continuously expanding UNIDO Country Programmes in LDCs covering a wide range of thematic priorities with an increasing focus on technology innovation, industry 4.0 and digitization and bringing the benefits of STI to LDCs. UNIDO was also reviewing its operational strategy for LDCs. Some key takeaways from this review were to improve monitoring and the result framework focusing on more tangible results which could be measured better. UNIDO's findings on best practices and lessons learned would also be presented in the regional review meetings, and UNIDO aimed to collaborate with other agencies on LDCs side-events to deliver joint-solutions for developing countries, especially related to science, technology and innovation and the 4th industrial revolution. This focus was also based on the Industrial Development Report 2020 finding that advanced digital production technologies were not yet produced and/or utilized in LDCs. UNIDO's response framework to COVID-19 was built on three steps (i) "prepare and contain", (ii) "respond and adapt" and (iii) "recover and transform". The first step focused on protection of supply chains, the productive sector and its workers, diversifying manufacturing capacity and adapting relating infrastructure to ensure access to critical supplies. "Responding and adapting" meant to repurpose manufacturing capacities towards the production of soft medical equipment with medical solutions, ensuring business continuity and expanding e-

learning. Lastly, the third step focused on a sustainable economic recovery. For this purpose, UNIDO was providing socio-economic diagnostics and reviews of food systems emphasizing resilience as well as green recovery through partnerships on Fourth Industrial Revolution initiatives and leveraging investments in digital infrastructure. Therefore, the launch of the COVID-19 Industrial Recovery Programme (CIRP) is aiming at supporting countries to restructure industrial sectors to transform and adapt to changing realities with the goal of meeting national, regional and international needs in post COVID-19 recovery phase.

The representative of UNFPA noted UNFPA's commitment to LDC5, and to working with OHRLS, and stressed the importance of tackling gender-based violence and strengthening health systems, which was reflected in their global response plan. Concerning UNFPA's contributions to LDC5, UNFPA would contribute with a concrete deliverable as well as supporting the work on the youth track. She echoed the calls of other participants on focusing on resilience and expressed interest in hearing more on the work of ESCAP and OSAA.

The representative of UN Office for Outer Space Affairs highlighted the Office's commitment to mobilizing international cooperation to bring the benefits of space to humankind. The Office was supporting LDCs through capacity building activities to enable them to use space technologies for environmental management, tele-health/tele-epidemiology, climate change, disaster management and the management of water resources. Its UN-SPIDER programme was providing technical advisory support to LDCs using space technologies in disaster reduction, preparedness and emergency response. He stressed the need to address challenges in parallel in a more integrated way. Regarding its response to COVID-19, UNOOSA had had to revise the workplan focusing on online efforts, webinars and a dedicated webpage presenting tools and solutions that the space community is making available to contribute to COVID-19 (<http://www.un-spider.org/advisory-support/emergency-support/covid-19>). Furthermore, the SPACE 2030 agenda would be launched in the next session of the UN General Assembly aiming to harness the potential of space technologies in addressing development challenges and calling for access to space for all. It aimed to contribute to LDC5 by joining efforts to enhance capacity of LDCs to leverage the use of technologies of various kinds, including space technologies. Therefore, UNOOSA was calling for improved synergies and cooperation with other UN agencies and organizations to mainstream the contribution of science, technology and innovation so that LDCs could achieve the SDGs and prosper while addressing multiple challenges such as COVID-19 and climate change.

The representative of UNEP noted that the climate emergency had not abated for LDCs and highlighted the importance of building resilience based on a holistic approach. UNEP's was working to incorporate the environmental dimension into COVID-19 response measures, in partnerships with agencies and to the UN sustainable development cooperation frameworks

that were being adjusted. UNEP's own programme was being adjusted, and was focused around four building blocks: (i) Medical humanitarian emergency phase; (ii) Transformational change for people and the planet; (iii) Investing to build back better and (iv) Modernizing global environmental governance. UNEP was mapping the threats on vulnerable groups in order to be able to act preventively instead of being reactive to the situation. She noted that UNEP's response was in line with the IPoA as well as the UN's COVID-19 response. She provided some examples in the four building blocks.

Strengthening the working methods of the IACG

Presentation

The OHRLLS Director noted the present agenda item was the starting point of a conversation aimed at gathering ideas on how to make the work of the IACG more focussed and outcome oriented. She introduced the idea of a thematic approach, under which members would identify topics or themes which warrant enhanced coordination and cited the recent example of work on LDC graduation support. These efforts have sought to reduce duplication, develop common messaging and engage in joint activities supporting graduating LDCs. Concrete solutions in the work of the IACG could be achieved through time-bound and outcome-oriented work streams focusing on specific challenges. She stated that OHRLLS would draft some concise Terms of Reference proposing the basic modalities for IACG's thematic work which would be shared with the participants for their comments. Due to time constraints, she proposed to carry out the work on this agenda item on an intersessional basis and discuss this topic in greater depth at the next IACG meeting.

UN System Best Practices Report on LDCs

Presentation

The OHRLLS Director delivered a presentation on the preparation of the UN System Best Practices Report on LDCs which was about to be finalized. The report had greatly benefitted from the contributions of more than 30 IACG organizations. These organizations shared information on the following topics based on a questionnaire administered in the beginning of 2020: (i) How they organized themselves internally to support the LDCs, in the context of the IPoA; (ii) Support measures put in place to help LDCs make progress on sustainable development and (iii) Best practices that have led to positive, and in some cases transformational changes in the LDCs. This collected information will be made available on the new OHRLLS website which is currently under construction. Furthermore, it has been incorporated in an analytical report. This report will serve as an essential input to an LDC5 High-level Event convened by the UN Secretary-General and aims to ensure the mobilization of the UN system in support of the LDCs. It is encouraging that the support measures covered all LDCs and all IPoA areas and were often undertaken jointly by two or more UN system organizations. To further enrich the perspectives of the report, the views of Resident Coordinators on how the UN System can best support LDCs accelerating their sustainable development are incorporated as well. In order to reflect on the severe health, social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in LDCs, a section focusing on early actions taken by the UN System to support the LDCs on COVID-19 was added. Inputs including initiatives or resources put in place by the participants' organizations are appreciated. The report which will be made available in the coming months after consulting with the organizations' as well as the Resident Coordinators. Ms. Schroderus-Fox opened the floor only to urgent questions due to time constraints.

Discussion

The representative of UNEP highlighted the interlinkages between QCPR and the best practices report and suggested this report support the discussion on the QCPR.

The representative of UNCTAD referred to the knowledge database on UN activities on COVID-19 in Africa described by OSAA and suggested to implement a similar database to share the support measures of the members of the IACG which also facilitates coordination of activities.

Closing remarks

In her concluding remarks, Ms. Fekitamoeloa Utoikamanu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS stressed the severe impacts of COVID-19 on LDCs for whom cases were still rising and the economic, social and governance impacts were continuing to unfold. The high level of participation had shown the importance and high priority of providing support to LDCs to cope with these multiple crises. She highlighted that in the year of the 75th UN anniversary, the UN System's advocacy and support is even more important, called to continue to deliver the best support possible to LDCs and stressed the importance to work together as one. Moving forward, OHRLLS would keep all participants updated on any revised dates and organizations arrangements for LDC5 and the preparatory process. Remaining committed to building stronger and more effective partnerships, the Office would circulate draft terms of reference for the IACG and would welcome the participants' comments and further suggestions on improving the effectiveness of the IACG's outcomes. Before adjourning the meeting, she noted that the Office would remain in contact with the participants in the intersessional period and would convene the next formal IACG meeting in fall 2020.

Annex I: List of participants

Common Fund for Commodities (CFC)

Amb. Sheikh Mohammed Belal, Managing Director
Mr. Andrey Kuleshov, Strategy and Development Advisor

Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF)

Mr. Ratnakar Adhikari, Executive Director
Ms. Annette Ssemuwemba, Deputy Executive Director

Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)

Mr. Roland Mollerus, Chief, Secretariat of the Committee for Development Policy
Mr. Matthias Bruckner, Senior Economic Affairs Officer, Secretariat of the Committee for Development Policy
Mr. Oliver Schwank, Senior Economic Affairs Officer

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

Mr. Shaukat Abdulrazak, Director, Division for Africa
Mr. Mickel Edwerd, Head of Africa Section 1, Division for Africa

International Labour Organization (ILO)

Ms. Amber Barth, ILO Office in New York
Mr. Massimiliano La Marca, Senior Economist, Multilateral Cooperation Department

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Mr. Robert Powell, Special Representative of the IMF to the United Nations
Ms. Valérie Guillamo, Senior Liaison Officer to the United Nations

International Telecommunications Union (ITU)

Dr. Cosmas Zavazava, Chief, Department, Partnerships for Digital Development
Department & ICT Development Fund Administrator

International Trade Centre (ITC)

Ms. Michelle Lau-Burke, Adviser, ITC Representative Office to the UN, New York
Ms. Aissatou Diallo, Regional Portfolio Manager
Mr. Ikuru Nogami, Associate Programme Officer

Office of the Special Adviser for Africa (OSAA)

Mr. Kava Katjomuise, Senior Programme Officer
Mr. Ben Idrissa Ouedraogo, Programme Officer

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

Mr. Diego Valadares Vasconcelos Neto, Focal point for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, Right to Development Section

Technology Bank for the LDCs

Mr. Joshua Setipa, Managing Director

United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)

Mr. Casper Sonesson, Policy Advisor

Ms. Laura Sennett, Policy Specialist

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

Mr. Paul Akiwumi, Director, Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes

Mr. Rolf Traeger, Chief, LDC Section, Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes

Ms. ChantalLine Carpentier, Chief, NY Office

United Nations Development Coordination Office (UNDCO)

Ms. Azeema Adam, Chief, SDG Financing Section, Policy and Programming Branch

Ms. Janine Theresa Chase, Policy and Programming Branch

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Mr. Mourad Wahba, Associate Administrator (a.i.) and Director of the Regional Bureau for Arab States

Mr. Mansour Ndiaye, Head, Inclusive Growth, Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (BPPS)

Ms. Eunice Kamwendo, Regional Bureau for Africa

Ms. Chaltu Daniel Kalbessa, Regional Bureau for Africa

Ms. Luisa Bernal, Policy Advisor

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)

Mr. Ben McCarthy, Officer in Charge, Development Planning Section, Macroeconomics and Governance Division

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

Mr. Oliver Paddison, Chief, Countries with Special Needs Section, Macroeconomic Policy and Financing for Development Division

Mr. Andrzej Bolesta, Economic Affairs Officer, Macroeconomic Policy and Financing for Development Division

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Mr. Youness Abouyoub, Chief, Governance and State-Building Section, Emerging and Conflict Related Issues Division

Mr. Jaquin Salido Marcos, Associate Programme Management Officer, Emerging and Conflict-related Issues Division

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Mr. Jean-Yves Le Saux, Director, Bureau of Strategic Planning

Ms. Iulia Nechifor, Programme Planning Specialist, Bureau of Strategic Planning

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Ms. Mara Angelica Murillo Correa, New York Office

Ms. Angela Mwandia, Programme Management Officer, Policy Coordination Unit,
Policy and Programme Division

United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)

Ms. Angélica Jácome Daza, Director, Office for SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs

Mr. Matthew Keil, Regional Coordinator

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

Mr. Paul Desanker, Chief, LDCs Unit

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

Mr. Manuel Mattiat, Programme Officer

Ms. Tihana Kovac

Ms. Roxana Vataselu

United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)

Mr. Marco Toscano-Rivalta, Chief, UNDRR New York Liaison Office

United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs

Mr. Juan Carlos Villagran de Leon, Programme Officer, Head, UN-SPIDER Bonn Office

United Nations Office for South South Cooperation (UNOSSC)

Mr. Tarik Iziraren, Deputy Director

Ms. Sumeeta Banerji

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

Ms. Petal Thomas, Multilateral and Intergovernmental Affairs Specialist, Policy and
Strategy Division (PSD)

World Bank Group

Mr. Nicholas Bian, International Affairs Officer

World Food Programme (WFP)

Mr. Paul Skoczylas, Deputy Director

Ms. Divya Mehra, Strategic Partnerships Officer

World Health Organization (WHO)

Dr. Shambhu Acharya

Dr. Tin Tin Sint

Ms. Saadia Lakhdim

World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)

Mr. Chi Dung Duong, Director, Division for LDCs

Mr. Purevdorj Vaanchig, Senior Counsellor, Division for LDCs

World Trade Organization (WTO)

Mr. Shishir Priyadarshi, Director, Development Division
Mr. Taufiqur Rahman, Head of LDC Unit, Development Division
Mr. Rainer Lanz, Secretary, Sub-Committee on LDCs, Economic Affairs Officer,
Development Division

United Nations Office of the High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS (UN-OHRLS)

Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS
Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox, Director
Mr. Sandagdorj Erdenebileg, Chief
Ms. Susanna Wolf, Senior Programme Officer, Deputy to the Chief (for LDCs)
Mr. Aniket Ghai, Senior Economic Affairs Officer
Mr. Abdul Alim, Senior Economic Affairs Officer
Ms. Yuxin Ai, Senior Programme Officer
Ms. Margherita Musollino-Berg, Economic Affairs Officer
Mr. Tomás González, Programme Officer
Ms. Shifaana Thowfeequ, Programme Officer
Ms. Miniva Chibuye, Economic Affairs Officer
Ms. Dagmar Hertova, Programme Officer
Ms. Nathalie Risse, Consultant
Ms. Johanna Roth, Intern

Annex II: Agenda

Twentieth 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

16 June 2020, 09:00-12:30
Virtual Microsoft Teams meeting

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| 09:00 – 09:20 | 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 |
| 09:20 – 11:45 | Update on the status of preparations for the Fifth UN Conference on LDCs (LDC5) and Impacts of COVID-19 on LDCs and UN response <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion and updates from participants moderated by Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox, Director, UN-OHRLLS |
| 11:45-12:00 | Strengthening the working methods of the IACG <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presentation by Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox, Director, UN-OHRLLS, followed by discussion |
| 12:00-12:15 | UN System Best Practices Report on LDCs <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presentation by Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox, Director, UN-OHRLLS, followed by discussion |
| 12:15-12:30 | Closing remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ms. Fekitamoeloa Utoikamanu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS |
