



Global Partnership for Sustainable Graduation

2–4 December 2025

Doha, Qatar



High-level Meeting on “Forging Ambitious Global Partnerships for Sustainable and Resilient Graduation of Least Developed Countries”

2-4 December 2025

Doha, Qatar

Draft Concept Note

Synopsis: The DPOA aims to enable 15 additional LDCs to meet the criteria for graduation by 2031. This high-level meeting, co-organized by UN-OHRLLS and the State of Qatar, aims to bring together senior government representatives from graduated countries, LDCs on different stages of graduation and their development partners to discuss reinvigorated global partnership and innovative tools to make graduation sustainable and irreversible. The meeting will offer opportunities for peer learning and exchange of best practices in preparing for graduation. The case for full operationalization of iGRAD will be presented. The development partners will be invited to participate in the event and renew their commitment to strengthening international partnerships for sustainable and resilient graduation.

I. Background

The *Doha Programme of Action (DPOA) for the Least Developed Countries for the decade 2022-2031* constitutes a bold and transformative cooperation framework for the 44 Least Developed Countries (LDCs) to embark on a sustainable and resilient pathway to development. It marks a decisive turning point in global cooperation with concrete targets commitments, and deliverables to address the pressing challenges of the LDCs in a comprehensive manner.

The DPOA identifies six key focus areas for action. It calls for specific measures by the Member States and all other stakeholders at national, regional and global levels to



support the LDCs overcome the overwhelming impacts of COVID-19 pandemic and other overlapping crises, tackle their longstanding structural challenges in achieving the SDGs, and set them strongly on course to graduate from the LDC category.

Since the establishment of the LDC category, only eight countries have graduated so far, namely Botswana (1994), Cabo Verde (2007), Maldives (2011), Samoa (2014), Equatorial Guinea (2017), Vanuatu (2020), Bhutan (2023), and São Tomé and Príncipe in 2024.

The previous programme of action for the LDCs, the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA), aimed to enable *half the LDCs to meet the criteria for graduation by 2020*¹. As of the latest report by the Committee on Development Policy, 14 LDCs are now at different stages of the graduation process. Three LDCs, namely Angola, Timor Leste, and Zambia, who previously met the graduation criteria, have backtracked. They no longer fulfill graduation criteria.

São Tomé and Príncipe has graduated in 2024; Bangladesh, Lao PDR and Nepal are expected to graduate in 2026 and the Solomon Islands in 2027. Senegal and Cambodia are slated to graduate in 2029. Other LDCs, namely Comoros, Djibouti, Kiribati, Myanmar, Rwanda, Tuvalu, Uganda, and Tanzania are at different stages of graduation.

The DPoA aims to enable 15 additional LDCs to meet the criteria for graduation by 2031. Given the historical record of graduation from the LDC category, this remains an ambitious target. For this reason, in the DPOA, the international community committed to ensuring “an incentive-based international support structure to graduating and graduated least developed countries, including support for their smooth transition from development and trading partners, as well as the United Nations system, to make graduation sustainable and ensure post-graduation development momentum and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals”.

Graduation from the LDC category is an important milestone in the sustainable development trajectory of an LDC. It marks important progress against various economic, social, and environmental indicators. Graduation should ideally be preceded by strong signs of transformative change in the economy of the graduating LDCs to enable them to overcome structural challenges and build resilience. However, often countries graduate by only crossing the threshold by a limited margin in certain areas of their socio-economic development covered under the three criteria. In most cases, the graduated country may remain far below the benchmarks in terms of most of the SDG indicators. They also continue to face vulnerabilities to exogenous shocks and crises. For some graduated countries, the situation is compounded by the potential macroeconomic

¹ <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N11/376/42/PDF/N1137642.pdf?OpenElement> (paragraph 28)



shocks that they face by losing all special, differential, and preferential treatment and LDC specific international support measures (ISM) upon graduation or after a phasing out period.

The DPOA demonstrates international solidarity and partnership to support the graduating and graduated countries by building their resilience capacity through specific package of international support measures. As this decade is expected to see an increased number of LDCs reaching the graduation thresholds amid challenging external conditions, graduating and graduated LDCs need concrete, integrated and innovative global support that will help these countries to achieve risk-informed sustainable graduation with momentum.

Development partners have extended some of the LDC-specific benefits (defined as international support measures – ISMs) to the graduated countries,² taking into account the challenges they continue to face. However, most of these measures were taken on an ad-hoc rather than a systematic manner and benefits were granted by some development partners rather than all.

Taking all these realities into consideration, there has been a growing demand that the existing processes related to graduation and smooth transition should be strengthened so that graduating and graduated countries do not face any disruption of their development plans, including challenges and uncertainties in achieving the SDGs.

In response to such demands, UN system support has been provided to graduating LDCs since 2017 in a better coordinated manner under the aegis of the [UN Inter-Agency Task Force](#), chaired by UN-OHRLLS. With the COVID-19 pandemic and other shocks having disproportionately affected the most vulnerable countries, graduating LDCs voiced the need for additional support to sustain progress.

Smooth transition strategies need to fully align with national development planning and financing support so that the graduating country can holistically mitigate the potential impacts of the withdrawal of LDC-specific international ISMs thus pursuing a sustainable path towards the SDGs.

The DPOA welcomes the establishment of a Sustainable Graduation Support Facility as a concrete, country-led solution of dedicated capacity development support. It calls upon Member States to support this initiative in order to further strengthen coordinated and coherent United Nations system support and bring together country-specific integrated graduation-

² For more details on existing smooth transition strategies, see the Secretary-General Report [A/76/271](#) on Implementation, effectiveness and added value of smooth transition measures and graduation support.



related advisory and capacity-building services responding to the concerns of Member States regarding graduation and serving as a repository and clearinghouse of initiatives and projects pursued in support of these countries.

The iGRAD was earlier launched by the UN-OHRLLS as Chair of the interagency task force on least developed country graduation, and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, as the secretariat for the Committee for Development Policy started to provide services to the countries on graduation track on pilot basis in following areas:

iGRAD has so far identified three main outcomes and six key outputs (service offering lines):

OUTCOME 1

Strengthened capacities to prepare for graduation and to develop and implement their Smooth Transition Strategies (STSs):

- Output 1.1 - Address the loss of existing LDC-specific ISMs.
- Output 1.2 - STS preparation and implementation.
- Output 1.3 - Ensuring effective participation in the enhanced monitoring mechanism as per the DPOA

OUTCOME 2

Improved capacity to access and utilize non-LDC specific support including transition financing and beyond.

- Output 2.1 Improving the ability of graduating LDCs to access non-LDC-specific support.
- Output 2.2 Assistance in accessing financing transition and beyond.

OUTCOME 3

Effective utilization of South-South Cooperation, and triangular cooperation, dialogue and exchanges on knowledge and country experience.

- Output 3.1 Facilitating South-South Cooperation, dialogue and sharing country as well as region-specific knowledge and experience.

Tailored to each country context, activities are not predetermined and will be requested by countries on demand, allowing flexibility and adaptation to changing circumstances, including domestic and external shocks.

Objective of the High-Level Meeting

The meeting will underscore the critical role of innovative and strengthened global partnerships in driving momentum for graduation among Least Developed Countries (LDCs), while enabling them to navigate and adapt to post-graduation challenges. Through this high-level platform, participants will address essential post-graduation support measures, including phased transitions from international support mechanisms and comprehensive strategies for smooth, sustainable progress, ensuring LDCs can maintain their development trajectory and resilience in



the long term.

The event will also foster robust peer learning and knowledge exchange, drawing on best practices of both graduating and graduated LDCs. Core objectives are to analyze the impacts of graduation, and outline a strategic guidelines for an incentives-based graduation framework with a particular focus on operationalizing the iGRAD, promoting financial innovation, and strengthening UN coordination, ultimately advancing an action-oriented agenda that delivers sustainable, irreversible graduation and aligns with both the Doha Programme of Action and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

II. Format

The three-day high-level meeting will consist of an opening session, several interactive panel discussions, presentations, case studies, and a closing session. The panel discussions will comprise presentations by experts, including government representatives from LDCs, partner countries and development practitioners to be followed by an interactive dialogue among all meeting participants, including representatives of the Member States and other stakeholders.

III. Participation

The participants will include ministers, senior graduation experts from graduating and graduated LDCs. Development partners, relevant UN entities, international financial institutions, regional development banks and other stakeholders will also be invited to attend at the highest level possible and actively contribute.

IV. Outcome

1. A report with key findings including policy recommendations will be published on the OHRLLS website. The results of the meeting will also feed into the LDC related reports of the Secretary-General and subsequent discussions at the General Assembly.
2. Key principals for an incentives-based graduation framework and guidelines for the operationalization of the iGRAD