

MINISTERIAL DECLARATION OF THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

NEW YORK, 21 SEPTEMBER 2023

1. We, the Ministers and Head of Delegations of the least developed countries, having met in New York on 21 September 2023 on the theme “Translating the ambitious Doha commitments into tangible actions to accelerate the implementation of the 2023 Agenda” aimed at providing strategic guidance on how LDCs can overcome the impacts of the ongoing crises and build resilience against future shocks through accelerated implementation of the Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2022-2031.
2. We reaffirm the Doha Programme of Action for LDCs for 2020 to 2031. We welcome the Doha Political Declaration adopted during the second part of the Fifth United Nations Conference on LDCs held in Doha, Qatar from 5-9 March 2023 in which the Heads of State and Government and representatives of States strongly committed themselves to the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action throughout the coming decade.
3. We appreciate the State of Qatar for its continued commitment to support the implementation of DPoA. We also acknowledge and appreciate the support of UN-OHRLLS for substantive and organizational preparation of the Conference.
4. We recognize that the multiple and widespread impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts and climate change have brought about a deterioration in the situation of food security, energy security, global trade and market stability, which is putting the very viability of achieving Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 and the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action at great risk. [ECOSOC resolution on LDCs 2023. We, therefore, call for a comprehensive transformation of the global partnership architecture, with scaled up quantitative and qualitative support on all fronts tailored for the special needs of the Least Developed Countries to achieve Sustainable Development Goals as well as ensuring that no one is left behind.
5. We take note of the reports of the Secretary-General on the Follow-up to the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries¹¹ and ensuring the effective implementation of the functions of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States².
6. We Express our deep concern that halfway to 2030, the defining principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a shared promise by every country to work together to secure the rights and well-being of everyone on a healthy, thriving planet is in peril. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are disappearing in the rear-view mirror – and with them the hope and rights of current and future generations. A fundamental shift is needed – in commitment, solidarity, financing and action - to put the world on a better path. Urgent global actions are needed to cope with and overcome these challenges and drive our countries back on track to achieve the 2030 Agenda and SDGs. [Based on the SDG Report 2023]. In this regard we welcome the convening of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development under the auspices of the General Assembly by the President of the General Assembly in New York on 18 and 19

¹ A/78/112-E/2023/94

² A/77/984

September 2023, which marks the acceleration of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals with high-level political guidance on transformative and accelerated actions leading up to 2030, and aimed at reigniting a sense of hope, optimism, and enthusiasm for the 2030 Agenda.

7. We recall the strong commitment from the Heads of State and Government and representatives of States to advancing the concrete deliverables of the Doha Programme of Action with respect to the feasibility of a system of stockholding or alternative means, such as cash transfers, taking into account possible economic implications and risks; an online university or other equivalent platforms; an international investment support center; a sustainable graduation support facility; and comprehensive multi-hazard crisis mitigation and resilience-building measures for least developed countries. [ECOSOC resolution on LDCs 2023] We request the OHRLLS to further elaborate on these deliverables and call upon the development partners and other stakeholders to fully support the timely and effective operationalization of the deliverables.

8. We recommit to developing an ambitious national implementation strategy for the Doha Programme of Action and integrating the provisions of the Programme of Action into our national policies, development strategies and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and conducting regular country-led and country-driven reviews, with the full involvement of all key stakeholders. [DPoA para 290] [MD 2022 para 4]

9. We, underlining the urgent need to vigorously pursue timely and effective implementation of the Doha Programme of Action in a coordinated and coherent manner engaging all key stakeholders, call upon development partners, the United Nations development system, IFIs, MDBs, multilateral institutions and all other relevant actors to implement the Doha Programme of Action by integrating it into their respective development policy frameworks, programmes and activities, as appropriate, to ensure enhanced, predictable and targeted support to the least developed countries, as set out in the Programme of Action, and the delivery of their commitments, and to consider appropriate ambitious measures to overcome challenges, shortfalls or shortcomings. Also request them to participate fully in reviews of the Programme of Action at the national, subregional, regional and global levels. [MD 2022 para 3 and 5 merged]

10. We call upon the relevant United Nations regional commission and agencies to undertake biennial reviews of the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action in close cooperation with relevant entities starting in 2024. We urge that effective linkages should be made with the follow-up and review arrangements of all relevant United Nations conferences, processes and frameworks, including the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. In this regard, we take note of the EU Council's conclusion on the EU's renewed partnerships with the least developed countries³ and invite other development partners to tailor ambitious roadmaps to enhance partnerships with the Least Developed Countries. [para 6 of MD 2022]

11. We call upon the UN Development Coordination Office (DCO), resident coordinators and the United Nations country teams, as well as country-level representatives of the World Bank Group, the International Monetary Fund and other multilateral institutions, to ensure mainstreaming of the Doha Programme of Action into country-level development framework and national development strategies and strengthening the UN Country Team's support to its implementation, follow-up and monitoring. [para 7 of MD 2022]

12. We welcome the work of the Inter-agency Consultative Group for Least Developed Countries, led by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, and request its coordinated providing coordinated support to the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action. We invite the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) and the High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) to support the coordination and follow-up of the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action on a system-wide basis. We request

the OHRLLS to further strengthen its role in the coordination and mobilization of the UN system to ensure timely and effective implementation of DPoA. [para 9 of MD 2022, shortened]

13. We welcome Secretary-General's call to Action for accelerated Food Systems Transformation (FST) launched at the UN Food Systems Summit +2 Stocktaking Moment on 26 July 2023 and deeply appreciate and support its call to fully operationalize the LDC5 Food Stockholding Mechanism. We take note of the recommendations of the Secretary-General, including with regard to a food import financing facility, a credit guarantee facility and a special food reserve system, and in this regard look forward to the study by the Secretary-General on further assessment of the proposed recommendations for the least developed countries, outlining their modalities, terms of reference, governance and support structures³.

14. We also invite the swift implementation of the UN Energy pledge and call upon its members to accelerate actions on all fronts to reach the milestone target by 2025 to raise energy access investment to US\$40 billion of which 50 per cent is directed to the Least Developed Countries. [para 15 of MD 2022]

15. We call upon the developed country parties to immediately deliver in full on the \$100 billion goal urgently and through to 2025 and emphasize the importance of transparency in the implementation of their pledges, ensuring a 50:50 balance between mitigation and adaptation finance with 50 per cent of the adaptation finance going to LDCs and other most vulnerable countries. [para 21 of MD 2022].

16. We welcome the decisions of the Board of the Green Climate Fund to aim for a 50:50 balance between the mitigation and adaptation over time on a grant-equivalent basis and to continue to provide at least 50 per cent and (in line with the Green Climate Fund's initial resource mobilization allocation floor) to aim to allocate 69 per cent of the adaptation allocation for particularly vulnerable countries, including least developed countries. [para 22 of MD 2022].

17. We underline the need for reinforcing the existing comprehensive multihazard early warning system and comprehensive multi-hazard crises mitigation and resilience-building measures for least developed countries aligned with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction as a key instrument to build resilience against and mitigate the impacts of various shocks and are committed to making the best use of existing initiatives. We request the Secretary-General to undertake, with least developed countries, a comprehensive study involving all relevant United Nations Development Systems and other relevant stakeholders on the existing arrangements, lessons learned and identified gaps and submit it to the General Assembly at its 79th Session for further consideration. [DPOA 217]

18. We look forward to COP28 to be held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates from 30 November to 12 and call upon Parties to make progress and reach an agreement, among others, on a new goal for climate finance to support developing countries, in particular least developed countries to address climate change; a work program for scaling up countries' emissions reductions targets to match the level needed to limit warming to 1.5°C; operationalize loss and damage fund; and a 'global stocktake' to assess progress on the implementation of the Paris Agreement. We also call for scaled-up WBG and other MDB financing, catalyzing substantial private finance and innovative financing instruments to bridge the financing gap and achieve inclusive and sustainable development in LDCs. [para 23 of MD 2022].

19. We welcome the commitment of development partners to ensuring the fulfilment of all ODA commitments to least-developed countries, ensuring the alignment of aid with least developed countries' national priorities and increasing the alignment of aid with least developed countries' national systems and procedures. [Senegal: We welcome the decision by the European Union by which it reaffirms its collective

³ A/Res/77/177 OP 26

commitment to achieving the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income for ODA within the time frame of the 2030 Agenda and undertakes to reach 0.20 per cent of gross national income for ODA to the least developed countries within the time frame of the 2030 Agenda. We encourage ODA providers to consider setting a target to provide at least 0.20 per cent of gross national income for ODA to the least developed countries. We are encouraged by those that are allocating at least 50 per cent of their ODA to the least developed countries.[para 24 of MD 2022].

20. We reiterate our call to official creditors to make long-term sustainable financing available to least developed countries through grants and concessional funding and to offer more fixed-interest lending at low-interest rates, emphasizing that this is part of a mix of financing approaches that also include grants. [para 26 of MD 2022]. We welcome the global ambition to voluntarily channel \$100 billion of unused SDRs to developing and least developing countries that need liquidity support and urge further pledges to meet that goal.

21. We recognize that least developed countries can derive significant benefit from a universal, rules-based, open, transparent, predictable, inclusive, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under WTO. We call for full implementation of the WTO ministerial decisions on LDCs. We recall the commitment of the international community to contribute to strengthening e-commerce in least developed countries by building digital ecosystems and providing capacity-building support. We urge development partners to provide additional and substantial support to least developed countries in building and gaining access to required infrastructure in energy, electricity and digital infrastructure; promoting personal data protection; upgrading workforce skills; ensuring affordable and reliable access to broadband and mobile networks and Wi-Fi connectivity, including in the last mile; facilitating mobile banking with low- or no-fee digital payments; and strengthening productive capacity and structural transformation, along with transparent and fair regulations, for promoting e-commerce and the integration of least developed countries into the global economy. We look forward to the successful outcome of the 13th Ministerial Conference (MC13), taking place in Abu Dhabi from 26 to 29 February 2024. [para 29 of MD 2022 and the DPOA].

22. We welcome the commitment in the DPoA to adopt and implement investment promotion regimes for the least developed countries. We reiterate the decision to provide financial and technical support for project preparation and contract negotiation, advisory support for investment-related dispute resolution, access to information on investment facilities, improving enabling environments, and risk insurance and guarantees such as through the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency. In this regard, we request the Secretary-General to explore the feasibility of establishing an international investment support centre for least developed countries in the form of a one-stop shop to mobilize support for the implementation of the investment promotion regime for least developed countries and graduated countries, and to submit the study and recommendations to the General Assembly for its consideration at its seventy-eighth session. [para 31 of MD 2022].

23. We note with concern that the stock of debt and debt service payment obligations of least developed countries increased significantly. The share of government revenues spent on servicing the debt rose to 17.0 per cent in 2022, from 15.6 per cent in 2021. We call upon the development partners, multilateral development banks, international financial institutions, commercial and private creditors and other stakeholders to undertake urgent measures to address the debt problems of LDCs through coordinated policies and measures aimed at fostering adequate debt financing, debt relief, debt restructuring and sound debt management, and ensuring that debt relief does not detract from ODA resources intended to be available for least developed countries. [para 32 and 33 of MD 2022].

24. We reiterate our conviction that no country graduating from the least developed country category should have its development progress disrupted or reversed. We welcome that the United Nations

graduation process helps to ensure that no graduating country has its special and differential treatment measures and exemptions reduced abruptly. We invite development and trading partners to consider extending to the graduated country trade preferences previously made available as a result of least developed country status or reducing them in a phased manner in order to avoid their abrupt reduction. We note that the Group of Least Developed Countries put forward various proposals at WTO, pertaining to, among other things, trade-related challenges and those related to the smooth transition of the countries graduating from the least developed country category, and seek to further examine these issues while calling for favourable consideration of proposals by least developed countries.

25. We call upon the development partners to continue to provide, as appropriate, special climate change-related finance and technological support to graduated countries to support action towards the achievement of the goals of the Paris Agreement and for a period consistent with their vulnerabilities, sustainable development needs and other national circumstances and emerging challenges. We further call for the continued provision of aid for trade to newly graduated countries to enable them to fully participate in the multilateral trading system, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts and protracted crises in different parts of the world and climate crisis which have negatively impacted the social and economic progress made by the Least Developed Countries. [para 34 of MD 2022].

26. We also welcome the establishment of a Sustainable Graduation Support Facility – iGRAD by OHRLLS, as Chair of the inter-agency task force on least developed country graduation, and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, as the secretariat for the Committee for Development Policy, as a concrete, country-led solution of dedicated capacity development support. We call upon Member States to support this initiative. We welcome the establishment of enhanced monitoring mechanism by CDP and calls upon graduating and graduated countries to integrate the enhanced monitoring mechanism into their existing policy monitoring and evaluation frameworks. [para 37 of MD 2022].

27. We reiterate our request to the Secretary-General to undertake feasibility studies to explore the possibility of establishing an online university or other equivalent platforms to support online graduate and post-graduate university-level science, technology, engineering and mathematics education in least developed countries and recently graduated countries with a view to, inter alia, providing policy support to promote distance education and open learning for graduate and post-graduate studies in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, ensuring a 50/50 gender balance at all levels while guaranteeing special access for the poorest and people in vulnerable situations; creating a virtual network of educational institutions within and beyond least developed countries; assisting in course design and curriculum development; and leading to scale and sustainability of the education system, taking into account all pre-existing initiatives developed by the relevant partners in a comprehensive manner. In this regard, we look forward to the report of the Secretary-General, outlining, inter alia, the mapping of existing initiatives, possible new modalities, resource requirements, accreditation and sustainable funding sources, to the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session for its consideration. [para 40 of MD 2022].

28. We reiterate our call to all relevant stakeholders to substantially expand globally the number of places and scholarships for students and trainees from least developed countries, in particular in the fields of science, education technology, business management and economics and encourage the full uptake of scholarships available to students of least developed countries. [para 41 of MD 2022].

29. We acknowledge the critical importance that science, technology and innovation, including inclusive and enabling innovation ecosystems, environmentally sound technologies and ICT can have in the pursuit of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. We reiterate the importance of article 66.2 of the TRIPS Agreement to provide incentives by developed country members to the enterprises and institutions in their territories for promoting technology transfer to enable least developed countries to create a sound and viable technological base. We welcome the decision of the DPoA that each least developed country will establish

and strengthen a national science institute to promote local innovations, research, design and development, including in emerging technologies. We also call upon development partners to undertake specific initiatives to build technological capacity and digital infrastructure and connectivity in the Least Developed Countries. [para 43 and 45 of MD 2022].

30. We recognize the critical importance of the work of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed countries in improving their scientific research and innovation base, promoting networking among researchers and research institutions, helping LDCs access and utilize critical technologies, and drawing together bilateral initiatives and support by multilateral institutions and the private sector, and to implement projects contributing to the use of STI for economic development in LDCs. We take note with appreciation of the contributions made to the Bank by the host country Turkey and other countries and call upon all members, especially donor countries and other development partners to make substantive contributions to the Bank for its effective functioning. We also call upon Member States to raise awareness of the activities of the Technology Bank in their countries and to collaborate with the Technology Bank to ensure that technology is used as a critical tool for development. We, therefore, support the UN Technology Bank as a focal point for the Least Developed Countries and recently graduated Least Developed countries to strengthen their science, technology and innovation capacity towards building sustainable productive capacities and promoting structural economic transformation. [para 44 of MD 2022].

31. We recommit to cooperating internationally to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration involving the full respect for human rights and the humane treatment of migrants, regardless of their migration status, and supporting countries of origin, transit and destination in the spirit of international cooperation, taking into account national circumstances. In this regard, we recognize the positive contributions of migrants to inclusive growth and sustainable development in their countries of origin, transit and. We welcome the successful holding of the first quadrennial International Migration Review Forum in May 2022 and the adoption of its progress declaration by consensus. We call on the Member States, UN agencies, the UN Network on Migration and all other stakeholders to ensure the full and effective implementation of the recommended actions contained in the Progress Declaration. [para 46 of MD 2022].

32. We recall the DPoA targets to reduce, by 2030, to less than 3 per cent the transaction costs of migrants' remittances and to eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5 per cent and invite the development partners, financial institutions as well as entities and stakeholders involved with the remittance transactions to assist LDCs to realize these targets. We welcome the DPoA decision to support incentive programmes to ensure that remittances are used for long-term investment in productive capacity-building in least-developed countries. [para 46 of MD 2022].

33. We recognize the significance of South-South and triangular cooperation in the world economic landscape and stress that the potential of this cooperation for trade, investment, and economic and technological cooperation should be fully harnessed in a predictable manner in line with the Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation as a real complement to, and not a substitute for North-South cooperation. We commend the increasing volume of development assistance and financial flows, technology transfer, and duty-free, quota-free market access being provided by countries of the South to the least developed countries. We call upon the countries of the global South to further strengthen their support to least developed countries in all these areas in a predictable manner to support the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries. [para 25 and 48 of MD 2022]. We look forward to the Third South Summit to be held in Kampala, Uganda from 21-23 January 2024.

34. We commit to strengthening good governance, democratic processes and the rule of law by ensuring transparent and accountable governance, equal access to justice and independent judicial institutions, based on the respect for human rights, gender equality and the empowerment of those experiencing poverty,

marginalization or vulnerability, especially women and girls. We also commit to increased democratic participation, enhancing institutional capacity at all levels and strengthening civil society. We will also strengthen efforts to fight corruption, bribery and money laundering, the illegal transfer of funds and other illicit activities by strengthening anti-corruption and other laws and regulations and their effective enforcement. [para 49 of MD 2022].

35. We call for the reform of the governance structure of the international financial institutions, especially for the Bretton-Woods institutions in order to enable the participation of all developing countries. The voting system and accountability structure of the BWIs must undergo fundamental reform with a view to ensuring the effective voice and participation of the least developed countries in their decision-making processes. We reiterate our call for the recognition of the least developed countries as a specific category by the BWIs based on the United Nations Economic Vulnerability Index prepared by the CDP for the sake of coordination and coherence of international development cooperation. [para 50 of MD 2022].

36. We urge the United Nations development system organizations to develop internal guidelines on how to translate the stated priority for least developed countries into their budget allocations or their capacity development projects. We also urge them to establish earmarked allocations or targets for shares of their core budgets to be allocated to least developed countries. We also call upon the international organizations, including the World Bank and IMF, to recognize the category of least developed countries and implement tailored programmes to ensure coherent and consistent global support for the most vulnerable countries of the world. We also request the international organizations to fully integrate the Doha Programme of Action into their operational mandates and to create a specific unit and focal points for the least developed countries. [Based on OP 102, A/77/984]

37. We recognize that over the years, the responsibilities of the OHRLLS have increased significantly in their scope and complexity (OP104, A/77/984). We also recognize that the five key deliverables of the Doha Programme of Action, namely, an online university, food stockholding, an international investment support centre, the Sustainable Graduation Support Facility and a crises mitigation and resilience-building mechanism, will require a significant amount of substantive work to conduct a detailed mapping exercise and feasibility studies and to carry out subsequent activities in the run-up to their final implementation and the necessary follow-up activities in line with intergovernmental mandates. [Based on OP107, A/77/984]

38. We look forward to the development of a comprehensive roadmap by the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States for the accelerated implementation of the Doha Programme of Action, with contributions from the UNDS, identifying specific roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders, with a view to ensuring that the commitments in favour of least developed countries lead to concrete deliverables that would facilitate implementation of the Programme of Action and help least developed countries to achieve the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals.

39. We therefore call upon the Member States to significantly strengthen the capacity and functions of the Office in view of the increased demand from the three groups of countries, improving its strategic position in dealing with key development issues and processes relevant to the most vulnerable countries and providing important service benefits to them while improving its performance implementation rate. [Based on OP112, A/77/984]

40. We welcome the participation at this meeting of many development partners. We most sincerely acknowledge the supportive role being played by the Group of Friends of the Least Developed Countries and invite the Group to further strengthen its support for the effective realization of the Doha Programme of Action. We especially call upon the Friends of LDCs to actively support the fulfilment of concrete targets

and deliverables agreed at the Fifth Conference of the Least Developed Countries in support of the implementation of the DPoA. [para 52 of MD 2022].

41. We call upon the development partners, including member states, UN development system and other international organizations, private sector and civil society organizations to come up with specific and dedicated support measures for full and timely implementation of the DPoA including operationalization of the key deliverables such as an online university, investment promotion regime, food stock holding, crisis mitigation and resilience building mechanism and graduation support package. We also invite governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations major groups and other donors to contribute to the LDC Trust Fund for undertaking implementation, follow-up and monitoring of the Doha Programme of Action [para 53 and 59 of MD 2022]

42. We resolve to uphold our common aspiration of ensuring sustained economic growth and sustainable development in all least-developed countries leading to our goal of graduation from the least-developed country category. We will continue to maintain our solidarity and unity and pursue a common position on issues related to our interest in various multilateral forums. [para 56 of MD 2022]