

Ministerial Declaration of the Least Developed Countries

New York, 17 September 2020

We, the Ministers and heads of delegation of the least developed countries, having virtually met on 17 September 2020, in an unprecedented global situation posed by the COVID-19, to provide strategic guidance for the full, effective and timely implementation of the Istanbul Declaration and Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020, Agreed ad ref.

Reaffirming the Istanbul Declaration¹ and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020,² adopted by the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held in Istanbul, Turkey, from 9 to 13 May 2011, and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution [65/280](#) of 17 June 2011, in which the Assembly called upon all the relevant stakeholders to commit to implementing the Programme of Action, and recalling also the Political Declaration adopted by the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020, held in Antalya, Turkey, from 27 to 29 May 2016, and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution [70/294](#) of 25 July 2016, Agreed ad ref.

Reaffirming also the overarching goal of the Istanbul Programme of Action to overcome the structural challenges faced by the least developed countries in order to eradicate poverty, achieve internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and enable graduation from the least developed country category, Agreed ad ref.

Reaffirming further also the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,³ the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development,⁴ the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,⁵ the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030⁶ and the New Urban Agenda adopted in Quito by the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III),⁷ Agreed ad ref.

Welcoming with appreciation the reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020,⁸ Agreed ad ref.

Adopt the following declaration:

1. We note with concern that, with only less than half a year left to implement the Istanbul Programme of Action, significant gaps persist between the goals and targets set out therein and the achievements made on the ground ([E/Res/2019/3](#)). We reiterate firm commitment to the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action within the remainder of the decade, including by conducting regular reviews with the full involvement of all key stakeholders; [OP1 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

2. We recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic is one of the greatest global challenges in the history of the United Nations, and further noting with deep concern its impact on health and the loss of life, mental health and wellbeing, as well as the negative impact on global humanitarian needs, the enjoyment of human rights and across all spheres of society, including on livelihoods, food security and nutrition, education, the exacerbation of poverty and hunger, disruption to economies, trade, societies, environments, and the exacerbation of economic and social inequalities within and among countries, which is reversing hard-won development gains and hampering progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, all its goals and targets, (PP1&3 of 74/270; PP1 WHA; PP2 HRC PS) (Omnibus res) Agreed ad ref.

3. We recognize that the least developed countries, particularly those are facing multiple challenges, will be severely hit by COVID-19 in the long term owing to the fragility of their health systems, limited coverage of

¹ *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9–13 May 2011* ([A/CONF.219/7](#)), chap. I.

² *Ibid.*, chap. II.

³ General Assembly resolution [70/1](#).

⁴ General Assembly resolution [69/313](#).

⁵ See [FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1](#), decision 1/CP.21, annex.

⁶ General Assembly resolution [69/283](#), annex II.

⁷ [[E/2017/L.32](#)], General Assembly resolution [71/256](#), annex.

⁸ [A/75/72-E/2020/14](#).

their social protection systems, limited financial and other resources, and vulnerability to external shocks, We also recognize the contributions of migrants in mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in both their countries of origin and destination, note with concern the significant socioeconomic consequences that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on migrant workers and refugees from least developed countries, including those in the low-wage informal economy, and note with concern also the effects that the projected significant decline in remittances will have on the millions of people that depend heavily on them, [PPs E/2020/L.21] Agreed ad ref.

4. We recall the “Statement dated 28 April 2020 of the Group of LDCs on the coronavirus disease (COVID-19): burgeoning challenges and a global stimulus package for the least developed countries” contained in document A/74/843 dated 7 May 2020. We reiterate our call for a global stimulus package for the least developed countries to be funded and implemented with immediate effect to address the impacts of COVID-19 which includes, among others, emergency public health package including PPEs, ventilators, tele-health and telemedicine facilities; support for social protection systems; education support for students in the form of digital equipment, as well as educational radio and television programmes; fulfilment of ODA commitments of 0.15-0.20 per cent at the earliest with grants-based ODA; full debt cancellation of all multilateral, bilateral and commercial debts owed by LDCs and the debt standstill with immediate effect until the decision of the debt cancellation; richer countries could apportion some of their SDRs to multilateral institutions to pay for debt payment cancellation for LDCs; lifting trade barriers and scaling up aid for trade; and additional allocations, including increased special drawing right allocations for LDCs to the tune of \$50 billion; Agreed ad ref.

5. Furthermore, in the medium- to long-term, the stimulus package includes ensuring an adequate, affordable and rapid supply of vaccines/immunization and antiviral drugs related to COVID-19; providing technology, technical know-how and free licence to manufacture antiviral drugs and vaccines; launching stimulus packages to stabilize the agricultural sector with seed distribution and fertilizer programmes and subsidies; taking into account structural constraints and longer-term investment requirements for the implementation of the SDGs in the debt sustainability framework for LDCs; launching a renewed and revitalized global trade framework to promote export earnings of LDCs; promoting the use of digital transfers of remittances and reduce remittance transaction fees; enhancing the quality, availability and affordability of the Internet and other online-related facilities, especially in rural areas; and providing countries graduating from the LDC category with continued and scaled up international assistance to support export sectors in order to avoid the reversal of development gains; Agreed ad ref.

6. We urge our development partners, countries of both the North and the South, the United Nations development system, multilateral development banks, the International Monetary Fund, the private sector and foundations to act on our calls as early as possible. We urge the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations to take the lead in the implementation of the stimulus package for the least developed countries; [Statement by LDCs on COVID-19] Agreed ad ref.

7. We re-emphasize that sustainable development cannot be realized without peace and security and that peace and security will be at risk without sustainable development, and recognize the particular challenges faced by LDCs in conflict and post-conflict situations, and their need for targeted support to drive accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Istanbul Program of Action; Agreed ad ref.

8. We welcome the fact underscored by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030⁹ and the New Urban Agenda (HABITAT-III) that the most vulnerable countries, including the least developed countries, deserve special attention and reflect the concerns and aspirations of these countries. We recall the decision contained in the 2030 Agenda that effective linkages will be made with the follow-up and review arrangements of all relevant United Nations conferences and processes, including on the least developed countries, underline the importance of strong synergy in the implementation of the recently adopted agendas and the Istanbul Programme of Action at the national and subnational levels. We encourage coordination and coherence in the follow-up of their implementation. In this regard, we request UN-OHRLS to ensure synergy and coherence in the follow-up and review of the three Programmes of Action for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; [OP3 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

⁹ General Assembly resolution 69/283, annex.

9. We take note with appreciation of the Secretary-General's report on Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals 2020,¹⁰ which indicates that through the end of 2019, progress continued to be made in some areas: global poverty continued to decline, albeit at a slower pace; maternal and child mortality rates were reduced; more people gained access to electricity; and countries were developing national policies to support sustainable development and signing international environmental protection agreements. However, progress had either stalled or been reversed in other areas and progress is uneven between and within countries including within the Least Developed Countries as LDCs remain far below in many of the targets of the SDGs: (OP2 of SG's progress report on SDGs). Available record suggests that even before the pandemic, the pace of global poverty reduction was decelerating, and it was projected that the global target of ending poverty by 2030 would be missed. Furthermore, COVID-19 has pushed tens of millions of persons back into extreme poverty and hunger (Based on SG's progress report on SDGs; OP 9). We recognize the urgent need to accelerate action on all levels and by all stakeholders, in order to fulfil the vision and Goals of the 2030 Agenda. We look forward to further progress in, inter alia, revitalizing and enhancing the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development in least developed countries, aligning existing policies with the new global plan of action, increasing policy and system-wide coherence and integration for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, addressing existing and emerging challenges, enhancing national capacities for evidence-based and data-driven decision-making and favouring participatory, cooperative and enabling environments at all levels; [OP4 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019-updated] Agreed ad ref.

10. We are concerned that only a small number of the least developed countries are expected to reach the SDG target for GDP growth of "at least 7 per cent" in the near term. Real GDP growth rate for LDCs reached 4.5 per cent in 2018 and 4.8 per cent in 2019. Due to the pandemic, that rate is expected to weaken to 0.8 per cent in 2020 and is projected to increase again at a rate of 4.6 per cent in 2021. This means that LDCs are falling short of the SDG target of at least 7 per cent real GDP growth per year. (The SDG progress report 2020) Weaker economic growth puts at risk essential investments in areas such as education, health, climate change adaptation and sustainable infrastructure. We are concerned that longer-term growth projections point to 35 per cent of the population in LDCs remaining in extreme poverty by 2030; [OP6 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019-modified] Agreed ad ref.

11. We express deep concern that a growing number of people are currently facing Crisis food insecurity or worse. At the end of 2019 data had continued to point to a rise in world hunger for the third consecutive year, after decades of steady decline, resulting in a growing number of people facing crisis food insecurity or worse. Around 690 million people in the world (8.9 percent of the world population) are estimated to have been undernourished in 2019. There are nearly 60 million more undernourished people now than in 2014, when the prevalence was 8.6 percent – up by 10 million people between 2018 and 2019. [The state of food security and nutrition in the world 2020] In the LDCs, the estimated prevalence of undernourishment was 23.6 per cent of the population. Thus, 28 per cent of undernourished people in the world live in LDCs. We call upon the international community, especially our development partners, to enhance their financial and in-kind support to address this emergency; [OP7 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

12. We recognize the recent surge in modern technologies, including breakthroughs in artificial intelligence, driven by machine learning and deep learning, and facilitated by access to huge amounts of big data, cheap and massive cloud computing and advanced microprocessors. Digital technologies have advanced more rapidly than any innovation in our history – reaching around 50 per cent of the developing world's population in only two decades and transforming societies. They offer the prospect of solutions and opportunities for sustainable development that are better, cheaper, faster, scalable and easy to use. Harnessing frontier technologies could be transformative in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and producing more prosperous, sustainable, healthy and inclusive societies. We note that the new technologies raise difficult questions about the broader impact of automation on jobs, skills, wages, and the nature of work itself. While modern technologies will replace some jobs, they are creating new work in industries that most of us cannot even imagine, and new ways to generate income; [OP9 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019-modified] Agreed ad ref.

13. We are concerned that while developed countries and countries at the technological frontier grapple with the opportunities and challenges associated with frontier technologies, many developing countries, especially LDCs, are yet to reap the benefits of these technologies. Furthermore, rapidly widening digital gap threatens to leave LDCs even further behind; [OP10 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

¹⁰ [E/2020/57](#).

14. We recognize that the challenge to close the technological divide is formidable, but this is achievable. Time is propitious to adopt policies and measures to ensure that LDCs reap the potential offered by modern technologies and accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. LDCs need to achieve coherence across policy areas such as industrial policies and those on science technology and innovation, foreign direct investment, trade, education and competition, along with macroeconomic policies, including fiscal policies. Furthermore, it is vitally important for LDCs to have access to modern electricity, broadband Internet connection, appropriate level of education and an enabling environment with regulatory regimes within which services can be offered; We therefore call upon the developed country members to deliberately facilitate and support technology transfer to improve innovation and accelerate development in the LDCs; [OP11 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

15. We underline that technology is reshaping the skills needed for work, as robots and artificial intelligence have the potential to take over many of the existing jobs. Therefore, the demand for advanced cognitive skills, socio-behavioural skills, and skill combinations associated with greater adaptability are likely to increase. Investing in human capital, particularly early childhood education, to develop high-order cognitive and socio-behavioural skills in addition to foundational skills would be critically important. We need to invest in our people with a fierce sense of urgency, especially in health and modern education, which are the building blocks of human capital to harness the benefits of technology and to blunt its worst disruptions;¹¹ [OP 21 of the last year Ministerial Declaration moved up here] Agreed ad ref.

16. We underline that the new reality created by frontier technologies calls for stronger and more effective international cooperation and global partnerships for development. We call upon the international community to come up with specific support measures for LDCs to enable them to reap the benefits of frontier technologies for achieving SDGs including through access to and adapting modern technologies, technological know-how, infrastructure and necessary logistics; [OP12 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

17. We stress that climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time and its widespread, unprecedented impacts disproportionately burden the poorest and most vulnerable countries, especially LDCs. The total per capita CO₂ emissions in LDCs were 0.34 metric tonnes in 2016 compared to the world average of 4.98 per capita (WDI, WB). The last four years were the four hottest on record. According to a September 2019 World Meteorological Organization (WMO) report, we are at least one degree Celsius above preindustrial levels and close to what scientists warn would be “an unacceptable risk”. Furthermore, the global health crisis caused by COVID-19 have aggravated the situation. Governments must ensure that economic recovery plans are just and sustainable, and contain measures aligned with emissions reduction pathways consistent with the Paris Agreement’s 1.5°C temperature limit. Our future will be defined by how we respond to these crises today; [OP13 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019-modified] Agreed ad ref.

18. We underline that while there will no longer be a COP this year, 2020 remains a critical year in which we still expect to see countries come forward with more ambition – through submission of updated nationally determined contributions (NDCs) that contain deeper emissions reductions targets; through communication of long-term strategies; and through the delivery of \$100 billion in climate finance to support developing countries and LDCs address climate change. The postponement of the COP should not affect the resolve of countries to deliver on these commitments in 2020. Despite LDCs being among the most vulnerable countries, hardest hit by the compounding crises of COVID-19 and climate impacts, all 47 LDCs are determined to communicate updated NDCs, and at least 19 of our countries are aiming to communicate them by the end of 2020; Agreed ad ref.

19. We must limit global warming to 1.5°C to protect lives and livelihoods, and this means global peaking of greenhouse gas emissions has to occur by 2020. We call for the implementation of the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) special report on 1.5°C. We recall the Climate Action Summit in September 2019 convened by the Secretary-General, which came up with concrete, realistic plans to enhance nationally determined contributions by 2020, with a view to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 45 per cent over the next decade, and to net zero emissions by 2050; [OP15 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019-modified] Agreed ad ref.

20. We welcome the specific initiatives presented by countries, groups of countries and other partners under the nine action areas at the Climate Action Summit, which have high potentials to curb greenhouse gas emissions and increased global action on adaptation and resilience. We are fully committed to do our part in addressing

¹¹ World Development Report of the World Bank 2019.

climate change in full compliance with our commitments under UNFCCC processes including the Paris Agreement. We urge all international partners to provide financial and technical support and technology transfer to LDCs in the spirit of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries to ensure that all LDCs can engage effectively in low emission and climate resilient development that will protect the lives of our populations, economies and systems; [OP16 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

21. We are deeply concerned that despite repeated commitments, there exists a large and persistent gap between support needed and support provided in terms of finance, technology and capacity building. We call upon the development partners to operationalize the Green Climate Fund fully and in a timely manner, with the goals of mobilizing \$100 billion per year by 2020, promoting and facilitating clean development mechanism projects in the least developed countries and addressing the needs of people displaced as a result of extreme weather events. We appreciate countries that have contributed to the Green Climate Fund and express concern that as of 31 July 2020, the Green Climate Fund has only raised USD 10.3 billion equivalent in pledges from 49 countries/regions/cities;¹² We stress the need for an ambitious replenishment for the Green Climate Fund in 2019, as a critical vehicle for financing the implementation of the Paris Agreement, taking into account the urgent and immediate needs of developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, including LDCs; [OP17 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019-modified] Agreed ad ref.

22. We reiterate the importance of resilience and adaptation for least developed countries and look forward to accelerated access to the fund for least developed countries based on the 50 per cent of the adaptation allocation for particularly vulnerable countries, in particular the least developed countries;¹³ [OP18 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019-modified] Agreed ad ref.

23. We note with concern that continued rapid population growth, which is currently 2.3 per cent annually in LDCs, presents challenges for sustainable development. The LDCs are among the world's fastest growing countries – many are projected to double in population between 2019 and 2050 and projected to grow to 3.0 billion in 2100. The concentration of population growth in LDCs will make it harder to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality, combat hunger and malnutrition, expand and update education and health systems, improve the provision of basic services and ensure that no one is left behind, unless specific measures are taken that will target these areas through the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. (World Population Prospects 2019 and [E/2019/66](#)); [OP19 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

24. We note that in the LDCs, the number of adolescents and youth aged 15 to 24 years is projected to grow from 207 million in 2019 to 336 million in 2050. Leveraging the opportunity presented by the demographic dividend depends critically on investing in the health and education (SDGs 3 and 4) of the young people who will soon join the labour force, and on ensuring their successful integration into the labour market, with full and productive employment and decent work for all (SDG 8);¹⁴ At the same time, the youth bulge poses a big challenge to public finances struggling to provide services to the young people today, as well as the challenge for the society in coming decades as it struggles to deal with its ageing population. [OP20 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019-modified] Agreed ad ref.

25. We recognize the importance of building productive capacity as a critical enabler for the development and graduation of the least developed countries. We emphasize that the development of physical infrastructure is an important prerequisite for sustained economic growth and sustainable development, and that significant amount of investment and technology are essential, including through public-private partnerships, innovative financing, regional integration and appropriate institutions and regulation, to bridge the existing savings-investment gap in the least developed countries. In this regard, we will strengthen the underlying investment climate, with enhanced support provided by the development partners and international financial institutions, including by improving predictability, governance and transparency, as well as in procurement practices and policies. We call upon the development partners to provide enhanced financial and technical support to the least developed countries for their infrastructure development and management. We look forward to the effective functioning of the multi-stakeholder forum to bridge the infrastructure gap, which should give special priority to the needs and challenges of the least developed countries; [OP22 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

¹² <http://www.greenclimate.fund/how-we-work/resource-mobilization>.

¹³ https://www.greenclimate.fund/documents/20182/1674504/GCF_B.23_23_-_Decisions_of_the_Board__twenty-third_meeting_of_the_Board__6__8_July_2019.pdf/de0260d1-736f-0dbf-695c-06684f805ad9.

¹⁴ World Population Prospects 2019.

26. We recognize that a key structural challenge in most of the least developed countries (LDCs) is to raise the share of manufacturing output in gross domestic product (GDP). Medium-high and high-technology products continued to dominate manufacturing production in developed regions, reaching 49 per cent in 2017, compared with 9 per cent in least developed countries (E/2020/57 para 92). In LDCs, the share of manufacturing in GDP increased from 10.0 per cent in 2010 to 12.4 per cent in 2019. However, the rate of growth was too slow to reach the target of doubling industry's share in GDP by 2030. Moreover, manufacturing value added per capita in LDCs reached only \$132 in 2019, lagging far behind Europe and Northern America, where it was \$4,856. (The SDGs report 2020) We would therefore further strengthen our efforts to accelerate capital accumulation, knowledge development, technology acquisition, expansion of higher-value-addition and employment creation in manufacturing sectors. We will also stimulate productive capacity building in labour-intensive manufacturing industries, with the objective of raising output and increasing the quality of those goods that are already produced and maximizing direct employment creation for low-skilled labour;¹⁵ [OP23 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019-updated] Agreed ad ref.

27. We reiterate that official development assistance continues to be the largest and a critical source of external financing for the development of the least developed countries and that it provides a buffer to weather the impacts of the unstable and volatile global economic environment. We welcome the reversal in the decline of official development assistance to the least developed countries in 2019, while expressing our concern that bilateral official development assistance to the least developed countries remains far from the target of 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of gross national income committed to by many developed countries, as set out in the Istanbul Programme of Action and reaffirmed in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. We are further concerned that since 2010, the concessionality of bilateral ODA has declined, due to an increased reliance on concessional loans and a decline in grants with the share of loans in the composition of ODA to LDCs rose from 2.8 per cent to 8.3 per cent. The impact of this change is already manifested in the rise of the number of LDCs in debt distress situation.¹⁶ We welcome the decision by the European Union, which reaffirms its collective commitment to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of the official development assistance/gross national income within the time frame of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and undertakes to meet collectively the target of 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of official development assistance/gross national income to least developed countries in the short term and to reach 0.20 per cent of official development assistance/gross national income to least developed countries within the time frame of the 2030 Agenda.¹⁷ We also welcome the provisions of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda that encourage official development assistance providers to consider setting a target to provide at least 0.20 per cent of official development assistance/gross national income to least developed countries, and express encouragement to those providers that are allocating at least 50 per cent of their official development assistance to least developed countries. These are some qualitative and quantitative changes in the decades-long target on official development assistance for the least developed countries. We call upon all development partners to fulfil these targets; [OP24 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

28. We reiterate our call upon the donor countries to provide 0.20 per cent of their gross national income to the least developed countries by 2020 and 0.25 per cent of their gross national income by 2030 or at least 50 per cent of net official development assistance to the least developed countries; [OP25 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

29. We underline the fact that the allocation of global official development assistance resources should take into account the structural handicaps and constraints which are unique to the least developed countries. We call upon development partners to ensure the right balance in the allocation of official development assistance among various sectors, with particular focus on productive sectors, including infrastructure, agriculture and information and communications technology. We also call upon them to ensure quality of aid especially through predictability, using recipient country's system and eliminating tied aid; [OP26 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

30. International migration can be a transformative force, lifting millions of people out of poverty and contributing to sustainable development in both countries of origin and countries of destination. Facilitating safe, orderly and regular migration, while reducing incentives for irregular migration, is the best possible way to harness

¹⁵ Achieving the SDGs in LDCs: A Compendium of Policy Options; UNCTAD 2018.

¹⁶ IATF report 2019.

¹⁷ See General Assembly resolution [69/313](#), annex.

the full development potential of migration. Addressing the adverse drivers of migration, such as poverty, insecurity and lack of decent work, can help to make the option of remaining in one's country viable for all people. [World Population Prospects 2019]. We are concerned that the global remittances are projected to decline sharply by about 20 per cent in 2020 due to the economic crisis induced by the COVID-19 pandemic and shutdown. The projected fall, which would be the sharpest decline in recent history, is largely due to a fall in the wages and employment of migrant workers, who tend to be more vulnerable to loss of employment and wages during an economic crisis in a host country [COVID-19 Crisis Through a Migration Lens-WB] Reduced demand for migrant workers and travel bans imposed by receiving or sending countries will drastically reduce remittances, which are essential in many LDCs. The return of migrant workers who have lost their jobs due to the crisis abroad can put further stress on limited social protection and health systems.[UN/DESA Policy Brief #66: COVID-19 and the least developed countries] [OP27 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019-modified] Agreed ad ref.

31. We call for global solidarity and cooperation to help migrant workers overcome this unprecedented crisis and encourage innovative policy steps to support them integrating better in the post-Covid job market and beyond. We also call upon international support measures to mobilize resources for providing emergency relief, social protection, and extending access to health care to migrant workers, and ensure the sustainability and security of their income in emergency situations; Agreed ad ref.

32. We welcome the targets contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development related to migration and remittances, and strongly urge partner countries to start taking action, specifically with respect to reducing to less than 3 per cent the transaction costs of migrant remittances by 2030 and eliminating remittance corridors with costs higher than 5 per cent, and to facilitate the orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies. We underline the importance of putting in place specific incentive programmes to ensure that remittances are used for long-term investments in productive capacity building in LDCs; [Last part of the OP27 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

33. We recognize the establishment of the International Migration Review Forum which will discuss and share progress on the implementation of all aspects of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, including as it relates to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; [OP28 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

34. We recognize that while official development assistance must remain central and play a catalytic role, there is a need to tap additional resources, including through innovative financing mechanisms which can provide more stable and predictable resources for development and are based on new partnerships between countries at different levels of development as well as public and private actors. Specific mechanisms for innovative financing should be operationalized to mobilize additional resources for financing sustainable development. We note the potential of blended finance and other innovative finance. We are however concerned that like traditional sources of finance, blended finance instruments are also bypassing the LDCs. We stress that the innovative sources of financing should be additional, substantial and predictable and disbursed in a manner that respects the priorities and special needs of the least developed countries and does not unduly burden them; [OP29 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

35. We are concerned that the value of LDC exports of goods and services declined by 1.6 per cent in 2019, a greater decline than that of world exports (1.2 per cent). Consequently, the share of LDCs in world exports also registered a marginal decline, falling to 0.91 per cent in 2019. The expected downturn in trade in 2020 is likely to be even more severe for LDCs than at the global level. [WTO information note 2020], LDCs are still further away from the target of 2 per cent of global exports called for in the Istanbul Programme of Action and target 17.11 of the Sustainable Development Goals. We also note that in 2018, LDCs' exports of commercial services expanded by 16 per cent, reaching US\$ 39.8 billion, as a result, in 2018, LDCs' contribution to world services exports rose to 0.69 per cent; [OP30 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

36. We are concerned that the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic has adversely impacted global trade. The World Trade Organization (WTO) projected that global trade would plummet between 13 per cent and 32 per cent in the second half of 2020 across regions and sectors. Declining demand, as well as supply disruptions, have weighed significantly on LDC exports, especially exports of textiles and clothing products. LDCs dependent on tourism revenues have seen the sector come to a virtual standstill. As migrant workers from LDCs return from host countries affected by the pandemic, flows of remittances – a critical source of foreign exchange for many countries

– have dramatically dried up. All of these factors are predicted to worsen further in the coming months. [WTO] Agreed ad ref.

37. We are concerned that since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, many countries have adopted a series of protective measures to slow down the progression of the virus and avoid the collapse of the health system. These initial trade policy responses have affected the availability of medical goods particularly in countries who rely on import to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic. LDCs depend heavily on imports to secure access and availability of these medical supplies, as most of them don't have the capacity to manufacture them directly. Between 2017 and 2018, LDCs' imports of these medical supplies amounted to nearly USD 7.3 billion with disinfectant and medical consumable accounting for the majority of imported items. However, the imposition of restrictions has affected the supply of a number of essential public health and other items; Agreed ad ref.

38. We therefore call upon the Members of the WTO not to impose export prohibitions or restrictions with respect to health related and basic food products, when such products are requested or purchased by LDCs for their domestic use or are exported for humanitarian purposes. We also urge them that consistent with their WTO obligations under the Trade Facilitation Agreement, to expedite and facilitate the flow and transit and departure of all products related to public health and food stuffs through their respective seaports and airports to reach LDCs for their domestic use; Agreed ad ref.

39. We call upon the members of the World Trade Organization to strongly commit to addressing the marginalization of least developed countries in international trade and to improve their effective participation in the multilateral trading system. We also call upon the members to fully and faithfully implement all the least developed country-specific provisions contained in the existing World Trade Organization agreements, ministerial decisions and declarations, including those contained in the Bali and Nairobi decisions. We invite the WTO secretariat to undertake a comprehensive study on the lack of progress in achieving SDG 17.11 and to make specific recommendations on the way forward to achieve this SDG by 2030; [Last part of OP30 of last year] Agreed ad ref.

40. We emphasize the importance of facilitating the accession of developing countries to the World Trade Organization, recognizing the contribution that their accession would make to the rapid and full integration of those countries into the multilateral trading system, urge in this regard the acceleration of the accession process on a technical and legal basis and in an expeditious and transparent manner for developing countries that have applied for membership in the World Trade Organization, and reaffirm the importance of that organization's decision WT/L/508/Add.1 of 25 July 2012 on accession by the least developed countries; Agreed ad ref.

41. We call upon developed country members and developing country members of the World Trade Organization declaring themselves in a position to do so to realize timely implementation of effective duty-free and quota-free market access on a lasting basis for all products originating from all least developed countries, consistent with World Trade Organization decisions, with a view to realizing the Sustainable Development Goals target of doubling the least developed countries' share of global exports by 2020; [OP31 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

42. We also call upon developed country members and developing country members of the World Trade Organization declaring themselves in a position to do so to take steps to facilitate market access for least developed countries' products, including by developing simple and transparent rules of origin applicable to imports from least developed countries, in accordance with the Decision adopted by members of the World Trade Organization at the Tenth Ministerial Conference, held in Nairobi as well as the subsequent Ministerial meeting; [OP32 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

43. We welcome the entry into force of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), which will address high trade costs incurred by LDCs and other developing countries and facilitate the integration of these countries in regional and global value chains. We call upon the development and trading partners to provide targeted assistance and support to LDCs to help them build sustainable capacity to implement their commitments under the TFA, especially its Articles 13 and 21; [OP33 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

44. We request the WTO Members to assess the work done so far under the 1998 work programme on e-commerce, taking into account the actual needs of LDCs in terms of the digital gap, lack of regulation, lack of infrastructure, including lack of energy, electricity, internet penetration, and connectivity. We urge Members to examine issues of the digital gap and the ability of LDC suppliers to participate fairly in, and establish their own, e-commerce platforms in order to directly trade their goods and services. We also call on developed country

Members to provide preferential market access to all business to consumer goods and services originating from all LDCs that are exported using an e-commerce- platform directly from LDCs suppliers. In this regard, we look forward to intensified and concerted action of the G20 countries to enhance the ability of least developed countries to more fully engage in digital trade, as committed in the G20 Summit in Germany in 2017; [OP34 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

45. We underline the importance of aid for trade initiatives in trade-related capacity-building; overcoming supply-side constraints; infrastructure development; and facilitating the integration of least developed countries' economies in regional and global trade. To this end, we call upon members to accord priority to the least developed countries' projects and ensure that at least 50 per cent of the aid for trade is allocated to least developed countries. We welcome the extension of the Enhanced Integrated Framework into phase two, and urge members to further intensify their efforts to secure the necessary level of contributions for the timely replenishment for effective implementation without any disruption of the Framework from 2016 to 2022; [OP35 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

46. We note with concern that in 2019, FDI inflows to LDCs as a group fell by 5.7 per cent. The pandemic and its economic consequences are hitting LDCs hard, making prospects for FDI bleak. This could affect many LDCs that are highly dependent on foreign investors both for export-oriented industrial activity and in public-private partnership projects in infrastructure development (such as power generation plants and industrial parks). A delay in these projects will diminish not only short-term prospects for new FDI flows to LDCs but also decelerate long-term economic growth.¹⁸ FDI in the LDCs remains heavily concentrated in the extractive industries, often providing few forward and backward productive linkages within the economy. It is a matter of concern that foreign investors overstate domestic risks and we invite national, regional and global development banks to play an instrumental role in mobilizing private capital for specific projects, through co-financing, providing risk guarantees and other instruments. We underline the need for undertaking necessary measures at all levels to further accelerate FDI to LDCs to meet their growing needs to realize the 2030 Agenda; [OP36 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019-modified] Agreed ad ref.

47. We welcome the decision contained in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to adopt and implement investment promotion regimes for least developed countries and the offer to provide financial and technical support for project preparation and contract negotiation, advisory support in investment-related dispute resolution, access to information on investment facilities and risk insurance and guarantees, such as through the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency. In this regard, we take note with appreciation of the initiatives undertaken by UN-OHRLLS aiming at providing legal and technical support to LDCs in investment-related negotiations and dispute settlement through the Investment Support Programme, implemented by the International Development Law Organization (IDLO) and at improving the capacity of the investment promotion agencies of LDCs to attract, diversify and retain FDI and derive maximum benefit from it. We commend the EU for its contribution of 1 million Euro for the implementation of the investment support programme and invite donors to make generous contribution to these initiatives; [OP37 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

48. We reiterate our call to the Secretary-General, in his capacity as the Chair of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, to include the issue of investment promotion regimes for the least developed countries in the agenda of the Board, with a view to enhancing the overall effectiveness of United Nations system support that can contribute to enhancing the flow of foreign direct investment to the least developed countries and the ability of those countries to attract such investment. We request the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly on the progress made in this regard. We take note with appreciation of the Capacity Development Programme for the investment promotion agencies of LDCs, developed by UN-OHRLLS jointly with UNCTAD, UNIDO, ILO, EIF and WAIPA; and call for financial support to this programme; [OP38 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

49. We recall the SDG target 17.5 which decides to “adopt and implement investment promotion regimes for least developed countries” and express deep concern at the lack of progress in its implementation. We call upon Member States to take a decision at the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly to establish an international investment support centre for the least developed countries under the auspices of the United Nations to provide a one-stop arrangement to help stimulate foreign direct investment in the least developed countries, which can make available the following interrelated and mutually reinforcing services, as already agreed upon in the Addis Ababa

¹⁸ UNCTAD World Investment Report 2020.

Action Agenda: (a) an information depository for investment facilities in the least developed countries; (b) provision of technical support to assist the least developed countries in preparing project documents and negotiating complex large-scale contracts; (c) provision of advisory support in dispute resolution; and (d) risk insurance and guarantees in close collaboration with the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development; [OP39 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

50. We are concerned that the external indebtedness remains a serious concern in the least developed countries, with an external debt stock of \$358 billion and debt servicing as a percentage of exports of goods, services and primary income of 8.7 per cent in 2018. As of November 2019, 6 least developed countries were classified as debt distressed, while an additional 12 were rated at a high risk of debt distress. (SG report on the IPoA 2020). These developments reflect continued reduction in the ODA flows and increased borrowing at commercial terms by those least developed countries over the past few years, incurring substantially higher debt servicing costs. Furthermore, there is increased risks from the changing composition of the public and publicly-guaranteed debt. The combined effect of those trends has led to a deterioration in both the numerator and denominator of key debt ratios, giving rise to increased fragility in the financial position of a number of least developed countries; [OP40 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019-modified] Agreed ad ref.

51. We are concerned that the debt problem in LDCs was already simmering before the pandemic. Between 2009 and 2018, the combined external debt stock of IDA-only countries almost doubled. The COVID-19 pandemic and a record number of super cyclones and other natural disasters such as locust plague have wreaked havoc in LDCs. Given their narrow and dwindling fiscal space, these countries will have to borrow heavily to rebuild their crippled economies, pushing them further into debt; Agreed ad ref.

52. We note with appreciation the IMF debt relief measures which has offered USD213.4 million worth of COVID-19 related debt relief to 27 LDCs. Similarly, the G20 and Paris Club have offered to temporarily suspend debt repayments until the end of 2020 for more than 70 countries including all LDCs under the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI). While acknowledging these efforts of the global community to deal with the financial impacts of the pandemic, it is clear that these measures are simply not enough as they do not cancel any debt, which is to be repaid in full over 2022– 2024, as interest continues to grow. Furthermore, some countries were not requesting for the suspension due to the perceived impact on their credit rating and borrowing costs. We are also concerned that the public money meant to respond to the crisis – including those released through the DSSI or new loans from the IMF and World Bank – is effectively being used to pay off high interest loan payment of private creditors; Agreed ad ref.

53. While debt suspension is a vital immediate measure, a full and comprehensive debt relief package is immediately needed. We therefore call upon development partners to take effective measures to cancel all multilateral and bilateral debts owed by all least developed countries to creditors, both public and private, and to arrange debt standstill and debt swaps until the debt cancellation is fully realized. We also call upon creditors, both public and private, for additional effective measures to facilitate financing of our economic development, including access to both concessional and non-concessional resources for investment in critically needed infrastructure and development projects. The debt sustainability framework for LDCs should systematically take into account their structural constraints and longer-term investment requirements for the implementation of the SDGs; [OP41 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019-modified] Agreed ad ref.

54. We recognize the critical importance of the work of the Technology Bank for LDCs in improving least developed countries' scientific research and innovation base, promote networking among researchers and research institutions, help least developed countries access and utilize critical technologies, and draw 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, Norway, Guinea, Bangladesh and India 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 members States to raise awareness on 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 reiterate our call to the Secretary General to continue his efforts to support the Technology Bank especially in getting donor countries and other development partners to provide financial and in-kind assistance for the activities of the Technology Bank; [OP42 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

55. We are concerned that Biological hazards such as COVID-19, along with other hazards such as hurricanes, floods, earthquakes and wildfires, cause disasters and worsen poverty. Based on the latest reporting under the Sendai Framework monitoring process from 80 countries in 2018, 23,458 deaths and 2,164 persons missing were attributed to disasters. Least developed countries (LDCs) were disproportionately affected by disasters in 2018. The 17 LDCs reporting disaster-related losses accounted for 14 per cent of the total population of the 80 countries reporting such losses, but over 29 per cent of the total reported deaths and missing persons attributed to disasters. The economic impacts of disasters were also larger for LDCs, relative to the size of their economies. The 17 LDCs reporting economic losses made up 2 per cent of the GDP of all countries reporting such losses, but suffered 10 per cent of the total direct economic losses; (The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020) Agreed ad ref.

56. We note with concern that the multilateral risk reduction strategies and mechanisms are proven insufficient for LDCs, as they are often inadequately funded, call for cumbersome administrative procedures and regulatory reforms and require complex and technical proposals to access various funds. The General Assembly in its resolution [72/231](#) underlines the importance of improving the coordination and effectiveness of resilience-building initiatives for the least developed countries by leveraging existing measures at the national, regional and global levels to respond to various types of disasters and shocks, as elaborated in the report of the Secretary-General. We invite the Secretary-General, in his capacity as the Chair of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, to set up an inter-agency working group to carry out this mandate. We also reiterate our invitation to the General Assembly to decide on the establishment of a “comprehensive multi-stakeholder resilience-building mechanism for LDCs”, leveraging the existing measures and initiatives. The mechanism would entail a number of measures to be established or revitalized at the national, regional and global levels to respond to various types of disasters and shocks as elaborated in the report of the Secretary-General; [OP43 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

57. We recall the goal in the Istanbul Programme of Action to enhance capacities in energy production, trade and distribution with the aim of ensuring access for all by 2030, as well as the targets established under SDG 7 on ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all. We note with concern that while the average global electrification rate reached 90 per cent in 2018, the average access to electricity across LDCs was 52 per cent. Furthermore, 84 per cent of the population in LDCs remain without access to clean fuels and technologies for cooking relies on biomass for cooking, underscoring the urgent need for improved access to clean and modern cooking energy. International public financial flows to developing countries in support of clean and renewable energy reached \$21.4 billion in 2017. This is 13 per cent more than in 2016 and double the level of 2010. While the progress is encouraging, only 12 per cent of these financial flows reached the least developed countries, which are the farthest behind in reaching Goal 7 targets. (The SDGs report 2020) We call upon all actors, including development partners, intergovernmental financial institutions, the private sector and civil society, to work together to ensure universal, seamless and affordable access to energy, especially renewable energy to LDCs, with the establishment of modern generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure. We also invite the UN Energy, to focus on the specific sustainable energy challenges of the least developed countries with game-changing programmes and multi-stakeholder partnerships tailored to meet the needs of LDCs; [OP44 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019-modified] Agreed ad ref.

58. We emphasize that in a globalized and interconnected world, information and communication technologies are key to allowing individuals and businesses to participate in the knowledge economy including e-health, e-education, e-banking and e-governance. Affordable and easily accessible broadband connectivity is an important enabler of economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. We are concerned that only 19 per cent of households in the least developed countries was online in 2019, displaying a very low level of penetration compared to 87 per cent developed countries and 40 per cent in developing countries.¹⁹ Globally, there were nearly 15 fixed broadband subscriptions for every 100 inhabitants in 2019, ranging from 33.6 in developed countries to only 11.2 in developing countries. In least developed countries, owing to the high cost and lack of infrastructure, there were nearly no fixed broadband connections. Key reasons for this large gap are the cost of using the Internet and the lack of necessary skills. (The SDGs report 2020) We call upon development partners to substantially scale up their support to infrastructure development and make available the financial resources and expertise to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020 in line with target 9.c of the SDGs. We take note of the empirical study undertaken by the OHRLLS and the International Telecommunication Union on the economic impact of broadband in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS; [OP45 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019-updated] Agreed ad ref.

¹⁹ [E/2017/66](#).

59. We reaffirm that achieving gender equality, empowering all women and girls, and the full realization of the human rights of all people are essential to achieving sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth and sustainable development. We reiterate the need for gender mainstreaming, including targeted actions and investments in the formulation and implementation of all financial, economic, environmental and social policies; [OP46 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

60. We underline that North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation is vital to the least developed countries, particularly in regard to technical assistance, sharing of best practices in terms of their development, especially in areas of productive capacity-building, infrastructure, energy, science and technology, trade, investment and transit transport cooperation, we call upon the countries of the South to further strengthen their support provided to the least developed countries in all these areas in a predictable manner along the lines of the outcome document of the Second High-Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation; [OP47 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

61. We stress that the particular challenges faced by LDCs in conflict and post-conflict situations need to be recognized and that targeted support should be provided to them. Efforts to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies that provide equal access to justice and that are based on respect for human rights (including the right to development), on effective rule of law and good governance at all levels and on transparent, effective and accountable institutions are critical to the implementation the 2030 Agenda and the Istanbul Program of Action. We recognize that the international community must redouble its efforts to resolve or prevent conflict and to support post-conflict countries, including through ensuring that women have a role in peacebuilding and Statebuilding; Agreed ad ref.

62. We recall the ambitious goal of the Istanbul Programme of Action to enable half the number of least developed countries to meet the criteria for graduation by 2020 and commit to take the steps necessary to complete the graduation process. We take note of the recent progress in graduation, as elaborated in the ECOSOC resolution,²⁰ including recommendation of graduation of Bhutan, Solomon Islands and Sao Tome and Principe; and deferral of the consideration of the graduation of Tuvalu and Kiribati to no later than 2021. In this regard, we take note of the review of the criteria by the CDP and look forward to its implementation²¹; [OP48 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

63. We acknowledge that the graduation of a country symbolizes its irreversible long-term socioeconomic progress prevailing over the structural handicaps to its socioeconomic development. However, it also brings a lot of challenges in the form of losing the entire package of LDC-specific benefits and waivers from compliance with international obligations and commitments. We note with concern that in most cases, the graduated countries still remain far below the benchmarks under most of the SDG indicators and continue to face insurmountable challenges and vulnerabilities to various shocks and crises; [OP49 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

64. We recognize that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) severely affects the least developed countries, including those graduating from this category, and is likely to impact their sustainable development trajectories and we request the Committee for Development Policy (CDP) to undertake a comprehensive study, within existing resources, on the impact of COVID-19 on the least developed country category; and also request the Committee to closely monitor and incorporate fully into its triennial reviews the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on least developed countries and countries graduating from the category of least developed countries; [E/Res/2020/10] Agreed ad ref.

65. We note with appreciation that some development partners have extended some of the LDC-specific benefits to the graduated countries, 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 partners rather than all. We reiterate that the existing processes related to graduation and smooth transition should be strengthened so that graduating and recently graduated countries do not face any disruption in their development trajectory, including challenges and uncertainties in achieving the SDGs; [OP50 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

²⁰ E/2018/L.22.

²¹ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/CDP-2020-Criteria-review-outcome.pdf>

66. We commend the Secretary-General for including the development of a package of incentives to further the development progress of graduating LDCs by the international development community as specific action in his Roadmap for Financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development 2019–2021 and call upon Member States to agree on such a package to ensure that the graduated countries continue to enjoy LDC-specific support in some critical areas of their economy for a certain period of time consistent with their development situations and needs. This can serve as a safeguard measure for the graduated countries to sustain their development path and not to relapse to the category of LDCs, thereby facilitating the achievement of the SGDs by 2030. This may include:²²

(a) Support to graduating countries in costing, mobilizing resources and monitoring the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, covering all 17 Goals.

(b) More in-depth analysis of the potential impacts of graduation and identification of additional support to address the challenges of graduation.

(c) Capacity-building support to enhance access to new sources of financing, including blended financing of domestic and international resources.

(d) Facilitating increased access to other means of financing, including private finance, green bond financing and GDP-indexed bonds. Credit ratings and risk management measures, including through the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, could be helpful in this respect.

(e) Bringing together various stakeholders, including development and trading partners and the private sector to provide a platform for countries about to graduate to showcase progress and investment opportunities, for example an improved business environment and increased institutional capacity.

(f) Legal assistance to transition from the EU's Everything But Arms (EBA) Initiative to the enhanced Generalised Scheme of Preferences to mitigate abrupt loss of preferences as the GSP+ offers an additional preference (in some cases comparable with the EBA).

(g) A transitional services waiver arrangement: The LDC services waiver is a new mechanism made available to and yet barely utilised by the next wave of graduates. Given the importance of services to trade nowadays, as organised within global value chains (GVC), a particular transitional arrangement could be secured for forthcoming graduates from LDC status for this preference.

(h) Support measures available to least developed countries under the WTO shall be extended to graduated LDCs for a period of at least five years after the entry into force of a decision of the UN General Assembly to graduate. This should include:

i. All special and differential treatment measures and exemptions available to a least developed country under existing and future WTO Agreements, Understandings, Ministerial, General Council and other relevant Decisions;

ii. All LDC-specific technical assistance and capacity building programmes and facilities provided under the WTO system;

iii. Any other relevant measure in favour of LDCs.

(i) Developed and developing countries granting unilateral trade preferences to least developed countries should establish procedures for extending and gradually phasing out their preferential market access scheme over a period of at least five years after the entry into force of a decision of the UN General Assembly to exclude a country from the least developed countries category.

(j) More targeted Aid for Trade support: To improve the effectiveness of Aid for Trade disbursements pre- and post-graduation, the GVC approach towards assessment of needs for trade-related adjustment must be adopted. Investments in infrastructure can further reduce trade costs in view of heightened competition after graduation.

(k) Enhanced technical assistance to LDCs to build and strengthen their intellectual property rights systems would enable them to comply with obligations related to intellectual property after graduation. The implementation of the intellectual property regime should be an integral part of the national smooth transition strategy, taking into

²² Transitioning from LDCs: Achieving Trade-Related Adjustment, Enhanced Diversification and Reduced Economic Vulnerability by Jodie Keane and Howard Haughton, The Commonwealth Secretariat and the SG's report on Report of the Secretary-General: Implementation, effectiveness and added value of smooth transition measures and graduation support ([A/73/291](#)).

account national circumstances, and assistance in this regard should be extended to the graduating country at an early stage; Agreed ad ref.

67. We recall paragraph 26 of General Assembly resolution [68/224](#), in which the Assembly requests all relevant organizations of the United Nations system, led by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, to extend necessary support in a coordinated manner to the countries that have expressed their intention to reach the status of graduation by 2020 in preparing their graduation and transition strategy, and we invite the organizations of the United Nations system, led by the Office of the High Representative, to extend the necessary technical support to the countries aspiring to graduation in developing their graduation and smooth transition strategies. In this regard, we welcome the establishment of the Inter-Agency Task Force on graduation of LDCs (IATF), led by the OHRLLS, and invite it to continue its support to graduating and graduated countries, as and when requested. We call upon the development partners to provide support for the implementation of the graduation strategy with a view to enabling those countries to graduate from least developed country status. Likewise, we call for providing support for the implementation of the smooth transition strategy after graduation, taking into account each country's development situation, in order not to disrupt its efforts towards sustainable development; In this regard, we welcome the report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation, effectiveness and added value of smooth transition measures and graduation support;²³ [OP52 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

68. We recall the decisions made in the Midterm Review that the review of the graduation criteria by the Committee for Development Policy should be comprehensive, taking into account all aspects of the evolving international development context, including relevant agendas and take note of the work programme of the CDP, adopted at its nineteenth session, to undertake a review of the basic structure of the least developed country criteria and its application principles aiming to identify additional indicators that could significantly improve the least developed country identification, which would become effective in 2021.²⁴ We also recall our invitation to the CDP to provide significantly higher weightage to the environmental vulnerabilities, and in this regard, we take note of the outcome of the comprehensive review of the LDC criteria ²⁵; [OP53 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

69. We recognize that the United Nations development system is challenged to meet the growing demands for more varied assistance by doing more, quicker and better. We invite all organizations of the United Nations system and other multilateral organizations, including the World Bank Group and international and regional financial institutions, to contribute to the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action, including by implementing scaled-up programmes of financial and technical cooperation, to integrate it into their programmes of work, to participate fully in its review at the national, sub-regional, regional and global levels, and to include in their annual reports to the Executive Boards and to the Economic and Social Council the progress made in this regard, as mandated by the Council in paragraph 9 of its resolution [2013/46](#); [OP54 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

70. We note that the share of expenditure for operational activities for development of the United Nations system in the least developed countries rose from 47.7% in 2017 to 48 per cent in 2018, while noting that this increase falls short of the 51 per cent contributed by the system in 2012. In this regard, urge the United Nations development system to continue to prioritize allocations to least developed countries including by allocating at least 75 per cent of their programme resources in least developed countries,²⁶ while reaffirming that the least developed countries, as the most vulnerable group of countries, need enhanced support to overcome structural challenges that they face in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and request the United Nations development system to provide assistance to graduating countries in the formulation and implementation of their national transition strategies and to consider country specific support for graduated countries for a fixed period of time and in a predictable manner; [OP55 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

71. We request the OHRLLS to extend necessary support to the least developed countries in the implementation and monitoring of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

²³ [A/73/291](#).

²⁴ [E/2017/33](#).

²⁵ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/CDP-2020-Criteria-review-outcome.pdf>

²⁶ Currently 74 per cent of core programme resources of the United Nations Development Programme is allocated for work in least developed countries.

Development through coordination with various United Nations entities, raising global awareness, mobilizing international support and resources in favour of the least developed countries, building multi-stakeholder partnerships and reaching out to all stakeholders, including by establishing partnerships with civil society and the private sector, to enhance support for the three groups of countries; [OP57 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

72. We recall paragraph 26 of General Assembly resolution [67/220](#), in which the Assembly invites the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, to include implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action as a standing item on the agenda of the Board, and we call upon the Board to continue to follow up on the implementation of the Programme of Action and to keep the Assembly informed on a regular basis; [OP58 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

73. We take note of the survey conducted by the CDP on reasons and consequences of the non-application of the least developed country category by United Nations development system entities and its findings that United Nations development system entities should not only recognize the least developed countries category, but also to consistently apply the least developed countries category by providing international support measures, and request the United Nations development system entities to adopt common guidelines in this regard. We also request international financial institutions, in particular the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and regional development banks, to consider the least developed country category in their procedures for allocating resources and to design policies that consider the special situation of the least developed countries;²⁷ [OP60 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

74. We express deep concern that least developed countries are hugely underrepresented in the decision-making processes of the global financial architecture. Forty-seven least developed countries, with 13 per cent of the global population, collectively enjoy only 3.27 per cent of the voting power of the International Monetary Fund and 3.78 per cent of the voting power of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. This needs to be addressed for the legitimacy and effectiveness of the global financial system. We recommit to broadening and strengthening the voice and participation of least developed countries in international economic decision-making and norm-setting and global economic governance. We invite the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision and other main international regulatory standard-setting bodies to continue efforts to increase the voice of least developed countries in norm-setting processes to ensure that their concerns are taken into consideration; [OP61 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

75. We welcome the resolutions of the General Assembly and the ECOSOC on the Fifth UN Conference on LDCs including its scope; duration; national and regional reviews; preparatory committee meetings and the contributions by the United Nations Development System and other international organizations including the World Bank Group and the IMF; [OP62 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

76. We want to see an evidence-based bottom-up approach in preparing for the Conference, in which national level experience, best practices and lessons learned in the implementation of the IPoA should serve as a key building-block for the next programme of action. The Conference should also address the new and emerging challenges such as the devastating impacts of climate change, population dynamics and leverage the enormous potentials offered by the frontier technologies, which will accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in LDCs; [OP63 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

77. We request the Secretary-General to mobilize the international community including the UN system in favour of the Fifth UN Conference on LDCs and secure a large number of participants at the highest political level in the Conference to be held in Doha, Qatar in 2022; [OP64 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

78. We deeply appreciate the Government of Qatar for offering to host the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in Doha at the highest possible level, including Heads of State and Government, from 23-27 January 2022; [OP66 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019-modified] Agreed ad ref.

79. We call upon Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, major groups and other donors to contribute in a timely manner to the trust fund in support of activities undertaken by the Office of the High Representative to support the implementation, follow-up and monitoring of the Istanbul Programme of Action, the preparation of the Fifth United Nations Conference on LDCs, and the participation of the representatives from the least developed countries in the high-level political forum on sustainable development of

²⁷ [E/2017/33](#).

the Economic and Social Council as well as in other relevant forums and the Fifth UN Conference on LDCs and its preparatory processes; [OP67 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.

80. We underline the need for ensuring sustainable funding for the Resident Coordinator system recognizing this as the centrepiece of the reform efforts, the RC system's funding arrangements must be adequate and sustainable. The full budget of the Resident Coordinator system will need to be capitalized to ensure the capacities, resources and continuity required for the reinvigorated system to live up to its promise; Agreed ad ref.

81. We express our concern that majority of UNDS entities have seen an erosion of core funding with only 21 per cent of contributions to the United Nations development system in 2018 were in the form of core contributions, continuing the imbalance between core and non-core funding. Core funding has been indispensable in allowing the UNDS to repurpose in response to the pandemic. We underline the importance of significantly increasing the core and other flexible forms of funding and of broadening the donor base; Agreed ad ref.

82. The scale and pace of the progress needed to achieve the Goals by 2030 will simply not be possible without robust partnerships. The 2016 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) highlighted the fact that one of the core functions of the United Nations system was to assist Governments in leveraging partnerships. UNDS must scale up its capacities to help Governments leverage partnerships for achieving the Goals; Agreed ad ref.

83. We urge the Secretary-General to ensure that the pool of resident coordinator candidates is sufficiently diverse in terms of gender, geography and skill sets. LDCs should be sufficiently represented in the pool; Agreed ad ref.

84. We recognize that of the \$26.5 billion of total country-level expenditures for United Nations operational activities for development in 2018, \$12.6 billion, or 48 per cent, were spent in least developed countries. That is a slight increase from 46 per cent in 2016. We however, express our concern that a higher share (51 per cent) of humanitarian expenditures was recorded in least developed countries, while 44 per cent of all expenditures on development activities were in such countries; (OP 81 A/75/79/Add.1 E/2020/55/Add.1) Agreed ad ref.

85. We welcome the decision to establish a multi-country office in the North Pacific [OP166 A/75/79 E/2020/55]. We call for additional and better support by multi-country offices that is more tailored to meet their needs with respect to the implementation of the Samoa Pathway, IPoA and the achievement of the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda. This should include increasing physical presence, policy resources, financial and technical resources, facilitating deeper engagement in global and regional intergovernmental forums, strengthening data capacities and enhancing access to financing for sustainable development and South-South and triangular cooperation; [Based on OP140 A/75/79 E/2020/55] Agreed ad ref.

86. We take note of decisions 2012/1 of 3 February 2012 and 2012/28 of 10 September 2012 of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, in which the Executive Board reiterated the allocation to least developed countries of a minimum of 60 per cent of its target for resource assignment from the core (TRAC-1) resources, and the UNICEF Executive Board Decision 2016/11 of 16 September 2016 reiterating that LDCs must receive at least 60 per cent of its regular resources, and invites the governing bodies of other all organizations of the United Nations development system and other multilateral organizations to prioritize allocations to least developed countries with at least 75 per cent of their resources going to LDCs. Invites also the UNDS to double the share of its resources to LDCs in next five years. [Based on A/RES/68/224, 14] Agreed ad ref.

87. We recognize that the COVID-19 is a stress-test for the UNDS to demonstrate that the repositioning efforts are enabling a more coherent and better coordinated, whole-of-system UN response at country level. Accelerating efforts to achieve the sustainable development goals is more critical than ever in leading an effective post-COVID recovery, while ensuring that no one is left behind. The UNDS should further sharpen its offer on critical priorities for Governments, such as poverty eradication, universal health coverage and addressing the multiple deprivations in people's lives, climate change, sustainable economic growth and strengthening national capacities; Agreed ad ref.

88. We emphasize that during the Decade of Action, the implementation efforts of the 2030 Agenda should be redoubled in order to build back better, and the role of Resident Coordinators (RCs) and United Nations country teams (UNCTs) in supporting LDCs to tackle COVID-19 is of utmost importance. UN should play the lead role in the fight against COVID-19. We also emphasize the imperative to uphold multilateralism, strengthen international solidarity, safeguard world peace, prevent economic recession, and help LDCs cope with the challenges of COVID-19; Agreed ad ref.

89. We stress the urgency for the United Nations development system to develop common guidelines to ensure that least developed countries are prioritized in all programming and budgeting. We thank the SG for its request to the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and the inter-agency task force to develop the above-mentioned common guidance; Agreed ad ref.

90. We underline that all United Nations development system members should ensure that graduation-related capacity development activities are coordinated and demand-driven, and to encourage an ambitious and flexible approach to help Governments to mitigate the impact of graduation. (based on OP 84 A/75/79 E/2020/55) In this regard, we thank UN-OHRLLS for leading the Inter-Agency Task Team on graduation of LDCs and look forward to its further coordinated and coherent support to graduating and graduated countries; Agreed ad ref.

91. We invite the governing bodies of the United Nations funds and programmes and other multilateral organizations, including the World Bank Group and international financial institutions, to contribute to the implementation of the Programme of Action for LDCs and to integrate it into their work programmes, as appropriate and in accordance with their respective mandates. Invites these organizations to participate fully in reviews of the Programme of Action at the national, subregional, regional and global levels; [Based on IPoA 153] Agreed ad ref.

92. We welcome the declaration of the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations and look forward to the successful holding of the commemoration event to be held on 21 September 2020; Agreed ad ref.

93. We are concerned that the UN is marking its 75th anniversary at a time when the world is passing a tumultuous time and plagued by growing inequality, poverty, hunger, climate change, pandemics and lacklustre global partnerships. People in different corners of the world are forced to make dangerous journeys in search of refuge and safety. The least developed countries are increasing falling behind. All this calls for greater action, not less; Agreed ad ref.

94. We recognize that the charter of the United Nations enjoined on us to ensure higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development. At this historic moment of 75th anniversary, our biggest concern is that around one-tenth of the world's 7.8 billion people still live in extreme poverty, with more than half of them living in LDCs. COVID 19 is going to add at least another 100 million to this list. Business as usual approach is likely to leave 30 per cent of our population in extreme poverty even after 2030; Agreed ad ref.

95. We stress that extraordinary measures by all countries, including strengthened international cooperation, are needed to address this and related problems. We call for a marshal plan for LDCs to save them from a possible greatest humanitarian crisis posed by COVID-19, climate change and other new and emerging threats. The UN needs more firepower to support the least developed countries. This is fundamentally linked to this global body's legitimacy and effectiveness. This is also a litmus test for the multilateralism. This is also the time for the development partners to prove their solidarity and support to LDCs and other vulnerable countries. The governance of the global development architecture needs to be revamped so that the voices of the poor and marginalized are present in the decision-making tables; Agreed ad ref.

96. We most sincerely acknowledge the supportive role being played by the Group of Friends of Least Developed Countries, and invite the Group to further strengthen its support for the effective realization of the Istanbul Programme of Action, the outcome of the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the outcomes of all other international and regional conferences and processes as they relate to the least developed countries. We especially invite the Friends of LDCs to actively engage and continue to provide their support to the Fifth United Nations Conference on LDCs and its preparatory process. [OP68 Ministerial Declaration of LDCs 2019] Agreed ad ref.