

Summary Report of the National Focal Points Meeting of the Least Developed Countries on the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA)

12-13 July 2018, UN Headquarters, New York

Opening

Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu, Under Secretary-General and the High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, welcomed all the participants and expressed her appreciation for their participation. The USG briefed participants on how OHRLLS incorporated the suggestions made by the National Focal Points (NFP) at the last meeting in 2017. While reviewing progress achieved by LDCs since last year, she updated participants about the operationalization of the Technology Bank of the LDCs, the investment promotion regimes for LDCs, and the progress of graduation from the LDC category. The USG stressed the linkage between dynamically transforming and diversifying economies of LDCs and graduation, and the importance of enhancing the statistical capacity of LDCs in the monitoring and implementation of the IPoA. The USG emphasized that additional support measures are needed to ensure sustainable graduation of LDCs. She also stressed the importance of partnerships and international support such as increased access to development finance for LDCs to address their vulnerability. The USG called upon the international community including the UN system to accelerate value-adding support to the most vulnerable countries. The USG appealed for reinvigorating global actions with concrete and effective measures to boost the human and institutional capacity of LDCs for an inclusive and sustainable development path.

Mr. Elliot Harris, Assistant Secretary-General, Chief Economist, DESA, pointed out that LDCs are at a critical juncture to forge partnerships for accelerated and sustained development. While praising the significant progress of graduation, he noted that the IPoA goal of enabling half of the LDCs to meet the graduation criteria by 2020 is still far from being met, and challenges remain for graduated countries to sustain progress. He pointed out that there is no single path in development, and peer experience is invaluable for LDCs facing similar development challenges. He stressed the importance of adopting integrated strategies for structural transformation which combine investment in human capital, sound macroeconomic policies and appropriate domestic industrial policy. He further noted that rural development is the basis of progress in many LDCs. He highlighted the role of innovation on policy transformation and mentioned that policy reforms can liberate countries from growth constraints. He underscored that LDCs need to be prepared to overcome barriers for structural transformation against the background of fast changing technologies and the impact of climate change.

H.E. Ambassador Masud Bin Momen, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh and Chair of the LDC Global Coordination Bureau, commended the vital role of NFPs in accelerating the implementation of the IPoA. LDCs are facing unique structural challenges in accelerating the pace of development and financing the capacity gaps is the greatest in LDCs. Ambassador Momen stressed the need for LDCs to focus on productive capacity, job creation and inclusive development. He expressed concerns over protectionist and contractionary measures by some development partners, and vulnerability of LDCs in the face of declining ODA and FDI, and increasing debt. There is an emphasis on the need for LDCs to focus on domestic resource mobilization and forging partnerships with development partners. Ambassador Momen also remarked that the repositioning of the UN development system, in the context of QCPR, would deliver fundamental changes in the way that the UNCT and the RC system provide support to LDCs.

He called upon the NFPs to keep close engagement with the UN Country Team, and guide collaboration between the UNCT and the national government. He praised the operationalization of the Technology Bank and stressed the importance of conducting technology needs assessment of LDCs. He further stressed that the Technology Bank would play a role in helping LDCs leapfrog the technology gap. He thanked Turkey, Member States, and OHRLLS for their continued support for the operationalization of the Technology Bank.

H.E. Ambassador May-Elin Stener, Deputy Permanent Representative of Norway, shared that Norway places great emphasis on cooperation with the LDCs, and has continued to support the implementation of the IPoA and the Addis Agenda. Norway met the target of allocating 0.15% of its Gross National Income (GNI) as ODA to LDCs. Ambassador Stener informed the participants that Norway aims to gradually transition from an aid-based relationship with LDCs to research and technology cooperation. Ambassador Stener stressed how vital it is for LDCs to build STI capacity in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda and underscored the critical role of the Technology Bank in achieving the SDGs. In reference to graduation, she expressed that it needs to be sustainable. There should also be dialogue on ways to support countries that are more vulnerable to external shocks, especially climate change. She emphasized the need to help countries mobilize their own national resources, and that Norway is aiming to provide capacity building support to LDCs to strengthen tax collection and combat illicit financial flows.

Session I: Achieving structural transformation and economic growth in LDCs: Challenges and opportunities

The moderator, **Mr. Bartholomew Armah, Chief, Renewal of Planning of the Macroeconomic Policy Division of UNECA**, referred to sustainable graduation and structural transformation as the antidote to the fear of relapse associated with graduation. He mentioned that economic transformation from agriculture to service industry would impact income distribution. Sustainable development should be inclusive growth while being mindful of economic degradation. In this regard, support for technological innovation is critical as well as good governance. Governments should design effective national plans to develop bankable projects that attract investment. He remarked that evidence-based policy making is essential, and there is a need for coordinated inter-sectorial approach for development. Efforts should be made to leverage the sectorial synergies in order to minimize policy trade-offs in the process of structural transformation.

Mr. Paul Maseli, Director, NY Office, UNIDO, mentioned that structural transformation is at the heart of the work of UNIDO. He remarked that structural transformation is associated with job/wealth creation, improved living standards, skill development, technology development and innovation, which are the requirement for creating a dynamic economy. He mentioned that in the past decades LDCs made limited progress in diversifying their economies and achieving dynamic structural transformation. He cited the World Bank data on the value added of manufacturing in LDCs in 2017 which was 1/40th of the amount in Europe and North America. Low productivity in the agricultural sector and shallow participation in the global value chain are the major challenges confronting LDCs. LDCs also face the headwind of low investment and global economic slowdown caused by the financial crisis in 2018, rapid technology change and threat to multilateralism. He shared concern over the impending failure to achieve the SDG 9 target of doubling the industry's share of employment and GDP in LDCs by 2030. LDCs must mitigate severe structural obstacles and compete in the challenging and complex environment which requires innovative policy measures. LDCs are already undergoing profound structural transformation in tradable services and

agricultural services such as tourism, ICT, horticulture and agribusiness. He elaborated on the impact presented by digitalization on LDCs and expressed concerns over a “jobless future” caused by digitalization. LDCs must adapt to changing nature of technology and boost STI capacity, and adopt context specific industrialization policy. He encouraged countries to pursue vertical and horizontal industrial policies to attract investment through provision of tax incentives and infrastructure. LDCs should develop the private sector, particularly SMEs, and make use of trade corridors and regional economic community. He concluded by reaffirming the long-standing commitment of UNIDO in promoting industrialization of LDCs and introduced country programmes that UNIDO is undertaking in LDCs on innovative models of sustainable and inclusive industrialization.

Mr. Matthias Bruckner, Senior Economic Affairs Officer, CDP Secretariat, UNDESA shared the work of CDP on LDCs inter alia triennial review of the list of LDCs with recommendation for inclusion and graduation, developing the criteria and procedures for identifying LDCs, monitoring graduating and graduated LDCs and preparing analytical papers on LDCs. He introduced the framework that CDP developed on expanding productive capacity for achieving the sustainable development goals, which contains five main elements: development governance (development-oriented vision from the country), industrial and sectorial policies, macroeconomic and financial policies, social policies (better social outcomes to increase productive capacity) and international support. He pointed out that graduation requires generating income, building human assets and/or reducing economic and environmental vulnerability, and it is not identical to building productive capacity. He elaborated on the three pathways for graduation based on national conditions and policies:

- Pathway I: Rapid economic growth through resource extraction with limited progress in HAI and EVI. He pointed out that this pathway generated income, but with low development of human assets, high vulnerability and weak development governance.
- Pathway II: Economic specialization and channeling investment in human assets. This pathway is economic specialization based on resources and services such as tourism, not wide spread diversification. Though income is channeled to building human assets, vulnerability remains high. Good development governance matters and countries also need to develop policies that harness external financing.
- Pathway III: Investment in human assets and structural transformation. This pathway is marked by slow structural transformation. Development governance and national ownership play a key role. It also increases agricultural productivity first, then moves to innovative social services delivery.

Mr. Raymond H. Landveld, Economic Affairs Officer, UNCTAD, noted that structural transformation could enable LDCs to accelerate progress towards IPoA targets and the SDGs, if it results from the transfer of productive resources such as labour, capital and land to more productive and higher value-added economic activities. This takes place through two parallel processes: increasing productivity within sectors as a result of technological improvements and shifting productive resources from less productive to more productive sectors and activities. He elaborated on different structural transformations undertaken by Asian and African LDCs in the past 20 years. He contrasted the decline of the primary sector as a share of GDP in Asian countries with the commodity super cycle that induced the growth in African LDCs and Haiti. There are more Asian than African LDCs graduating because the former adopted productivity-oriented measures and a much more diversified economy. African LDCs are still highly dependent on commodity export, leaving them very vulnerable to fluctuations in commodity prices. He mentioned that there is a strong association between the type and pace of structural transformation and progress towards IPoA goals and SDGs. He suggested prioritizing energy access for production, rural transformation, focusing on industry policy through developing sectors with competitive advantages, aligning science, technology and

innovative policies, and shaping macroeconomic policies to support resource mobilization and ensure investment and financing for development. He stressed that LDCs effort in achieving structural transformation needs to be accompanied by additional support measures from the international community including fulfillment of ODA/GNI commitments by development partners.

Mr. Kaven Zahedi, Deputy Executive Secretary for Sustainable Development, UN-ESCAP, stressed that structural transformation is essential to support growth, employment and poverty eradication. In the Asia-Pacific, half of the productivity gains are due to effective structural transformation; however, challenges remain as they transition to higher productivity activities. He noted that the status and pace of structural transformation of LDCs in Asia and the Pacific varies. LDCs need to build economic resilience to shield development gains and accelerate structural transformation; however, LDCs in the Asia-Pacific are struggling to meet the Economic Vulnerability Index. He noted that although many countries have taken the leap from agriculture to service, they are constrained in their attempts to achieve significant structural transformation due to issues such as remoteness, inadequate infrastructure leading to high transaction costs, rigid labor markets and underdeveloped financial markets. He stated that there is a scope for governments to play an active role in supporting the higher value-added activities. Government interventions should focus on enabling an environment for the expansion of productive sectors, facilitation of trade and foreign direct investment, and reduction of inequality. Mr. Zahedi stressed the importance of structural reforms in the economy, and how economic resilience is crucial to ensure sustainable and irreversible graduation. He concluded by reaffirming ESCAP's commitment to work with LDCs to build productive capacity and achieve structural transformation.

National Presentations

H.E. Monowar Ahmed, Additional Secretary & NFP on IPoA, Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance of Bangladesh, shared the country's success story about dynamically transforming the economy and achieving graduation. Bangladesh met all three thresholds for graduation during CDP's triennial review in 2018. In reference to strategies towards structural transformation that Bangladesh has adopted, he emphasized inter alia policy intervention to provide an enabling environment for manufacturing-led export, enhancing skills for boosting productivity, increased participation of women in labor force and massive infrastructure development. He particularly identified challenges and opportunities associated with graduation and supporting measures to minimize risk. Loss of LDC specific preferential treatment, ODA support and technical assistance are among the challenges confronting LDC graduation. However, graduation will also improve credit rating, and the regional and global influence of the country. He also shared the best practices of Bangladesh in sustaining the graduation momentum which includes inter alia internalizing graduation in the national policy framework, setting up a national task force to monitor, guide and coordinate graduation, early impact assessment and the whole of society approach. He emphasized the need to continue DFQF access for a reasonable period of time after graduation, scale up concessional support targeting infrastructure development to expand productive capacity, allow easy and affordable access to knowledge product for graduating and graduated countries, and create a global platform to facilitate the voices of LDCs. He called on the UN system to provide enhanced support to graduating and graduated countries.

Ms. Moh Moh Naing, Director, Foreign Economic Relations Department, Ministry of Planning and Finance of Myanmar, briefed participants that the government has renewed and strengthened partnerships for development in order to achieve the objectives of the IPoA. She shared Myanmar's goals for 2030 which includes achieving sustainable development, inclusive economic growth, building human

capacities, reducing vulnerability and enhancing good governance at all levels. She presented guidelines for achieving these objectives, which inter alia includes national ownership, peace and security and an integrated approach. On structural transformation, she stressed that ODA plays a fundamental role and that the efficient utilization of it is crucial for LDCs. In this regard, Myanmar launched a 12-point economic policy in 2016; created Development Assistance Coordination Unit in 2016 to monitor aid flows and ensure that aid is allocated strategically and systematically. Myanmar also launched Development Assistance Policy (DAP) in 2018. She noted that the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan (MSDP) is aligned with SDGs and various global commitments. Myanmar also enacted an investment law to assure foreign investors in 2017. Moreover, she addressed the challenges and opportunities after Myanmar's graduation from the LDC status, and highlighted Myanmar's vulnerability to environmental shocks and voiced concerns over declining flow of ODA and access to concessional aid resources. She strongly encouraged developed countries to meet the target of 0.15 per cent ODA/GNI to LDCs. She concluded by affirming Myanmar's commitment towards achieving the SDGs and meeting the graduation threshold.

Mr. Leulseged Tadese Abebe, Minister Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Ethiopia to the United Nations, highlighted the country's progress in the implementation of the IPoA. He stated that the government has set eradication of poverty and achieving inclusive and sustainable development as the central objective. Mr. Abebe mentioned that the government has introduced a series of national plans including the National Growth and Transformation Plan 2015-2020, which are aligned with objectives of the IPoA and the SDGs. The government is strengthening cooperation with domestic and external partners to achieve sustainable economic growth. The pillar of Ethiopia's development strategy is to achieve structural transformation. He highlighted the encouraging GDP growth of Ethiopia between 2015 and 2017, registering at 10.9% and 9.5% respectively. He stressed that such sustained economic growth is broad-based. Mr. Abebe also pointed out two particular challenges confronting Ethiopia, namely climate-induced drought and volatility of commodity prices. He shared the successful policies that the Ethiopian government has undertaken, such as public investment in infrastructure including investment in renewable energy; promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization (building industrial parks); and introducing agricultural production safety programme to ensure agricultural productivity. He also referred to financing development projects as the emerging challenge.

Interactive Discussion

During the interactive discussion participants focused on how LDCs can benefit from technology development, and shared challenges associated with graduation and financing infrastructure development in LDCs. A number of participants highlighted security challenges that LDCs are faced with. They stressed that lack of peace and security has hindered the implementation of the IPoA and their progress towards graduation and has affected international support. Participants also discussed how natural disasters, volatility of commodity prices, and health pandemics affect their growth and development. They emphasized the necessity of having specific measures to address their increased vulnerabilities and fragility. Participants also mentioned how lack of adequate infrastructure has been a critical challenge for LDCs to expand their productive capacities. It has been difficult for LDCs to mobilize and access resources such as energy to have a meaningful impact on infrastructure development. Participants stressed the need for funding from international financial institutions to help them expand their productive capacities. LDCs have little room to explore innovative financing. Participants also shared best practices and successful policy options for building productive capacity and achieving sustainable graduation.

Mr. Talal Aljimali of Yemen mentioned that productive capacity is an essential force to drive sustainable economic growth and to overcome structural impediments. Yemen will be preparing a national strategy for the development of agriculture, mining, fishery, and tourism, among other areas, and the IPoA is in the forefront of national plans to restore capacity. Mr. Aljimali emphasized that sustainable development is directly linked to peace and security, and LDCs in conflict and post-conflict situations need to address peace and security in an integrated manner. He stated that international support, such as ODA and trade facilitation, is limited due to conflicts in Yemen.

Mr. M. Hassan Soroosh Y. of Afghanistan shared that Afghanistan adopted a new export promotion strategy to promote economic specialization with a priority on sectors that Afghanistan has comparative advantages in. In the meantime, as a landlocked country, Afghanistan is trying to serve as a “land bridge” to share the benefits of regional economic cooperation under a regional cooperation agenda. He expressed the concern over security challenges that Afghanistan is facing as a post conflict country and stressed the importance of taking a multi-stakeholder approach and leverage more resources for graduation. He also mentioned the challenge of ensuring aid effectiveness to support graduation. He underscored the need of repositioning the UN development system to bring synergies among UN programmes in Afghanistan.

Mr. Michael Wamai of Uganda expressed concerns about the digitalization of trade and noted that technology has to be inclusive. He highlighted that countries must join the process, and an inclusive space needs to be created to implement digitalization of trade. He enquired about: how LDCs would seek policy remedies that would apply to graduated countries; how to make technology inclusive in the process of digitalization; how LDCs can take advantage of digitalization and benefit from dividends of digitalization of trade with all the restrictions they face; and how to harmonize the narrative not only to advance graduation but also to sustain graduation for sustainable development of LDCs.

Mr. El Tahir Suliman Aidam of Sudan underscored the importance of agriculture for building productive capacity and achieving structural transformation in Sudan. He noted that transformation of agriculture will accelerate the implementation of the SDGs, and Sudan needs enhanced global partnership to meet the targets of the IPoA. He stressed that Sudan is suffering from shortage of funds as a result of protracted economic sanctions, and more assistance from the international financial institutions is needed. In the meantime, Sudan is facing the challenge of rapid population growth, climate-induced natural disasters such as droughts and desertification and associated displacement of people. He mentioned that transition of aids from humanitarian assistance to recovery and economic development is underway, and encouraged investment from the private sector.

Ms. Abie Elizabeth Kamara of Sierra Leone emphasized that Sierra Leone is facing a broad range of development challenges such as volatility of commodity prices, natural disasters, and health pandemic like Ebola. She highlighted that lack of adequate infrastructure and access to energy hinders the transformation agenda, making the economy uncompetitive. She remarked that for LDCs that are in fragile situation like Sierra Leone, specific measures need to be put in place which should go beyond ensuring structural transformation and address fragility. Ms. Kamara suggested convening a meeting among African LDCs to share best practices of graduated African countries.

Mr. Lamin Dampha of Gambia shared concerns over the emerging trade war due to domestic policies of a certain country, which will have serious impact on LDCs including those that are on the path of

graduation. He also stressed that these restrictive trade policies will aggravate the economic challenge that LDCs are facing.

UNCTAD stated that LDCs should not view graduation as a one-off activity but rather a point in a continuum, and a process with momentum. LDCs should adopt a long-term view towards graduation. UNCTAD expressed the view that international support measures should continue after graduation. At the same time, ODA commitment needs to be fulfilled. UNCTAD referred to a technical assistance programme undertaken in Afghanistan to develop an automated system for customs data, and capacity building activities to end illicit financial flows.

UNIDO shared the view that synergies should be forged among UN programmes at the national level to ensure the UN delivering as one. UNDAF should prioritize structural transformation, and the National Focal Points should actively engage in the preparation of UNDAF to ensure national priorities are reflected. UNIDO stressed that the best way to transfer technology is through industrialization. The issue of digital divide is not between LDCs and other countries that have over 70% of digital footprint, but between countries that monopolize the technology and the rest. LDCs are advised to start working with available technologies such as internet, telephone and other basic technologies, and building infrastructure for technology development. LDCs should learn from countries that successfully circumvent the technology challenges, and prioritize infrastructure for productive purposes.

Bangladesh responded to the question by proposing the initiation of a dialogue process to discuss how LDCs can benefit from each other's experiences and the international support after graduation. A pilot project is underway in collaboration with CDP to devise innovative support measures for LDCs during and after graduation.

CDP noted that international support is essential for LDCs, and acknowledged the issue of support after graduation. CDP emphasized that international support plays a role in the design and implementation of the smooth transition strategy of LDCs. CDP encouraged LDCs to negotiate additional support measures that will continue after graduation with development partners including: trade support measures and strategies to deal with the DFQF. CDP survey suggested that graduation will not necessarily affect ODA flows to LDCs. The smooth transition strategy is country specific, depending on the situation of each country. UN is ready to provide enhanced support to graduating and graduated countries, for example on structural transformation which touches upon LDCs and non-LDCs.

Session II: Monitoring the implementation of the IPoA and SDGs: A focus on data challenges

Ms. Eunice Kamwendo, Strategic Advisor, UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa, New York, moderated the session. She highlighted common constraint of LDCs in monitoring the implementation of the IPoA and SDGs and the importance of tailored support for capacity building, including for statistics.

Ms. El Iza Mohamedou, Deputy Manager, Paris 21 Secretariat, Statistics and Data Directorate, OECD, shared preliminary findings about the monitoring and evaluation of the IPoA. She provided an overview of the IPoA and elaborated on the challenges of implementing the IPoA. She noted that in comparison to the SDGs there is a lack of clear indicators which makes it difficult to measure certain objectives such as human capacity. Most of the priority areas of the IPoA are not numerical. She noted that there should

be a way to measure actions outlined in the IPoA. There was an emphasis on the need for country-led follow ups to be sustainable in the long run. In terms of reporting, she noted that there have been four reports about the implementation of the IPoA. She stressed the need to harmonize indicators in the reports as changing indicators makes it difficult to observe trends. She recommended the development of a suite of consistent headline indicators for selected action priority areas, regular reporting on those indicators, reduction in overall gaps and duplication with other frameworks, and engagement with a country's national statistical system. In terms of development aid, there has been little financial support for statistics and money is allocated based on those with the most need. She further recommended that countries should look into capacity development with an emphasis on soft and technical skills. She stressed that dealing with data challenges needs to be continuous.

Mr. Ronald Jansen, Assistant Director, Data Innovation and Capacity Branch, Statistics Division, DESA, discussed strengthening statistical capacity in LDCs. He shared the four main functions of the Statistics Division. He mentioned the restructuring of the UN Statistics Division that resulted in the inclusion of the economic and social pillars, environmental statistics, and the addition of a new division on data innovation and capacity development. He shared that there are 244 global indicator frameworks that the national offices need to collect data on; despite this national indicators take precedence. He gave an overview of the data flow in SDG reporting and stressed the importance of partnerships. The role of the statistical office has evolved in a way that it is able to combine information from all the ministries to feed into the indicator framework. The Cape Town Global Action Plan elaborates on what the UN Statistical Commission recommends in terms of data capacity and it includes 6 strategic areas. He highlighted some of the work that the Statistical Division does such as the 10th Tranche Development Account Programme on Statistics and Data (DA10) which strengthens statistical capacity by adapting to the needs of the country. There are 10 agencies providing statistical capacity to developing countries. Their work covers 3 pillars: environmental, social demographic, and economic. He also mentioned the UNSD-DFID project that monitors the SDGs through several activities such as technical assistance. He then moved on to state that new technologies and new data sources can be used in LDCs. He elaborated on “big data” sources by mentioning automatically generated data such as mobile phone data and social media data that would be useful to LDCs. The Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics is working to inform others that with big data and quality frameworks there can be statistics that are up to date. He highlighted two upcoming events: the World Data Forum in October 2018 and big data conference in April 2019.

Mr. Michael Landau, Chairman and CEO, MPWR DATA and CTI Africa, shared his organizations work on filling data gaps in the SDG indicator framework. The assessment of the data gaps was completed by Blockchain for Sustainable Development (B4SD). He noted that current data gaps exist because of a lack of baseline data on SDG indicators, clear established methodological standards for SDG indicators, and relevant disaggregation. Therefore, LDCs face challenges in trying to implement policies and procedures for SDG impact, and holistic solutions are needed. He mentioned CTI Africa's project on smart homes where they developed a comprehensive solution that allowed homes to have clean power. Families that were provided with the homes were asked to provide data through a series of questions that touched on 200 data points to assess the skillsets of the people. He stressed that the data was being collected in order to implement changes that could hopefully benefit the people. He further noted that there was no standardized methodology to measure the data and that because of the way the data was collected, they were able to do a comprehensive analysis to assess the needs of the people.

National Presentations

Mr. Mamadou Dia, Head of the Division for Social Policy and Sustainable Development, Ministry of Economy, Finance and Planning of Senegal, presented on statistical data for the monitoring of SDGs and IPoA. He discussed the data context and challenges as well as the process and perspectives. He shared that Senegal incorporated the SDGs into the Emergent Plan for Senegal (PSE). All the SDGs fit into the three pillars of the PSE and he highlighted that 77% of the SDG objectives were already met. He informed the participants of the process for integrating the SDG indicators and IPoA into the national development strategy. There was an evaluation of needs, dialogues with different sectors about the indicators, and an update of the National Strategy for Statistical Development. He also stressed that actors have to undertake capacity building and evaluate sources of information. In terms of challenges, the country is trying to expand the field of work, and have new indicators that take into account the present system of production and collection of statistical data. He stressed the need to harmonize terminology and approaches to produce global data that are valid universally. He elaborated that it is not just about producing data, but also analyzing and measuring it. He also noted the disparity of information for some of the indicators such as governance and environment. In order to obtain information, they commissioned a study to survey the population and obtain the necessary data to effectively implement the SDGs and the IPoA. There are approximately 68 surveys that will allow them to better assess what is happening in the country.

Mr. Khomraj Koirala, Joint Secretary and National Focal Point of LDCs and LLDCs, National Planning Commission of Nepal shared the data challenges the country faced in monitoring the implementation of the IPoA and the SDGs. He presented an overview of the situation in the country and mentioned that they were in a trade deficit. In terms of graduation from the LDC category, he noted that Nepal met the criteria for graduation for the second time based on EVI and HAI; however their GNI was low. He stressed that Nepal is committed to graduating from the LDC category and implementing the SDGs, but they realize that the availability of reliable and timely data is crucial for them to achieve their goals. Despite their eligibility for graduation at the 2018 Triennial Review, Nepal asked for a postponement due to concerns about the sustainability of their development progress. The CDP deferred its decision on Nepal's graduation for the 2021 triennial review. He shared that Nepal's strategy for incorporating the SDGs was based on alignment, adaptation, and adoption of the goals into their existing development plans. Monitoring and evaluation of the SDGs would occur through identification, instruments, investment, and institutions. He noted that Nepal has been focusing on institutional reengineering in order to implement the SDGs. He mentioned the SDGs status and roadmap at the local and global level. The financing strategy for SDG data management has focused on diverse sources of financing. He highlighted the percentage of the government budget devoted to each SDG up until 2020/21. A number of initiatives have been started in terms of data management such as the creation of a national data profile system. In terms of challenges, Mr. Koirala noted that there has been limited data availability and among the 380 SDGs indicators only 15% are available publicly. He further stressed that there is no one size fits all solution; in order to move forward inter alia they need country specific measures, policy coherence, and capacity development at provincial and local levels.

Mr. M. Hassan Soroosh Y., Director General for Economic Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, discussed the coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the IPoA and the SDGs in the country. He shared Afghanistan's development framework that included four components: Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF), Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework (SMAF), Afghanistan Sustainable Development Goals (A-SDGs), and National Priority Programs (NPPs). He noted several high-level institutional arrangements that support the

development framework: the Inter-ministerial Development Councils, Council of Ministers, Executive Committee on SDGs, and several coordination mechanisms. He shared the two levels of integration and synergy for SDGs and the IPoA. The first level focuses on integration of SDGs into the ANPDF and the NPPs. The second level focuses on integration of IPoA, Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA), and South-South Cooperation (SSC) into the work of the Executive Committee on SDGs (ECSDGs). He went on to discuss the phases of the implementation of the SDGs. He highlighted that Afghanistan presented its first VNR at the HLPF in 2017. During the first VNR they shared a picture of the nationalization process as well as the challenges faced and areas of improvement. Several major challenges were identified under the VNR in the areas of technical and professional capacity, financing for SDGs implementation, security issues, technologies and skills, and data. In terms of data, he noted that the country has had challenges in getting accurate data due to a lack of technical capacity and inadequate resources. He highlighted that 86% of the data was available for the SDGs indicators. While he stressed that they had significantly improved their statistical capacity over the years, they were still ranked low by the World Bank Statistical Capacity Indicator. He provided a number of key recommendations for his country to improve national capacity to monitor the implementation of the A-SDGs, IPoA, ANPDF, and NPPs such as pursuing a more systematic approach, and improvement of coordination and synergy at national and international levels. He further recommended placing greater focus on improving technical capacity, providing greater support to dedicated databases for SDGs, and mainstreaming of South-South Cooperation.

Interactive Discussion

During the interactive discussion, it was stressed that in terms of data a number of issues should be considered such as impartiality, confidentiality, cost effectiveness, and country coverage. **Mali** emphasized the need for support from partners in building statistical capacity. **Cambodia** stressed that graduation efforts should be integrated in the national planning process. **DESA** noted that technology can be used at the grass roots level, and UN agencies at the country level can help with capacity building. **MPWR Data and CTI Africa** highlighted that the program the company designed becomes self-sufficient once it is operational.

Sudan stressed the importance of statistics and recommended that there should be a focus on capacity building. **Uganda** asserted that data is going to be the oil of the country and emphasized that how one treats and manages data will determine a development path. **Senegal** noted that it would be useful for countries to work together on common surveys, and emphasized experience sharing among the National Focal Points. **DESA** emphasized that in reporting on SDGs there should be some storytelling and capacity development is much needed. In terms of data privacy DESA mentioned that the statistical office abides by statistical laws for privacy protection, and data and privacy protection should be well coordinated. **MPWR Data and CTI Africa** affirmed the company's belief that people should own their own data. It expressed that the company served as custodians of people's data. MPWR Data and CTI Africa explained that the company was working on compensating people for the data, and that a percentage of the revenue would go towards this goal.

Session III: Graduation from LDC status and enhanced support measures for graduating and graduated LDCs

The moderator, **Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox, Director, OHRLLS** stressed that graduation from the LDC category is part of the long term social and economic development goals of LDCs. She noted that 12 LDCs are at different stages of graduation and commended the graduation progress. She stressed that each

country's graduation path is unique, and there is opportunity for LDCs to learn from one another. She highlighted a graduation booklet prepared by OHRLLS that provides an overview on the graduation process. She noted that while none of the graduated countries has backtracked in their development so far, there have been mixed sentiments towards graduation: some are eager to graduate while others are hesitant due to fears over potential loss of international support. She stressed the importance of building productive capacity and overcoming structural impediments and environmental vulnerabilities of LDCs. Meanwhile, smooth transition strategies play a crucial role in ensuring further progress along the development trajectory of LDCs, and the development partners should step up efforts to facilitate the graduation of LDCs and their smooth transition. There is a need to provide enhanced support to graduating and graduated LDCs. She mentioned that OHRLLS in collaboration with key partners has set up an Inter-agency Task Force on UN Support for Graduation to provide strengthened and coordinated UN system-wide support to graduating LDCs. She asked the participants to provide recommendations on incentives and support measures that would be beneficial to LDCs.

Mr. Matthias Bruckner, Senior Economic Affairs Officer, CDP Secretariat, UNDESA talked about graduating from LDC status and enhanced support measures for graduating and graduated LDCs. He noted that the LDC criterion for graduation is based on three indicators: GNI per capita, Human Assets Index (HAI) and Economic Vulnerability Index (EVI). He introduced the LDC graduation eligibility, and the process leading to the recommendation for graduation by CDP. He updated participants on the results of the CDP triennial review in 2018 and mentioned that out of the 12 countries that met the criteria for graduation, Angola and Vanuatu are graduating, and Bangladesh, Lao PDR, and Myanmar met the graduation threshold for the first time. He further illustrated the number of countries meeting the criteria for graduation over time. Although the latest Triennial Review saw the largest number of eligible countries for graduation, Mr. Bruckner noted that they were still far below IPoA targets. He stated that some countries are embracing graduation, but there are others that are concerned about the graduation process, especially in regards to losing access to LDC-specific support. In terms of support there are opportunities to improve assistance packages for graduating and recently graduated countries such as advisory services. He highlighted the platform, Gradjet created by DESA that would allow countries to monitor their graduation process.

Ms. Susanna Wolf, Senior Programme Officer, Deputy to the Chief, OHRLLS, shared smooth transition measures and graduation support for LDCs. She illustrated that graduation was a step in the process for economic growth. In terms of moving towards graduation, after a country is recommended for graduation they are advised to establish a consultative mechanism to facilitate the process. She informed the participants of the smooth transition preparations such as LDC specific support, and impact assessments. She also reminded the participants that countries were recommended to prepare their smooth transition strategies early. She informed the participants although some measures would end after graduation, there was still other post-graduation general support available such as official development assistance. She also illustrated the development progress of graduated countries and how their economic vulnerability index decreased over time, but most were still above the graduation threshold. There is the need for additional support for graduation that addresses new challenges countries face with respect to accessing finance and markets. Such additional support measures should also be in line with priorities of the graduated country. She briefed participants on proposed new measures that would help the countries move towards a smooth transition and stressed the need to better address debt sustainability and capacity building within the countries.

National Presentations

Ms. Dechen Pelmo, Senior Planning Officer, GINH Commission of Bhutan, presented on achieving sustainable graduation from the LDC category. She shared that Bhutan reached the graduation threshold for the second time at the Triennial Review in March 2018 based on GNI per capita and HAI, but it fell short on EVI. She highlighted the country's achievements in having sustained growth over 3 decades, reduction in poverty, domestic resource mobilization, and a steady increase in trade exports. Despite the achievements, she noted some challenges and constraints, such as high vulnerability due to single sector dependence, disparities at aggregate levels, underdeveloped domestic markets, narrow range of exports, and high costs. She also discussed the opportunities for growth including a successful transition to a democratic form of governance. Bhutan's ease of doing business rank increased from 148th in 2013 to 75th in 2017, and it is ranked 26th on the Transparency International Corruption Index. In terms of graduation, despite being eligible for graduation Bhutan asked to delay graduation until the end of their 12th Five Year Plan (2018-2023). She stressed that the country wanted to address last mile challenges in all sectors and focus on resilience through economic diversification in order to have a sustainable graduation. She also reiterated that it was important for development partners to support graduating countries with concrete measures to facilitate their smooth transition. She concluded by giving some recommendations of enhanced support measures that would be beneficial for graduating countries. She mentioned targeted support measures that suits a country's needs, contextually appropriate technology measures, support in developing productive capacity, and assistance in development of domestic capital market.

Mr. Anouparb Vongnorkeo, Director General, Department of International Organization, MOFA of LAO PDR, gave a statement on the country's progress towards graduation and preparations for a smooth transition. He noted that many countries have experienced steady economic, but despite the progress poverty remains widespread especially in LDCs. He further stressed that the international community should redouble their efforts towards poverty eradication and implementation of the IPoA and the 2030 Agenda. The country initiated a five-year socio-economic plan to ensure effective implementation of the IPoA. He further highlighted that the country met the graduation threshold for the first time based on GNI per capita and HAI. The milestone achievement fueled the government to undertake further national reforms in order to ensure that the country would meet the graduation criteria again at the next Triennial Review in 2021. He provided some recommendations on what kinds of support graduating and graduated countries need. He suggested advisory services from the UN and partners in order to ensure that countries overcome their post-graduation challenges. He further recommended that the specific needs of the countries be taken into account in order to ensure a smooth transition.

Interactive Discussion

During the interactive discussion **Ms. Schroderus-Fox** pointed out that "uncertainty" expressed by Member States over graduation could be mitigated by providing more in-depth information. **Timor-Leste** expressed gratitude for the deferral of the country's graduation for the next triennial review. Deferral was requested because graduation should not be separate from domestic development. Timor-Leste affirmed the country's commitment to graduation and emphasized that LDCs should graduate in a sustainable way. **Bangladesh** recommended that the participants begin thinking about what happens after the end of the IPoA in 2020. Bangladesh suggested that the Task Force consider adding three member states: a graduated country, a country on the verge of graduating, and a county that is just starting the process. As most countries face the challenge in trying to overcome EVI, it recommended a series of meetings be conducted to address this issue, and Bangladesh is willing to provide support in this regard. While acknowledging different experiences between Asian and African LDCs, it was pointed out that similarities

could be helpful for all, and the UN country offices should provide tailored support to assist countries to graduate.

Solomon Islands affirmed the country's commitment to graduation and noted that it was recommended for graduation for the second time. Solomon Islands mentioned that the country needed more time to assess data from the CDP report. It was highlighted that the IPoA, SDGs, and SAMOA Pathway were all incorporated into the country's 20-year national development strategy. It was noted that discussions during the meeting contributed to mitigating uncertainties over graduation. **Nepal** mentioned that although the country met the criteria for graduation for the second time, EVI was deteriorating in comparison to previous reviews due to an earthquake in 2015 and other challenges. **Uganda** asked about measures to prevent graduated countries from relapse. **Guinea** sought information about their graduation status, and highlighted improvement of the country's economic performance. **Democratic Republic of Congo** shared its experience in addressing challenges such as conflicts and illicit exploitation of resources and emphasized the importance of peer learning.

Ms. Schroderus-Fox also briefed the meeting about the operationalization of the Technology Bank and stressed its role in helping LDCs moving towards graduation and beyond. She updated participants about the initial programmes on STI needs assessment and digital access review undertaken by the Technology Bank. She stressed the necessity of resource mobilization for the Technology Bank and expressed appreciation to countries that have provided financial support.

CDP pointed out that although standard period for graduation was 3 years after meeting graduation thresholds for the second time at the CDP triennial review, reasonable request for a deferral could be made. **OHRLLS** mentioned that the issues raised at the meeting would feed into the work of the Inter-agency Task Force on how to provide better support measures for graduating and graduated countries. OHRLLS also expressed the hope that more African countries would meet the graduation thresholds, and that all LDC specific support outlined in the IPoA be fully implemented. LDCs were encouraged to maintain active engagement with OHRLLS. Participants were also informed that Bangladesh's tenure as Chair of the LDC group would end in September, and the need for a strong leadership of the group was stressed.

Session IV: Interactive discussion on the role of NFPs to enhance implementation of the IPoA

The moderator, **Mr. Sandagdorj Erdenebileg, Chief, OHRLLS**, highlighted the important role that national focal points play. While acknowledging various challenges facing LDCs, from access to information to overburdening of reporting tasks, he highlighted the importance of national ownership in the implementation of the IPoA and the 2030 Agenda. In response to suggestions put forward by the National Focal Points at last year's meeting, he reviewed actions undertaken by OHRLLS including regular updates on programme activities and enhanced engagement with Member States at the senior level. He informed the participants of a recently adopted UN resolution on repositioning of the UN development system. He mentioned that efforts on the reform to the RC system would aim at greater efficiency in coordination and would be based on the specific needs and background of each country. He further informed participants of the Fifth UN Conference on LDCs to be included in the resolution of the General Assembly later this year.

During the interactive discussion participants shared their experiences and provided recommendations for moving forward. **Malawi** shared that the country developed a National Development Strategy (2017-2022) that incorporated the SDGs, IPoA, and Agenda 2063. **Afghanistan** stressed the need to improve communication and suggested that an online tool could be a cost effective way to help them better prepare for the annual meeting. He further recommended greater collaboration at the regional level and involving UN Country Teams. **Democratic Republic of the Congo** has adopted national development strategies to evaluate the progress of different sectors with a priority on building productive capacity. **Timor-Leste** pointed out that there is a need for strong engagements at different levels between LDCs and donors to leverage development for graduation. Timor-Leste suggested that the UN development reform, presented an opportunity to develop guidelines reflecting mandates approved by the QCPR resolution for implementation at the country level. Such guidelines would serve as a stepping stone for NFPs to enhance coordination with the UNCT on the ground, and help with reporting, monitoring and follow up by the governments. The importance of strong leadership of the UN and better coordination at the country level were stressed. **The Gambia** mentioned that it has designed a national development plan. It is facing a unique challenge of high public debt, and 50% of the national budget went towards debt servicing. As a result, the country is more vulnerable to external shocks. **Comoros** suggested more frequent updates to LDCs and the organisation of meetings in an LDC to enhance peer learning.

Mr. Erdenebileg commented on the importance of synergy at the national level. He mentioned that the UN development system needs to better coordinate with country needs, which was one of the main components of the UN development reform. He noted that the main objective of the Inter-agency Task Force on UN Support for Graduation is to provide coordinated support to LDCs. He further stressed the need for early planning for post-IPoA and more exchanges at the national level.

Concluding Remarks

Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, remarked that the national focal points have a critical role of bridge building. She emphasized that sharing of best practices contributes to better decision making to dynamically transform the economies of LDCs. She called for the strengthening of partnerships, concrete actions by development partners, and sound national frameworks. She stressed that SDGs should be localized and strengthening productive capacity in LDCs is critical. She noted that 10 LDCs presented their VNRs, and the HLPF is a platform to exchange best practices. The USG further stressed synergies between the IPoA and the 2030 Agenda. LDCs are most at risk of being left behind. Therefore, LDCs must be at the heart of the 2030 Agenda. She concluded by emphasizing that efforts need to be redoubled to turn objectives into actions. She called for concerted efforts to prepare for the next global conference on LDCs scheduled to take place in 2021.



MEETING OF THE NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS OF THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ISTANBUL PROGRAMME OF ACTION (IPOA)

CONFERENCE ROOMS 11 AND 6 / UN HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK / 12 – 13 JULY 2018

Programme

12 July (Thursday) Conference Room 11

08:50-09:30	Registration
09:30-10:00	<p>Opening Welcome Remarks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS • Mr. Elliot Harris, Assistant Secretary-General, Chief Economist, DESA • H.E. Mr. Masud Bin Momen, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN, and Chair of the LDC group • H.E. Ms. May-Elin Stener, Deputy Permanent Representative of Norway to the UN
10:00-12:15	<p>SESSION I: Achieving structural transformation and economic growth in LDCs: challenges and opportunities</p> <p>(This session will address some key structural impediments of LDCs in promoting higher-value-added sectors for economic diversification, and identify challenges as well as a range of effective policy options to accelerate implementation of the IPoA)</p> <p>Moderator: Mr. Bartholomew Armah, Chief, Renewal of Planning, Macroeconomic Policy Division of UNECA</p> <p>Keynote Presentations (10 minutes each):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Paul Maseli, Director, NY Office, UNIDO • Mr. Matthias Bruckner, Senior Economic Affairs Officer, CDP Secretariat, DESA • Mr. Raymond H. Landveld, Economic Affairs Officer, UNCTAD New York Office

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Kaven Zahedi, Deputy Executive Secretary for Sustainable Development, ESCAP <p>National presentations on achieving structural transformation through building productive capacity (7 minutes each)</p> <p>Interactive discussion</p>
12:15-12:30	Break
12:30-13:30	<p>Launch of report entitled “Broadband for national development in four LDCs: Cambodia, Rwanda, Senegal and Vanuatu” in collaboration with the Broadband Commission</p> <p>Moderator: Mr. Amir Dossal, the Commissioner of Broadband Commission; President and Chief Executive Officer of the Global Partnerships Forum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation by Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS (UN-OHRLLS), Commissioner of the Broadband Commission • Remarks by H.E. Mr. Odo Tevi, Permanent Representative of Vanuatu to the UN • Remarks by Ms. Ursula Wynhoven, ITU Representative to the UN, New York Office • Remarks by the representative of the Broadband Commissioner: Ms. Elizabeth Rojas Levi, Senior Director, Public Affairs & Government Relations, Americas, Nokia Corporation <p>Key discussant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Vanessa Gray, Head, Least Developed Countries, Small Island Developing States & Emergency Telecommunications Division Telecommunication Development Bureau, ITU • Mr. Ethan Lucarelli, Director, Regulatory and Public Policy at Inmarsat, on behalf of the Broadband Commissioner, Mr. Rupert Pearce <p>Interactive discussion</p>
13:30-15:00	Lunch Break
15:00-17:30	<p>SESSION II: Monitoring the implementation of the IPoA and SDGs: A focus on data challenges</p> <p>(This session will address statistical constraint of LDCs in monitoring the IPoA and SDGs, and discuss tailored support for capacity building.)</p> <p>Moderator: Ms. Eunice Kamwendo, Strategic Advisor, UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa, New York</p> <p>Keynote Presentations (10 minutes each):</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. El Iza Mohamedou, Deputy Manager, PARIS21 Secretariat, Statistics and Data Directorate, OECD • Mr. Ronald Jansen, Assistant Director, Data Innovation and Capacity Branch, Statistics Division, DESA • Mr. Michael Landau, Chairman and CEO, MPWR DATA • National Presentations (7 minutes each) <p>Interactive discussion</p>
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13 July (Friday) Conference Room 6

10:00-12:00	<p>Session III: Graduation from LDC status and enhanced support measures for graduating and graduated LDCs</p> <p>(This session will take stock of progress concerning graduation from the LDC category and exchange views on enhanced support to graduating and graduated LDCs for sustainable graduation.)</p> <p>Moderator: Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox, Director, OHRLLS</p> <p>Presentations (10 minutes each):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Matthias Bruckner, Senior Economic Affairs Officer of CDP • Ms. Susanna Wolf, Senior Programme Officer, Deputy to the Chief, OHRLLS <p>National presentations (7 minutes each)</p> <p>Interactive discussion</p>
12:00-12.45	<p>Session IV: Interactive discussion on the role of NFPs to enhance implementation of the IPoA</p> <p>(This session will build on the discussions at the NFP meeting in 2017, where several proposals on strengthening the role of NFPs were made.)</p> <p>Moderator: Mr. Sandagdorj Erdenebileg, Chief, LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, OHRLLS</p> <p>Interactive discussion</p>
12.45-13:00	<p>Closing</p> <p>Concluding remarks: Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS (UN-OHRLLS)</p>