

Summary Report
LDC Ministerial Meeting
17 September 2020, 9am - 1pm

Panel

The Director of the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Land Locked Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States welcomed the participants to the Annual Ministerial Meeting of LDCs 2020. She shared that this Ministerial Meeting is taking place in an extraordinary situation. Despite our geographical remoteness by thousands of miles, technology has afforded us to meet virtually in a single platform. She then invited His Excellency Mr. Eisenhower Mkaka M.P., Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Malawi and the Chair of the Global Coordination Bureau of LDCs to Chair this Meeting.

The Chair of the Global Coordination Bureau of LDCs stated that the progress made by LDCs on the implementation of IPoA and the 2030 Agenda has been uneven and off track. The insufficient and uneven progress has been further exacerbated by the COVID 19 pandemic. The Chair reaffirmed LDCs commitment to multilateralism and sustainable development and reiterated the unique development challenges of the LDCs. He recalled the group's statement calling for a global stimulus package and highlighted the LDCs' hurdles and asks to address and overcome COVID 19. He called for the pandemic to be addressed in a holistic approach to building back better. The Chair also called for extension of the World Bank, IMF and G-20 debt moratorium and ultimate consideration of debt cancellation for LDCs. The Chair reiterated LDC's appreciation to the State of Qatar for agreeing to host the conference and announced the new dates for the Fifth UN Conference for LDCs, 23-27 January 2022, and the preparatory Committees from May 24-28 and July 26-30, 2021.

The President of the General Assembly acknowledged that the Covid-19 pandemic has compounded the preexisting conditions and challenges of LDCs, and called on the international community to extend its full support to LDCs to tackle the pandemic – both the health impacts and the socio-economic response, including through access to essential medicines, health care facilities and universal access to vaccines to tackle this pandemic. On the recovery front, he called on the need to build resilience against future shocks, employing the SDGs as the blueprint for a more sustainable future. The President stressed that the UN Technology Bank for LDCs has huge potentials in bridging the digital divide, gaining access to technologies and building the innovation capacity of LDCs and underlined the need for capitalizing on the experience gained from the Bank. The President noted that the organizational details and modalities of the Fifth UN Conference on LDC have been finalized and will provide an important opportunity to build a renewed and strengthened global partnership. He reaffirmed the full engagement and support of his Presidency in undertaking necessary preparations for the Fifth UN Conference on LDCs.

The Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations recalled that before COVID-19, collective efforts towards the SDGs were already falling short. The COVID-19 and the projected global economic slowdown risks making matters worse. LDC economies will be hardest hit. Climate change continues to take a disproportionately heavy toll. These strains threaten efforts to achieve

the SDGs and the Istanbul Programme of Action. She called for extra effort and extra support for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The Deputy Secretary-General reaffirmed that the United Nations remains fully committed to assisting the progress of all LDCs and committed to mobilizing the international community to make bold decisions for an effective response and recovery from this development emergency. The UN will continue working with LDCs to forge a new global development architecture and ensure that LDCs receive coherent and effective international support tailored to LDC needs. Together, we will deliver inclusive, resilient and sustainable societies that fulfill the aspirations of the Istanbul Programme of Action, she added.

Permanent Representative of Pakistan and President Economic and Social Council noted that Covid-19, implementation of SDGs and Climate Change are three challenges that the World is facing right now. He reminded the build back better principle in line with the Covid-19 situation and called for global solidarity to continue. He highlighted that the new PoA of LDCs should accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and that priority should be given to resources allocation to LDCs. The President Economic and Social Council shared that the LDCs 2021 triennial review will determine whether to recommend 5 countries for graduation: Bangladesh, LAO PDR, Myanmar, Nepal and Timor-Leste. He reminded that LDCs graduation does not mean that countries will need less support considering the current global challenges.

The Vice President of Partnerships, Communication, and Outreach, IFC stated that IFC's work to support private sector development in the most vulnerable settings is even more essential in the current situation of the pandemic that resulted in a severe economic development downturn. He shared that Covid-19 has pushed up to 100 million people globally into extreme poverty, with most of them in LDCs and suggested to thrive private activities without which social and economic development can't be reached. He informed that the World Bank Group expects to mobilize 160 billion through the end of 2021 as crisis response. He cited the three phases through which the IFC is responding to the pandemic including relief, recover, and rebuild.

The Vice President of Development Finance, World Bank reiterated that the poorest will feel more severely the impact of the pandemic and that International Development Association, a fund for the poor countries, risks moving backward on the SDG paths as millions of children are out of school and many may not return. The WB's urgent priority is the fight against Covid-19 and its impacts in 4 key targeted response, namely: saving life, protecting the poor and the vulnerable; ensuring sustainable growth and job creation; and strengthening institutions; and investment for rebuilding better. As of September 15, 2020, 43 countries out of 73 eligible requested assistance. The President of the World Bank has urged the G20 to extend their financial assistance until the end of 2021.

The State Minister for Foreign Affairs, State of Qatar reaffirmed its commitment to a successful LDC5 conference in 2022. He shared that the State of Qatar is closely coordinating with the Chair of the LDCs group and the OHRLLS and we will spare no effort to provide all the requirements for the success of this conference. He shared that the Fifth United Nations Conference is of great importance to LDCs, especially in light of the changing global landscape and emerging challenges to meet the needs and priorities of LDCs, and contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and its overall goal of leaving no one behind.

He recalled the first preparatory working visit of the delegation of the Office of the High Representative for the LDCs to the State of Qatar in November 2019, during which fruitful and constructive discussions were held with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other stakeholders in the state. He looked forward to the next inter-departmental working visit to which will depend on the current developments. The Minister shared that the COVID-19 exacerbates the existing exceptional challenges and threatens to undermine Development gains achieved by LDCs. The Minister recalled the declaration by His Highness the Emir of the State of Qatar, during the Summit for Climate Action that was held last September, of the State of Qatar's contribution of 100 million US dollars to support the LDCs and SIDS to deal with climate change.

The Under-Secretary-General and High Representative of LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS stated that a global recession is a reality and it can only exacerbate the dire situation in LDCs. Millions of people are unemployed in LDCs. These countries were struggling before the pandemic. They cannot meet basic public health requirements. Exports, remittances and tourism sector have fallen. Without robust and far reaching global and regional responses, the people of the LDCs will be left further behind. LDCs urgently need special and fast action to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Considerable progress has been achieved towards graduation with 12 LDCs at various stages in this process. There is no room for complacency. For many other goals and targets, progress had either stalled or been reversed. Climate change impacts are also accelerating and escalating with more severe tropical storms, droughts and related events around the globe. This is truly challenging the scope to realize the SDG targets in these areas. This will have a serious domino effect on other socio-economic indicators.

The USG highlighted that the Fifth UN Conference on LDCs provides us with great opportunities. Above all it is a powerful platform to build a renewed global compact in favour of the peoples of the LDCs. She called on all stakeholder to work together to ensure its success and reaffirmed the commitment of the UN system to support the LDCs and the conference. The USG also briefed on preparations for the Conference.

Statement

Turkey stated that supporting the LDCs remains a central pillar of Turkish foreign policy and, therefore, has provided 2.5 billion US Dollars of development assistance to the LDCs over the last decade (2009-2019). Turkey also responded to medical equipment requests of 146 countries, many of them are LDCs, and 7 international organizations. In order to increase local production of essential medical technologies in developing countries, the UN Technology Bank for LDCs that Turkey host launched a "Tech Access Partnership (TAP)" in collaboration with the World Health Organization, UNDP and UNCTAD. Turkey also supported the debt service suspension initiative for the poorest countries and a debt service relief to 25 IDA countries and promised to continue its efforts to keep the vulnerable groups, including the LDCs, at the focus of its work, especially in these testing times. It has provided 1 million US Dollars to support the preparatory meetings of LDC5 in Doha and will continue to cooperate with Qatar for a successful Conference.

Timor-Leste has managed to contain the spread of Covid-19 throughout the country registering just 27 confirmed cases without any local transmission. But the restrictions imposed affected the

economic activity and growth, which urged Timor-Leste's government to approve an 'Economic Recovery Plan' to mitigate the impact of the pandemic. The country continues to focus on human capital development, economic diversification, empowering people through access to quality education. Timor-Leste reminded that it relies on oil revenue and that falling oil prices in the global market have massively affected incomes and continues to obstruct the transformation of other development sectors for diversification of the economy in sustainable ways. As Timor-Leste called for CDP to carefully assess the impact of Covid-19 toward the graduation process.

EU stated that the Covid-19 pandemic has reinforced the importance of the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the IPoA. Financial support to tackle the consequences of the pandemic in LDCs from the European Commission accounted for 2.4 billion euros. The EU supports to LDC include ODA of Euro 19.8 billion in 2018, Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFFs) to which the EU lends its support and that 24 LDCs have started to apply, the Everything But Arms (EBA) scheme that grants full duty free and quota free access to the EU Single Market for all products originating from LDCs, an "Aid for Trade" programme which includes a specific commitment to LDCs. It also supports a smooth transition from the LDC status (including by extending its trade preferences to countries for three years after graduation) and mediation efforts, including in ten LDC. It reaffirmed its commitment to accompany the LDCs and look forward to engaging in the preparations of the Fifth Programme of Action for LDCs in the coming year.

Denmark noted that Covid-19 is a challenge but also an opportunity to work for the future, which is why it is working to make sure that we build back better and greener. Denmark explained that, as we are not on track to meet the Paris climate target and SDGs, it supports and contributes to the financing of LDCs as it plans to finance the poorest countries in the coming years.

Lesotho announced some progress towards graduation that include GNI per capita of \$1,296 above the graduation threshold of \$1,230; the Human Asset Index of 61.6 close to the graduation threshold of 66; and the Economic Vulnerability Index (EVI) of 42 higher than the graduation threshold of 32. However, Progress towards graduation has been hampered by limited financial resources as well as governance related challenges. Furthermore, setbacks such as negative effects of climate change and more recently COVID 19 pandemic have beleaguered any positive gains that may have been realized by Lesotho during the IPoA 2011 – 2020 implementation. It informed that multilateralism and solidarity in the face of these adversities will be its only succor.

Bangladesh highlighted that Covid-19 has impacted all LDCs. They risk of losing decades of socio-economic development. Bangladesh lost export orders of billions of dollars, industries were closed and millions of workers faced the prospect of losing their jobs, agriculture suffered a huge loss. Bangladesh stressed that the country is heavily dependent on migration and remittance and the first victim of this pandemic is the migrant workers and many of them lost their job permanently, stranded in the foreign land with uncertain future and their economic benefits abruptly vanished. Bangladesh cautioned that LDC cannot afford the health crisis to turn into a humanitarian and economic crisis and called against diverting financial and other resources to COVID-19 related activities. Bangladesh also called for a new support mechanism to help the graduating countries continue to enjoy the international support measures after graduation.

Finland acknowledged that the poorest and most disadvantaged are particularly vulnerable in this Covid-19 crisis and has supported the global response to the pandemic by bilateral commitments and via the European Union's Team Europe package. The political and financial support to the United Nations is particularly important in its global response. Finland is actively engaging the Ministers of Finance in the work for sustainable development through the Coalition of Finance Ministers for Climate Action, currently led by Finland and Chile. It also informed of its support of the UNFPA's and UNICEF's innovation funds. Finland hosts the UN Technology Innovation Lab and the UNOPS S3I sustainable infrastructure investments initiative, which aim to also mobilize Finnish expertise and its companies' innovation resources to generate needs-based solutions in developing countries. It continues to be committed to support and scale up the support targeted towards developing countries' climate effort. Finland has supported the Office of the High Representative for LDCs in developing science-based recommendations for the next LDC Conference.

Ethiopia called for next programme of action to be informed by necessary assessments and measures of progress and identify challenges with the involvement of all key stakeholders. Ethiopia shared that the Africa Regional Review Meeting will be critical in this regard. Ethiopia noted progress towards implementation of IPoA and SDGs include expansion of rural development programs, continued investments in the renewable energy sector, establishment of eco-friendly industrial parks. It also listed major priorities that include building climate resilient economy, preventing and managing disasters, including by implementing productive safety net programs; while serious challenges remain in poverty, youth unemployment, sluggish export sector, shortage of foreign currency, rising public debt and climate change. It called for support of international development partners to face the challenges.

Sudan informed of its efforts towards graduation from the LDC category and challenges in realizing peace and progress towards development. It mentioned the initiation of a three-year macroeconomic policy program that focuses on their commitments towards health, education, social protection, and environmental protection, along with its emphasis on clean energy and rural development. It highlighted that the LDC5 conference provides an opportunity for the international community to share best practices, effective policies and lessons learned and allow for additional international engagement and support within a renewed partnership between development partners and LDCs.

Benin pointed out that it implemented major reforms since 2016 which included a national plan towards reaching the SDGs. It mentioned that living conditions were improved through actions related to the construction of roads, street lighting, education, access to energy and sanitation. It called for support measures to help small businesses and agriculture, while mitigating the impact of the health crisis and strengthening good governance.

Gambia noted that the COVID-19 deeply affected Gambia's trade, access to remittances, ability to create and protect jobs, the productivity of agriculture and food production. It called for global access to financial support, food programmes, debt cancellation and the removal of trade barriers.

Bhutan indicated that its National Development Plan has been re-oriented to meet urgent and immediate needs as all sectors of the economy have been severely impacted by Covid-19. It

expressed concern over its economic vulnerability and fears that the pandemic will further exacerbate this situation. As chair of LDC Group for climate negotiations at the UNFCCC, Bhutan committed to continue to work closely with all member states to ensure that the LDC group continues to speak with one voice. It added its commitment to remaining carbon neutral for all times to come and looks forward to submitting its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) in line with the Paris Agreement. Bhutan confirmed its availability to work with other LDCs and partners in preparation of LDC5 conference.

Afghanistan called for an economic package for LDCs as Covid-19 highlights structural inequalities, exposes vulnerability and threatens the principle of leaving no one behind. It noted that our development partners should strengthen their efforts in assisting most needed countries as terrorism and security concerns continue to pose significant threat and undermine economic and social development. It indicated that the upcoming LDC5 Conference in Doha will be an opportunity to discuss a concrete plan to end the war in Afghanistan.

Lao PDR called for support from development partners, UN system, and International Financial Institutions to assess the overall impacts the pandemic while adopting a holistic approach to building back better in the new normal. Lao PDR mentioned that ODA is crucial for the development of LDCs and therefore, called upon the development partners to mainstream LDC related activities into their work plans.

Myanmar highlighted that significant gaps that persist in IPoA, and declared that a new ten-year plan of action, which will be adopted at the LDC Fifth Ministerial Conference, will be more effective for the implementation of the global agenda and the remaining tasks of IPoA. It informed that it is preparing to submit an IPoA Country report, providing comprehensive information and analysis on recent progress and some gaps that need improvement. Myanmar called for the impact of COVID-19 to be considered in the review of graduation from LDC category.

Sierra Leone shared its challenges on the implementation of IPoA, starting with the Ebola outbreak in 2014, the drop in the prices of its primary exports, and now COVID-19. It underscored the importance of strengthening national health and social protection systems, to help ensure a sustainable recovery from COVID-19, as well as put mechanisms in place for early detection, prevention and response to future outbreaks. It highlighted that the availability and accessibility of vaccines to all and especially for low income countries who are at the tail end of the global supply chain, is critical. Sierra Leone called for an extension of the Debt Service Suspension Initiative and ultimate consideration of debt cancellation for LDCs, as well as the increase of ODA given to the LDCs, a progress in the establishment of the Investment Promotion Regime for LDCs.

Nepal highlighted that LDCs deserve special attention in their efforts to achieve peace, development and prosperity. Reaching furthest behind first demands concerted and collective effort because the decade of action and delivery of SDGs will not be realized if LDCs are left behind. Nepal also cautioned on the sweeping impacts of the pandemic resulting in decline of ODA flow to LDCs. Nepal shared that Covid-19 has wrought its economy to a standstill –impacting industry, employment, trade, revenues, tourism, and remittances and it is likely to constrain Nepal’s economic growth to less than 2.3% during this fiscal year, while vulnerabilities to climate

change and natural disasters further accentuate its development challenges. It reiterated the call for a global stimulus package for the LDCs to be funded and implemented with immediate effect.

Italy outlined that the global crisis will help to build support for the effective realization of the IPoA and set the pace for the Fifth UN Conference on the LDCs to be held in 2022. Italy reaffirmed its willingness to strengthen strategic partnership with the LDCs in order to address all challenges at political, financial and technical levels. Italy will continue to activate all the strategic partnerships, such as those with IDLO, the Roman based Agencies, the new initiatives in health and nutrition, namely the ACT accelerator and the Food Coalition to strengthen the basis of its cooperation to the benefit of every citizen in the world.

Liberia called for the enhanced global support to LDCs across the three dimensions of the SDGs with conscious efforts to build back resilient health systems and stronger economies. It entertained the hope that the 5th United Nations Conference on LDCs will present yet another opportunity for robust and multilateral actions to garner support for LDCs.

Canada highlighted the importance of understanding how the crisis has affected vulnerable populations and gender equality will be critical to informing the development of a new Programme of Action for LDCs, and the next steps to take towards the Sustainable Development Goals and the objectives of the Paris Climate Agreement. As a member of the bureau in preparation for LDC5, it looks forward to forge a new, innovative path that reflects the new reality, and supports a more inclusive and sustainable future. Canada is also pleased to partner with LDCs at the UN's Group of Friends of LDCs, and as part of the Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond initiative, which have been co-convened by Canada's Prime Minister Trudeau, Jamaica's Prime Minister and the UN Secretary General.

Belgium reaffirmed its commitments to focus its development effort on LDCs in Africa. Belgium informed that it increased its humanitarian budget with 22m Euros and has been organizing flights to send emergency humanitarian equipment to countries in need, while adjusting its health programmes in order to support several of its partner countries with a focus on development of resilient, robust and effective public health systems. Belgium expressed that it is working together with its partners from the EU, UN and the IFIs in their efforts to assist LDCs in addressing the longer-term socio-economic consequences of the current crisis.

Cambodia stated that COVID-19 threatens to undermine its consistent economic growth of over 7% per annum in the last decade. It called on developed countries, together with the International Monetary Fund, the UN development system, and the private sector, to ensure that adequate financial support is accorded to LDC economies. It also suggested that countries graduating from the least developed category should be accorded scaled up international assistance to promote development gains.

Portugal declared that among OECD member states, it has the highest share of its bilateral ODA allocated to LDCs and that its main contributions go to multilateral organizations, including regional development banks and the UN. Portugal reaffirmed its commitment to support LDC and partner countries and the UN.

Senegal highlighted that impact of COVID-19 on its socio-economic development and called for solidarity to support the resilience of LDCs and their post-Covid-19 economic recovery plans. Senegal suggested the integration of risk and disaster management into LDCs development policies. It proposed that the Doha Programme of Action should, in addition to the structural transformation of LDC's economies, focus on the productive capacities of societies and the expansion of south-south cooperation for qualitative changes in our countries.

Brazil reported that it has designated food and nutrition as essential services, in order to keep its trade corridors open. It indicated that it has contributed, over the years, to the development of LDCs through the provision of South-South cooperation. Such initiatives have flourished in areas such as agriculture, education, health, capacity building, strengthening of local markets and technical cooperation, in response to and aligned with the development priorities of countries in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean. South-South cooperation as an important cooperation modality aimed at fostering sustainable development through human and institutional capacity-building and at promoting structural changes to the socioeconomic reality of its partners.

Norway affirmed that it will continue to be a strong voice and advocate for debt relief, increased ODA, and trade arrangements to be made more inclusive and sensitive to the needs of the LDCs. It notified that it is increasing the level of development assistance to the LDCs and encouraged others to do the same.

Japan informed that it has been supporting LDCs to overcome the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Japan has implemented swift assistance measures to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to the United Nations humanitarian assistance appeal, it has been providing technical assistance to medical personnel, and has been assisting developing countries, including LDCs, in implementing counter-infection measures and strengthening their healthcare systems. Japan has been actively promoting the universal health coverage (UHC) through the strengthening health care systems around the world. It reaffirmed its commitment to the sustainable development of LDCs and looks forward to actively participating in the process toward the 5th UN conference on LDCs.

Yemen conveyed that partnership with LDCs does not only benefit them but contribute to the progress of humanity as a whole. Fighting against poverty, raising the standard of living of individuals, and providing decent work opportunities for all will inevitably contribute to strengthening international peace and security, blocking the way of terrorist groups and armed militias to exploit the difficult living conditions of youth in recruiting them.

China stated that it is actively implementing the outcomes of the FOCAC Beijing Summit and carrying out practical cooperation with Africa in all fields. Under the WTO framework, it gives zero-tariff treatment to 97 percent of exports from LDCs. China has been the largest export market for LDCs for many years and the largest source of FDI for LDCs. It highlighted its active help to LDCs to expand international financing and its support to the IMF and the World Bank in giving priorities to LDCs. It, furthermore, mentioned its implementation of the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative leading to reaching debt suspension agreement with several countries. China called on the G20 to extend debt service suspension further for LDCs. China committed to work

with the international community on 5th UN conference on LDCs to build consensus, support LDCs in achieving common development to ensure that no one is left behind.

Unite Kingdom affirmed that protecting those most at risk and leaving no one behind is central to the its COVID-19 response. UK will commit \$153 million to provide food relief to over 6 million people and prevent famine in countries hit by conflict and COVID-19. It informed that its 0.7% ODA target is enshrined in law and it donates 0.2% to LDCs.

Uganda called for a global stimulus package including debt cancellation, to help LDCs mitigate the negative impacts of the pandemic. Uganda informed looking forward to actively participating in the preparatory process of the Fifth UN Conference for LDCs including the intergovernmental negotiations of its outcome document.

Permanent Representative of Malawi recommended adoption of the Ministerial Declaration and, seeing no objection, declared its adoption.

Closing Remarks: The Under-Secretary-General and High Representative of LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS thanked all participants and speakers. She expressed appreciation to His Highness the Emir of Qatar and the Foreign Minister of Qatar for accepting to host the LDC-5 and for its full commitment of support to the LDCs. She echoed the sentiment expressed by the Honourable State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Qatar that a new program of action for LDCs for the coming decade will serve as a road map and a solid basis for raising the level of ambition for LDCs. She acknowledged the support of the government of Turkey and other development partners towards the preparatory process leading to LDC5.

The Chair thanked all participants for their presence, appreciated His Highness the Emir of Qatar and the Foreign Minister of Qatar for all their support and for accepting to host the LDC5.