

# UNEP inputs

## I. Introduction

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*The section will briefly introduce the report, highlighting the legislative mandate for the report and its scope.*

## II. An overview of recent socio-economic development in landlocked developing countries including impact of COVID-19 pandemic and building back better

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*Using recent data the section analyses recent developments in the social and economic situation of the LLDCs including progress made by LLDCs on the SDGs. It will highlight the impact of COVID-19 pandemic and recovery efforts and suggest policy recommendations to enhance the implementation of the VPoA and achievement of the SDGs by the LLDCs. The report will also provide an analysis of the impact on gender and youth and identify recommendations.*

### Latin America and the Caribbean

Paraguay was one of the first countries in Latin America to take measures to control the COVID-19 pandemic, implementing strict quarantine between the months of March and July of 2020, achieving a good degree of success to control the spread of the disease. However, later flexibilization of lockdowns resulted in an increase in the number of cases and related deaths that drove the health system to the brink of collapse by the end of 2020 and the first term of 2021. The pandemic also affected the country's economy and despite that the Central Bank of Paraguay reported only a 1% drop in gross domestic product, one of the lowest in the region, some 150 thousand people lost their jobs as a direct consequence of the pandemic.

In the case of Bolivia, the pandemic has had profound impacts, as it hit a country already high impacted by an economic and political crisis. Adopted measures against the pandemic helped to slow down the growing curve of cases in the beginning of the pandemic, however, they later failed to prevent an exponential growth of cases that resulted in a collapsing of the health system. Moreover, the lockdown resulted in loss of job opportunities and incomes. The government later begun to reopen the economy by injecting liquidity into the financial system.<sup>1</sup>

A study published by MedRxiv on April 29, 2020 showed that Bolivia experienced a high case fatality rates due to the COVID-19 as well as high positive test rates. In the region, Bolivia was amongst the countries with the highest case fatality rates. The country was hit by a second wave in January 2021 with more than 2,000 cases per day. Those figures were not experience since the peak of first wave in July-August 2020.<sup>2</sup>

## III. Status of implementation of the priorities of the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA)

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*This section assesses the progress made in the implementation of the VPoA highlighting the major progress and challenges experienced. It will be prepared using inputs submitted by Member States,*

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<sup>1</sup> UNDP [https://www.latinamerica.undp.org/content/rblac/es/home/library/crisis\\_prevention\\_and\\_recovery/covid-19-en-bolivia--en-la-senda-de-la-recuperacion-del-desarrol.html](https://www.latinamerica.undp.org/content/rblac/es/home/library/crisis_prevention_and_recovery/covid-19-en-bolivia--en-la-senda-de-la-recuperacion-del-desarrol.html)

<sup>2</sup> WFP <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000124220/download/>

*This section assesses the progress made in the implementation of the VPoA highlighting the major progress and challenges experienced. It will be prepared using inputs submitted by Member States, UN system organizations and other relevant international organizations and analysis of available relevant statistical data for each priority area. The specific sub sections will include -*

- *Fundamental Transit Policy issues.*
  - *Infrastructure Development and Maintenance*
  - *International Trade and Trade Facilitation*
  - *Regional Integration and cooperation*
  - *Structural economic transformation*
  - *Means of implementation*
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## **ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

In line with VPoA Priority 2 which addresses infrastructure development and maintenance with specific focus on transport infrastructure, UNEP is working to promote sustainable, low-emission transport and to reduce the transport sector's contribution to air pollution and climate change in Mongolia, through a project titled 'Sustainable Low Emissions Transport - Development of Fuel Quality and Vehicle Emission Roadmap for Mongolia'. In collaboration with the Eco-Asia Environmental University, UNEP is supporting the preparation of a national roadmap on the adoption of cleaner fuels and vehicle emission standards and assessing the contribution of the transport sector to emissions and fuel use in Mongolia.

Under the same priority area, in Lao PDR, through a Global Climate Fund Readiness project entitled 'Development of Action Plan for Designing and Implementing Standards and Labelling Programme in Lao PDR (Aug 2019 – Feb 2021)', UNEP works with the Ministry of Energy and Mines to strengthen institutional capacity in designing and implementing Minimum Energy Performance Standards (MEPS) and labelling. The readiness support will develop an implementation plan for MEPS and labelling programme for energy efficient lighting and appliances and establish an enabling environment for transformation of the Energy Efficient lighting and appliance market, including an investment plan for introducing Energy Efficient appliances and supporting implementation of MEPS and labelling in the long term.

In line with Priority 4, which addresses regional integration and cooperation, at the 7th Asia-Pacific Climate Change Adaptation Forum held on 8-12 March 2021, Member States, including the Land-Locked Countries in the Asia-Pacific region, met under the theme "Enabling Resilience for All: The Critical Decade to Scale-up Action," with participants sharing learnings from actions towards climate-resilient development. Forum participants developed a set of recommendations under five enabling conditions, including on:

- Climate governance: the need for a whole-of-society approach to resilience.
- Planning and processes: an emphasis on political will, leadership, and putting people at the center.
- Science and assessment: the need for a bottom-up approach to innovation and solutions in adaptation and strengthening regional and transboundary cooperation.
- Technologies and practice: the need to value capital in all its dimensions; and

- Finance and investment: the need to integrate climate change into development finance and private sector investment.

The Forum held deeper discussions on each enabler through four thematic resilience streams in parallel technical sessions, namely: (i) inclusive resilience; (ii) nature-based resilience; (iii) economic sector resilience; and (iv) communities and local resilience.

In line with VPoA Priority 5 which focuses on structural economic transformation, through the 'Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE) – Phase II', UNEP supports the implementation of the Sustainable Development Vision 2030 of Mongolia. In November 2020, PAGE participated in a UN Workshop on Social, Economic and Environmental Impact of Shocks Induced by COVID-19 in Mongolia, co-hosted by the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in Mongolia in collaboration with the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP).

In Lao PDR, through the Poverty-Environment Action for SDGs (PEA) project, UNEP, in collaboration with its partner UNDP and Investment Promotion Department, Ministry of Planning and Investment (IPD/MPI) aims to strengthen the government's regulatory capacity to coordinate and promote higher-quality investment that contributes to the achieving the SDGs.

In Nepal, through the Poverty-Environment Action for SDGs (PEA) project, UNEP in collaboration with UNDP is supporting a 4-year project "Accelerating Implementation of the SDGs" to accelerate implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the country. To be implemented under the leadership of the National Planning Commission, the project aims to integrate the SDGs into planning, budgeting, monitoring and reporting systems at all levels of government, with a new focus to align finance and investment in poverty, environment and climate objectives. The project will also explore innovative public and private financing available for Nepal to advance the Global Goals.

## **EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA**

### **Priority 5: Structural economic transformation**

Through the project entitled "Supporting countries to implement the Pan-European strategic framework for greening the economy," which covers LLDC countries such as, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, UNEP is supporting a transition to a Green Economy through the development and implementation of Sustainable Consumption and Production policies and practices. This contributes to Priority 5 of Vienna Programme of Action.

## **LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

Paraguay and Bolivia are the only countries in Latin America that belong to the group of 32 Landlocked Developing Countries worldwide. Paraguay, which limits with Bolivia, Argentina and Brazil, has a population of approximately 7.15 million inhabitants, of which about 50% are women, with an economy based on the export of agricultural production (soybeans and derivatives) and beef, as well as hydroelectric energy. The World Bank classifies Paraguay as an upper middle- income economy, and its human development index<sup>3</sup> (0.728) places it 103rd out of 189.

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<sup>3</sup> United Nations Development Programme. Human Development Report 2020.

UNEP, as the world's leading environmental authority, offers its support to strengthen the capacities of Bolivia and Paraguay in environmental matters, in order to improve the quality of life of their population, contributing to the achievement of their National Development Plans objectives and the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Considering UNEP's institutional mandate, this report identifies and describes environmental aspects related to the progress achieved by Bolivia and Paraguay in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action 2014-2024.

### **Priority 1: Fundamental transit policy issues**

- The COVID-19 pandemic affected the transit of people with neighboring countries, and during the months of strict quarantine (March to June 2020), the borders were closed as a measure to reduce the spread of the virus, except for cases of land travel or humanitarian repatriation flights for Paraguayan citizens and residents.
- From the environmental standpoint, one of risks related to the increase in commercial land, river, rail, or air traffic, is the occurrence of spills of dangerous substances that may affect not only the environment but also people's health and well-being. In this regard, Paraguay is governed by MERCOSUR regulations on transportation and transit of dangerous products and the country has also ratified the Basel Convention, so the import and transit of hazardous wastes is prohibited within its territory.
- In 2020, no incidents related to spills of dangerous substances during transportation were reported in Paraguay.
- In Bolivia, UNEP is providing support in eliminating and replacing chemicals of concern from building materials, toys and electronics.
- Bolivia has laws in place within the transit policy area. Bolivia has ratified Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal. The status of Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for certain hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in international trade is "Accession".

### **Priority 2: Infrastructure development and maintenance:**

#### **a) Transport infrastructure**

#### **b) Energy and information and communications technology infrastructure**

- The impacts of the pandemic in the country forced the Government of Paraguay to take not only sanitary measures but also to implement a socioeconomic recovery plan, which has as one of its fundamental axes the generation of employment through the development of public infrastructure such as routes and bridges.
- Data from the Ministry of Public Works and Communications indicate that in 2020, nearly USD 1 billion was invested to build 2,000 kilometers of new asphalt routes, road corridors and bridges generating 85,000 jobs.
- However, the country's infrastructure suffered the impacts of extreme weather conditions associated to climate change, evidencing the necessity to incorporate climate change adaptation and sustainable infrastructure approaches in the different stages of infrastructure development.
- In 2020, historical droughts in the Paraguay river basin affected the Paraguay-Parana waterway<sup>4</sup>, the main transport route for the Paraguayan international commerce, and at the beginning of 2021, at least 10 people died and large damages and losses of roads, bridges and private properties occurred as a consequence of extreme rainstorms.
- Regarding the energy sector, UNEP is assisting the Government of Paraguay to advance baseline and feasibility studies for the implementation of policies to encourage the transition and adoption of electric mobility at the national level. In the case of Bolivia UNEP provides supports to accelerate the transition

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<sup>4</sup><https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-54558777>

to energy-efficient lighting technologies through the development of a national efficient lighting policy and practical innovative interventions that will ensure success of the transition.<sup>5</sup>

- In transport infrastructure, UNEP gives technical assistance in order to support the development of legislative and regulatory frameworks for electric mobility in Bolivia.

### **Priority 3: International trade and trade facilitation:**

#### **a) International trade; and**

#### **b) Trade facilitation**

- International trade has had positive effects on the growth of the Paraguayan economy, but also negative effects from the environmental perspective. Soy and meat are the main export products of the country and deforestation caused by its expansion is one of the main environmental challenges at present. According to the Global Forest Watch Platform of the World Resources Institute, in 2017 Paraguay was among the top 8 countries regarding deforestation rates.
- In this context, international trade is one of the key factors in the increase of deforestation, since the growing global markets demands, and the good prices are very strong incentives. In this scenario, international cooperation has played an important role to advocate and implement measures to reduce the impact of commodities production on forests and biodiversity. In Paraguay, UNEP and associated agencies and organizations are advancing initiatives to promote deforestation-free meat and soybean production involving all key supply chain stakeholders.
- Also, through the UNEP Finance Initiative (UNEP FI), the Central Bank of Paraguay has been supported to strengthen regulations for sustainable finance, which aims to ensure that environmental and social risks are considered in the process of analysis and evaluation of loans granted by financial institutions in the context of meat and soy production.
- Regarding the facilitation and harmonization of customs procedures and formalities, UNEP has supported the strengthening of capacities of customs officials in Paraguay for controls and audits related to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), as well as the Montreal Protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer.
- UNEP is supporting Ministry of Environment and Water in enabling Bolivia through activities for HFC phase-down . Bolivia is also one of 19 members in a Network for Ozone Officer, led by UNEP.

### **Priority 4: Regional integration and cooperation**

- The Paraguayan government has made great progress in the construction of the section of the “Bioceanic Corridor” route that crosses its territory. The corridor, that will connect the Atlantic coast with the Pacific coast, run along one of the most threatened and important ecosystems in the country and the region: the Paraguayan Chaco.
- From the transit of people and commerce perspective, the Corridor is of utmost importance and an opportunity for the development of the region, however, if measures to ensure a sustainable use of natural resources are not taken, increase in the rate of deforestation and land use change can caused irreversible damages to biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- In this regard, UNEP and other UN and civil society organizations are joining efforts to ensure that national and local authorities and institutions implement the necessary measures such as land use planning, law enforcement and environmental monitoring and fiscalization to minimize the negative impacts of land use change.

### **Priority 5: Structural economic transformation**

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<sup>5</sup> United 4 Efficiency <https://united4efficiency.org/country-regional-activities/bolivia/>

- In line with Priority 5: Structural economic transformation, UNEP is implementing the project “UNEP Finance Initiative: Aligning private finance with sustainable development” in Paraguay. The UNEP Finance Initiative, is a unique and long-standing partnership between the UNEP and a global network of over 200 banks, insurers and investors from nearly 60 countries. The Finance Initiative aims to catalyse change in the finance industry so that it becomes ‘fit for purpose’ for sustainable development. The Initiative contributes to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and the inclusive green economy as a change agent for a sustainable finance industry realized through: (1) more funds being diverted away from unsustainable activities; (2) more funds being invested into sustainable activities; and (3) financial institutions are more decarbonized as a result.
- In Bolivia, UNEP is implementing the “GO for SDGs” initiative launched by Federal Ministry of Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) and UNEP. One of its components is to serve as a platform to facilitate dialogue and knowledge sharing for inclusive green economies, and has three change-agent groups: policy makers, small to medium size enterprises and youth.

#### **Means of implementation**

- UNEP is implementing different types of projects in Bolivia, for example technical assistance, Knowledge-sharing/Network and Political Dialogue/Meetings. The pandemic has caused delays in several of these activities. For example, during December 2020, the project “Operationalization of the Special Programme to support institutional strengthening at the national level to enhance the implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, the Minamata Convention on Mercury and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management” experienced delays owing to government changes and the direct impact of the pandemic on the project team.<sup>6</sup>

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#### **IV. Follow-up and review**

The section will highlight progress in the activities of the United Nations system and other international organizations relating to implementation of the priorities of the VPoA including on the key activities of the Roadmap for accelerated implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action in the remaining five years. It will also review actions made by all stakeholders aimed at promoting the integration, synergy and coherence in the implementation and monitoring of, and follow-up to, the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda at the national, regional and international levels.

#### **V. Conclusions and recommendations**

This section will provide key recommendations to accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action based on the analysis provided in the report.

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<sup>6</sup> PIMS

**Statistical Annex**

The statistical annex will provide, in a tabular form, referenced, national-level data on selected VPoA indicators discussed in the report.