



Concept Note and Programme for the LDC5-UN Technology Bank High Level Side Event – *Unleashing LDCs potential: Harnessing new technologies to leave no one behind*

5 March 2023, Qatar

The United Nations Technology Bank for LDCs is a subsidiary organ of the United Nations General Assembly with a mandate to support science, technology and innovation for sustainable development in the world's 46 least developed countries.

Background

Fifty years have passed since the UN General Assembly created the LDC category in 1971. The expectation, at that time, was to achieve a world without LDCs by the end of the century. Sadly, instead of decreasing, the number of LDCs have increased from 25 in 1971 to the current number of 46 LDCs, 33 of them in Africa. In five-decades, only six countries have fully graduated from the LDC category – which is not impressive, especially, when compared with the achievements of some countries in East Asia, which have moved from low-to high-income economies in less than fifty years.

The good news is that since the Fourth UN LDC Conference held in Istanbul, Türkiye, increasing number of LDCs have met the criteria for graduation, and it is expected that at least 16 countries will leave the LDC category by the end of the current decade.

Countries are included in the LDC category because of low performance in social indicators and because they suffer from structural impediments and limited development of productive capacities, low-level of technological development and generally they lag behind other countries in many aspects of the development process. In this scenario, the uptake of new and emerging technology solutions that underpin the essence of development in the 21st century is critical if LDCs are to achieve rapid economic growth that leaves no one behind and meet the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) while remaining planet friendly. In the current rapidly changing global economic environment, acquiring skills in new technologies, particularly the knowledge to find innovative solutions to persistent development challenges, is no longer a luxury but a necessity and a lifeline to economic and social development and catching up with more developed countries.

Leaving no one behind: In LDCs, approximately 60% of the population is under 25 years old. The number of adolescents and youth aged 15 to 24 years is projected to grow from 207 million in 2019 to 336 million in 2050. This is the generation that will transform the LDCs from structurally weak and underdeveloped economies to dynamic and prosperous countries that can compete internationally without the need for special international support measures. This demographic composition reinforces the high potential of LDCs in terms of younger and more dynamic socioeconomic structure. However, the trend also magnifies existing challenges in many areas, including employment, quality of education, adequate skills development, and access to opportunities. Furthermore, the growing global challenges imposed by climate change, emerging conflicts and fast-paced technological advancements tend to disproportionately affect the

younger generations which is why any vision or development plan for LDC must include young people as agents of change¹. The question is how to prepare the youth for the challenges ahead and equip them with the skills and knowledge they need to find innovative solutions to the social, economic and environmental problems facing the LDCs.

As a response to this pertinent question and in line with the relevant provisions of the Doha Programme of Action (DPoA) the UN Technology Bank for LDCs has recently piloted a pioneering programme – Technology Makers Lab - in Niger aimed at exposing young people to frontier technologies and enabling them, from young age, to utilize new technologies as solutions to development challenges. The Technology Makers Lab is modelled on “Deneyap” (meaning ‘Try & Make’) centers that the Government of Türkiye has implemented throughout the country to provide young people the opportunity to become masters in the new technologies. To date, Türkiye has established over 100 “Deneyap” centres in 81 cities and towns with an annual enrollment of 4000 students ranging from the age of 7 to 18.

Equipping youth to enable them to develop solutions for their society: The Technology Makers Lab (TML) programme is strategically designed to enable young people gain a wide range of science, technology and innovation (STI) related competencies focusing on new technologies, particularly design & production, robotics and coding, materials science and nanotechnology, advanced robotics, cybersecurity, electronic programming and internet of things sessions, among others. The novelty of the programme is its focus on innovation, creativity, entrepreneurship and empowering young people to new technologies as solutions to persistent development problems. Moreover, the students are expected to undertake training in the Center while they are still enrolled in mainstream education, particularly in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. At the end of each session in the Technology Makers Lab, students are expected to develop a solution to a specific challenge affecting their society and contribute to the global common good. In short, the core target of the project is equipping the youth with frontier technology skills to unleash their potential for addressing devastating effects of persistent global challenges in LDCs.

Boosting partnerships & South-South cooperation at all levels: Proactive partnership at all levels is the building block of the Technology Makers Lab project. In a collective approach, the TML brings member states, LDCs, international organizations, UN entities and relevant international development stakeholders in well-defined role responsibilities to create strengthen synergies to support youth STI development in LDCs.

Within this context, the project will directly contribute to the following priorities of the **Doha Programme of Action**;

Priority 1: Investing in people in least developed countries: eradicating poverty and building capacity to leave no one behind

Priority 2: Leveraging the power of science, technology, and innovation to fight against multidimensional vulnerabilities and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Priority 6: Mobilizing international solidarity, reinvigorated global partnerships and innovative tools and instruments: a march towards sustainable graduation.

¹ [for all generations - youth declaration.pdf \(un.org\)](#)

Objective

The High-Level Event on “*Unleashing LDCs potential: Harnessing new technologies to leave no one behind*” has two objectives: first, to review the role of new and emerging technologies in accelerating the development of LDCs and enabling them to achieve the SDGs and catch-up with middle-income developing countries; and second, to explore the potential for disseminating competencies and skills in new technologies through the training methods encapsulated in the Technology Makers Lab programme for which UNTB targets to expand the project in 9 LDCs in next 3 years. The ultimate objective of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is to generate an inclusive and sustainable global development that leaves no one behind. At present, the LDCs are the bottom of the development ladder and the danger of these countries being left behind is high unless the international community lives up to the pledges encapsulated in the Doha Programme of Action for LDCs. In this endeavor, new and emerging technologies will play a critical role in reducing inequalities and transforming LDCs from structurally weak to more dynamic economies. The key to this vision is the youth, which accounts for the majority of the population in LDCs. This High-Level Event will discuss how to equip the youth with the knowledge and skills they need to tackle the development challenges facing their societies.

Participants

Speakers and Panelists:

- H.E. Mevlut Cavusoglu, The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Türkiye (TBC)
- H.E. Dr. Rabiou ABDOU Minister of Planning Republic of Niger
- Ms. Rabab Fatima, High Representative of the United Nations for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States
- H.E. Mehmet Fatih Kacir, Deputy Minister of Industry and Technology of the Republic of Türkiye
- Ms. Doreen Bogdan-Martin Secretary General International Telecommunication Union
- Mr. Ibrahima Guimba-Saidou CEO/ Director General of the National Agency for Information Society (ANSI) at the office of the President of the Republic of Niger
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- Mr. Abdoul Salam Bello Executive Director of the Africa II Group-World Bank (TBC)

Draft Programme

Sunday, 5 March 2023 17:15 (Room 104)

12 mins **Panel Introduction:**
Mr. Taffere Tesfachew, Acting Managing Director
Opening video – Technology Bank Overview
Second Video: UNTB Technology Makers Lab

20 Min **SESSION 1: Keynote Addresses**

- H.E. Mevlüt Cavusoglu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Türkiye (TBC) (or head of delegation)
- Ms. Rabab Fatima, High Representative of the United Nations for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (Confirmed)
- H.E. Dr. Rabiou ABDOU Minister of Planning Republic of Niger (Head of Delegation) (Confirmed)

60 Min.: **Panel Discussions:**

Moderator: Prof: Mohammad H.A. Hassan, Chair of the Governing Council UN Technology Bank

Panel Opening Address

- H.E Mehmet Fatih Kacir, Deputy Minister of Industry and Technology of the Republic of Türkiye (video address -confirmed)

Panel Session

- Ms. Doreen Bogdan-Martin Secretary General International Telecommunication Union (confirmed)
- Prof. Hasan Mandal- President of TUBITAK President (TBC)
- Mr. Ibrahima Guimba-Saidou CEO/ Director General of the National Agency for Information Society (ANSI) of the Presidency of the Niger (confirmed)
- Mr. Abdoul Salam Bello Executive Director of the Africa II Group-World Bank (TBC)