



LDC5
5TH UNITED NATIONS
CONFERENCE ON THE
LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

Ministerial Meeting on South-South Cooperation

Renewed partnerships for actionable solutions in support of implementation of the Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (DPoA)

Time: 09:00-12:00, Tuesday, 7 March 2023

Venue: Exhibition Hall 2, Qatar National Convention Centre

Doha, Qatar

Concept Note

I. Background

In recent decades, South-South cooperation has grown both in scale and scope with the Global South becoming a vital force in the world economic landscape. The increasing volume of development assistance and financial flows, technology transfer, and duty-free, quota-free market access, being provided by countries of the South to LDCs, have contributed to LDCs' progress towards achieving the SDGs. Many countries in the Global South have emerged as important development partners of LDCs in addition to traditional donor countries.

South-South and triangular cooperation has provided innovative solutions for LDCs to address some of their development challenges. LDCs have benefited from accelerated regional integration, platforms and partnerships formed among LDCs and between LDCs and other Southern partners in terms of enhancing institutional capacity, building human capital, promoting technological know-how and innovation.

The BAPA+40 outcome document adopted in 2019 also emphasized the need to build the human and institutional capacity to formulate and implement national development policies, strategies, and programmes for South-South and triangular cooperation, including the sharing of good practices and experiences from the South, especially with LDCs. It emphasized the role of the United Nations development system in this regard to address poverty eradication and achieve sustainable development.

During the IPoA (2011-2020) period, significant progress was made by LDCs in several key areas such as access to information and communications technology (ICT), sustainable energy,

health, education, gender, and governance. Internet access in LDCs increased from about 5 per cent in 2011 to 19 per cent in 2019. Access to electricity in LDCs increased significantly, from 35 per cent in 2011 to 52 per cent in 2018. 16 LDCs are in various stages of graduation. However, progress was uneven across LDCs. Critical gaps remain where the LDCs as a group have fallen short of meeting the targets set out by the IPOA. The IPOA target to graduate half of the LDCs by 2020 remain unfulfilled. Furthermore, despite progress towards graduation, LDCs are facing significant challenges to ensure sustainable and irreversible graduation.

In the decade of the IPOA, LDCs leveraged South-South cooperation to promote trade, mobilize development finance, improve infrastructure, undertake technological transfer, and build human capital. The South-led regional cooperation and trade arrangements such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) signed in 2019 have ushered in a new expectation to boost intra-regional trade, and assist LDCs with moving up the regional and global value chains.

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Southern partners ramped up support to LDCs with provision of much-needed vaccines, therapeutics and medical equipment, strengthening the capacity of public health systems in LDCs and enhancing distribution and local production capacity of vaccines. And Southern-led development banks provided critical liquidity support to LDCs to address the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic.

The Fifth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) takes place in the most unprecedented circumstances, in which LDCs are grappling with cascading crises and intertwined global geopolitical challenges. These are happening against the backdrop of devastating health, social and economic impacts on LDCs due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. In effect, LDCs are bearing the heaviest brunt of these unprecedented challenges due to unsustainable debt levels, rising energy costs, acute food insecurity and persistent structural handicaps are.

More than ever before, LDCs are in dire need of enhanced, targeted, and tailored support from the global community and all partners in order to achieve a quick recovery from the pandemic, put them back on SDGs track, and build resilience against future shocks.

The Doha Programme of Action (DPoA) adopted in March 2022 represents a new generation of global partnerships built on renewed and strengthened commitments by LDCs and their development partners to achieve recovery from the pandemic, build resilience and accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The DPoA particularly calls for scaled-up and ambitious means of implementation forging widest possible coalition of multi-stakeholder partnerships.

The DPoA contains six key focus areas with a set of ambitious goals and targets for LDCs to accelerate progress towards the SDGs. The key deliverables in the DPoA include a new system of stockholding to address food insecurity, an online university, an international investment support centre, a resilience building mechanism and a sustainable graduation support facility.

The implementation of the DPoA coincides with the remaining decade of the SDGs. During this crucial decade, it is imperative for LDCs to harness the potentials of South–South and triangular cooperation to accelerate progress towards the SDGs including digital leapfrogging. Actionable solutions and new and innovative ways to boost South-South and triangular cooperation are also of vital significance to unlock the immense potential of LDCs in this Decade of Action.

LDCs have always been marginalized in global trade. They need stronger support through the Aid for Trade initiative to help them address their supply-side constraints and enhance their competitiveness in the global economy. They also need broad capacity development efforts to improve the quality of their institutions and their ability to harness existing support, particularly in areas related to non-tariff measures (NTMs), digital trade and trade in services. LDCs can learn from their Southern partners on how to move away from low value-added natural resources and low-technology products to higher value-added and higher-technology products, effectively integrating into global value chains. Regional integration including enhanced South-South and triangular cooperation can facilitate LDCs integration in the global trading system.

LDCs are often unable to benefit from the economic and social benefits related to technological development. They are critically lacking technological know-how including access to digital technologies and innovation to build back stronger and more resilient. South-South cooperation can tailor to the expressed needs of LDCs for digital transformation by harnessing the ICT to narrow the digital divide and fast-track sustainable development.

LDCs are facing a pressing need to improve education systems, develop digital and entrepreneurial skills and enhance human development in light of the size of the young population. To implement the DPoA, development partners can provide concrete support to LDCs through investment and provision of education for youth, especially young women, including access to digital learning and skills development. This includes tangible support to the proposed online university for graduate and post-graduate study in science, technology, engineering and mathematics education in LDCs. South-South cooperation with academic and research institutions, think tanks etc. could play an important role in leveraging the high quality university education in countries of the Global South.

Furthermore, women and girls in LDCs continue to face barriers, such as lack of access to inclusive and quality education and digital skills, to health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health-care services, and to social protection and decent work and opportunities in the labour market. They have also been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, including in terms of loss of jobs, income and livelihoods. Promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls through South-South and triangular cooperation will be crucial in the successful implementation of the DoPA.

Climate change induced natural disasters, disruption of supply chains due to the COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts and geopolitical tensions have pushed additional millions of people in LDCs into extreme poverty. South-South cooperation is an important means to help LDCs

achieve food security through knowledge sharing, transfer of adaptable agricultural technologies, in-kind support and regional collaboration.

As the most vulnerable group of countries, LDCs are bearing a heavy brunt of climate change. The Global South can share knowledge including adaptation technologies and resources and experience to help LDCs develop coping strategies and build resilience against future shocks.

The implementation of the Sustainable Graduation Support Facility is one of the deliverables of the DPoA. It has a particular focus on facilitating South-South cooperation, dialogue and sharing country as well as region-specific knowledge and experience.

The LDC5 Conference presents an opportunity for LDCs and their development partners and all other actors to reinvigorate partnerships and mobilize concrete support measures, actions and innovative solutions to accelerate implementation of the DPoA.

The effective and full implementation of the DPoA plays a key role in the success and achievement of the 2030 Agenda. While implementation of the DPoA requires the ownership and leadership of LDCs, LDCs also need their partners and other actors to integrate the DPoA into their respective national cooperation policy frameworks, programmes and activities. In order to fulfil the promise of leaving no one behind, the implementation of the DPoA must be a collective endeavor of LDCs and their development partners and all other actors. South-South and triangular cooperation is part and parcel of the reinvigorated global partnerships in support of implementation of the DPoA.

II. Objective

The Ministerial Meeting on South-South Cooperation -- “Renewed partnerships for actionable solutions in support of implementation of the DPoA” is aimed to forge new partnerships, and explore concrete, innovative and actionable solutions in support of the deliverables of the DPoA through multi-stakeholder participation of the global South and development partners.

The Meeting is organized by OHRLLS, the State of Qatar (host country) and Malawi (Chair of LDCs) in collaboration with the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation.

III. Participants

This meeting will draw participation of ministers from LDCs as well as countries from the global South, development partners, principal-level representatives from the UN system, multilateral and regional development banks and financial institutions, the private sector and NGOs. Interpretation in Arabic, English and French will be provided.