



LDC5
5TH UNITED NATIONS
CONFERENCE ON THE
LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

Ministerial meeting on South-South cooperation

Empowering South-South cooperation in building a resilient and prosperous future for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs)

Time: 25 January 2022, 09:00 to 12:00

Venue: Exhibition Hall 2, Qatar National Convention Centre

Doha, Qatar

Concept Note

I. Background

The Fifth UN Conference on Least Developed Countries takes place in the most unprecedented circumstances in which a health and socio-economic crisis has disproportionately affected the least developed countries (LDCs). The COVID-19 pandemic threatens to not only reverse some progress made during the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) but also exacerbate persistent challenges in LDCs.

In the past decade, major advances were made by LDCs in several key areas such as access to information and communications technology (ICT), sustainable energy, health, education, gender, and governance. However, progress was uneven across LDCs. While progress has been made towards graduation, there are significant challenges to ensure sustainable and irreversible graduation. Critical gaps remain where the LDCs as a group have fallen short of meeting the targets set out by the IPoA.

The IPoA recognized the contribution of South-South cooperation to issues relating to health, education, professional training, agriculture, environment, science and technology, trade and investment in LDCs. It highlighted the role of South-South cooperation in promoting LDCs access to technology, which culminated in the establishment of the Technology Bank for LDCs in Turkey in 2017, marking the achievement of the first SDG target, target 17.8. The IPoA also emphasized the role of South-South cooperation in promoting initiatives that are beneficial to LDCs.

The BAPA+40 outcome document adopted in 2019 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 the least developed countries. It emphasized the role of the United Nations development system in this regard.

In the decade of the IPoA, LDCs have scaled up South-South cooperation to strengthen institutional capacities while intensifying experience sharing and exchange of good practices. They have leveraged South-South cooperation to mobilize development finance, promote technological transfer and build human capital. The South-led trade blocs such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) has helped LDCs to boost trade and expand market access. Some Southern partners have become important trading partners of LDCs. Regional integration has also accelerated thanks to the catalytic role of South-South cooperation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exemplified the role of South-South and triangular cooperation in addressing the global health crisis. Through South-South cooperation, LDCs coordinated policy responses and shared successful initiatives to contain the spread of the virus. Southern partners ramped up support for LDCs with provision of much-needed vaccines, therapeutics and medical equipment to ease the constraint of weak health systems in LDCs. Meanwhile, the South-led development banks have provided liquidity support to LDCs to help alleviate LDCs financial constraints to address the socioeconomic fallouts of the pandemic. It is praiseworthy that South-South and triangular cooperation has contributed to the improvement of the public health systems in LDCs and equitable distribution of vaccines including fostering local production capacity of vaccines. However, there is a stark gap between vaccine rollout in LDCs and the rest of the world despite 14% of global population living in LDCs. At present, LDCs are in dire need of increased support to safeguard the wellbeing of over one billion population so as to avoid being left further behind.

As LDCs are poised to achieve a resilient, sustainable and inclusive recovery, it is imperative to unleash the potential of South-South and triangular cooperation in critical areas of sustainable development. More than ever before, LDCs need the full contribution and cooperation of the global South to build more resilient economies and equitable societies and achieve technology and digital leapfrogging.

The new Programme of Action for LDCs for the decade 2022-2031 embodies a new generation of renewed and strengthened commitments by the LDCs and their development partners. Its effective implementation will play a key role in the success and achievement of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs. It outlines areas where South-South cooperation can generate impactful results such as productive capacity-building, infrastructure development, energy, science and technology, trade, investment and transit transport cooperation.

By 2030 one in five of the youth in the world will be born in the LDCs. LDCs are facing the pressing need of improving education systems, developing digital and entrepreneurial skills and enhancing human development. Southern partners can provide concrete support to LDCs through investment and provision of education for youth including access to digital learning and skills development. South-South cooperation can further contribute to the proposed establishment of an online university for LDCs in the new Programme of Action.

LDCs 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. Innovative solutions including South-South digital cooperation and financing arrangement will strengthen LDCs efforts in building resilience and adaptative capacity to climate change.

Ownership and leadership of LDCs is important for the effective delivery of the new Programme of Action. To provide an enabling environment, LDCs need to strengthen good governance at all levels and build strong institutions. LDCs can draw upon good policy initiatives through peer learning in nation building, including provision of better public services, promotion of social equity and gender equality, and enhance cooperation at the regional and subregional levels to tackle transboundary crises. Promoting South-South cooperation in this regard would deliver a valuable outcome.

In the implementation of the new Programme of Action, LDCs can scale up partnerships and strengthen platforms at the regional and subregional levels to make headway in enhanced support for graduation. LDCs can translate solidarity into concrete deliverables such as increased market access, preferential treatment, improved connectivity of regional digital infrastructure and better integration of LDCs into regional and global value chains.

II. Objective

The Ministerial meeting on South-South cooperation is scheduled to take place on the morning of 25 January 2022 at the Qatar National Conventional Center during LDC5. It aims to: 1) take stock of good practices and lessons learned in LDCs in scaling up South-South cooperation in the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA); 2) identify challenges and new areas for South-South and triangular cooperation to generate real changes for peoples in LDCs in the Decade for Action to accelerate progress towards the SDGs; 3) deliberate on ways and means to strengthen South-South and triangular cooperation in achieving the goals and targets of the new Programme of Action; and 4) discuss the role of the UN Development System in strengthening national capacities to design and implement South-South and triangular cooperation in LDCs. The event will result in a Chair's summary.

The meeting will be organized by UN-OHRLLS in collaboration with the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, United Nations Capital Development Fund, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the State of Qatar (host country) and Malawi (Chair of LDCs).

III. Participants

This high-level meeting will draw participation of ministers from 46 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 English, French and Arabic will be provided.

IV. Draft programme

09:00	Opening remarks
09:15	Launch of <i>Good Practices in South-South and Triangular Cooperation in LDCs: From the Istanbul Programme of Action to Achieving Sustainable and Resilient Development</i> , joint publication by UNOSSC, UNCDF, UN-OHRLLS and Qatar
09:20	Discussion on <i>Empowering South-South cooperation in building a resilient and prosperous future for the Least Developed Countries</i> <i>[Ministers from LDCs and development partner countries, Heads of UN agencies, representatives from the multilateral and regional development banks and financial institutions, the private sector, NGOs and experts will share views on how to leverage South-South cooperation to achieve resilient and sustainable recovery, and deliberate on scaling up South-South and triangular cooperation in the effective delivery of the Doha Programme of Action for LDCs.]</i>
11:00	Expert panel perspectives
11:20	Interactive dialogue
11:50	Closing remarks
12:00	End