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Letter dated 9 October 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In my capacity as Chair of the Global Coordination Bureau of the Least Developed Countries, I have the honour to transmit herewith the ministerial declaration adopted at the annual Ministerial Meeting of the Least Developed Countries, held in New York on 22 September 2017 (see annex).



I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 (a), 23, 24, 25 and 26.

(Signed) Masud **Bin Momen**
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
of Bangladesh to the United Nations
Chairman of the Global Coordination Bureau
of the Least Developed Countries

Annex to the letter dated 9 October 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Ministerial Declaration of the Least Developed Countries

New York, 22 September 2017

We, the Ministers and heads of delegation of the least developed countries, having met in New York on 22 September 2017 to provide strategic guidance for the full, effective and timely implementation of the Istanbul Declaration and Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020,

Recalling the Istanbul Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted at the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution [65/280](#) of 17 June 2011, in which the Assembly calls upon all the relevant stakeholders to commit to implementing the Programme of Action,

Reaffirming the overarching goal of the Istanbul Programme of Action to overcome the structural challenges faced by the least developed countries in order to eradicate poverty, achieve internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and enable graduation from the least developed country category,

Recalling the Political Declaration adopted by the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020, held in Antalya, Turkey, from 27 to 29 May 2016, and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution [70/294](#) of 25 July 2016,

Recalling also the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,¹ the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development,² the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,³ the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030⁴ and the New Urban Agenda adopted in Quito by the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III),⁵

Recalling Economic and Social Council resolution [E/2017/L.32](#) of 25 July 2017 on the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020,

Recalling also the General Assembly resolution [71/243](#) of 21 December 2016 on Quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system,

Taking note of the ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the 2017 session of the Economic and Social Council and the high-level political forum on sustainable development, convened under the auspices of the Council, adopted on 14 July 2017,⁶

¹ General Assembly resolution [70/1](#).

² General Assembly resolution [69/313](#).

³ See [FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1](#), decision 1/CP.21, annex.

⁴ General Assembly resolution [69/283](#), annex II.

⁵ [[E/2017/L.32](#)], General Assembly resolution [71/256](#), annex.

⁶ [E/2017/L.29-E/HLPF/2017/L.2](#).

Welcoming with appreciation the reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020,⁷ crisis mitigation and resilience building for the least developed countries and the flagship report of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, entitled *State of the Least Developed Countries 2017*,⁸

Welcoming also the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, as well as its annex I (Comprehensive refugee response framework) and annex II (Towards a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration), adopted at the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants, held in New York on 19 September 2016,⁹

Adopt the following declaration:

1. We reiterate our firm commitment to the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action, including by integrating its provisions into our national policies and development frameworks and conducting regular reviews with the full involvement of all key stakeholders;

2. We recognize that many of the least developed countries continue to face multiple structural challenges and constraints, including narrow production and export bases, stagnant trade and investment flows, diminishing productivity growth, weak land and natural resource governance, and widespread poverty, hunger and malnutrition. These long-standing challenges are compounded by new and emerging challenges, such as climate change, increased incidences of natural disasters and public health emergencies, conflicts, declining commodity prices and rising capital outflows. This needs to be kept in mind while repositioning the UN system. Without a structural transformation that tackles institutional and capacity constraints, the least developed countries will remain vulnerable to various economic, social and environmental shocks;

3. We reaffirm that sustainable development cannot be realized without peace and security, and that peace and security will be at risk without sustainable development. In this regard, we further recognize that the least developed countries in conflict and post-conflict situations and those experiencing political instability, or unable to deliver basic State services, have specific structural challenges and require context-specific approaches, including targeted national policies and international support measures to address these challenges and to provide support for peacebuilding, State-building activities and sustainable development; and we note the principles set out in the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States by the Group of Seven Plus, countries that are, or have been, affected by conflict;

4. We express our deep concern that the world is facing one of the largest food crises in 70 years, with 20 million people in four countries¹⁰ are at risk of famine. Globally, 108 million people in 2016 were reported to be facing food insecurity crisis or worse, fuelled by conflict, record-high food prices and abnormal weather patterns including those caused by El Niño. Out of 23 countries that are facing high severity and magnitude of acute food insecurity, 18 are LDCs with a combined population of around 72 million.¹¹ We call upon the international community, especially our development partners, to enhance their financial and in-kind support to address this emergency;

⁷ [A/72/83-E/2017/60](#).

⁸ http://unohrrls.org/custom-content/uploads/2017/07/State-of-the-LDCs_2017.pdf.

⁹ General Assembly resolution [71/1](#).

¹⁰ Somalia, South Sudan, Yemen and north-eastern Nigeria.

¹¹ <https://www.wfp.org/content/global-report-food-crisis-2017>.

5. We recognize that the least developed countries represent an enormous human and natural resource potential for world economic growth, welfare, prosperity and food and energy security. Therefore, a successful, renewed and strengthened global partnership that effectively addresses the special needs of the least developed countries will contribute to the causes of peace, prosperity and sustainable development for all. Further strengthening our collective actions towards enabling the young populations and women of the least developed countries to fully and effectively participate in economic, social and political life will more effectively contribute to equitable and inclusive development, poverty eradication, job creation and social justice;

6. We also recognize that, while the least developed countries have made significant efforts towards achieving the objectives, goals and targets of the Istanbul Programme of Action, a lot still remains to be done. The principle of country ownership and leadership remains crucial in order to accelerate progress towards sustainable development, and we recommit to take the lead in formulating, implementing, following up and reviewing our own coherent economic and development policies, strategies and plans. We call upon the international community to fulfil its commitment to give special attention to the least developed countries in the implementation of the IPoA;

7. We welcome the fact that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030¹² and the New Urban Agenda (HABITAT-III) underscore the fact that the most vulnerable countries, including the least developed countries, deserve special attention and reflect the concerns and aspirations of these countries, recall the decision contained in the 2030 Agenda that effective linkages will be made with the follow-up and review arrangements of all relevant United Nations conferences and processes, including on the least developed countries, underline the importance of strong synergy in the implementation of the recently adopted agendas and the Istanbul Programme of Action at the national and subnational levels, and encourage coordination and coherence in the follow-up of their implementation;

8. We take note with appreciation of the Secretary-General's report on Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals 2017,¹³ which indicates that there has been some progress in the achievement of the SDGs, but the progress is uneven as LDCs remain far below many of the targets of the SDGs; we welcome further efforts in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels, building on the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals and seeking to complete their unfinished business. We are encouraged by these efforts, including by several least developed countries, and in this second year of its implementation, look forward to further progress in, inter alia, revitalizing and enhancing the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development in least developed countries, aligning existing policies with the new global plan of action, increasing policy and system-wide coherence and integration for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, addressing existing and emerging challenges, enhancing national capacities for evidence-based and data-driven decision-making and favouring participatory, cooperative and enabling environments at all levels;

9. We call upon the international community, including the United Nations system, to realize its commitment to the full and timely implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to provide support for its mainstreaming into the national development policies and programmes of the least developed

¹² General Assembly resolution 69/283, annex.

¹³ E/2017/66.

countries. We also call upon it to realize its commitments to mobilize the means required to implement this Agenda through a revitalized global partnership for sustainable development, in a spirit of global solidarity, focused in particular on the eradication of poverty, the promotion of inclusive growth and the implementation of social protection systems, particularly for the poorest and most vulnerable;

10. We also welcome the successful convening of the second high-level political forum after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, and the adoption of the ministerial declaration,¹⁴ which, among others, expresses concern that, under the current growth trajectory, nearly 35 per cent of the population in least developed countries could remain in extreme poverty by 2030; we also commend the countries, including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Benin, Ethiopia, Nepal, and Togo, that presented voluntary national reviews to highlight the early steps taken to implement the 2030 Agenda at the 2017 high-level political forum;

11. We call upon the international community to ensure full and timely implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, in particular those parts that relate to least developed countries. We welcome the convening of the second meeting of the annual Economic and Social Council forum on financing for development follow-up, held from 22 to 25 May 2017 and take note its intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations.¹⁵ We also note the convening of the 2017 Global Infrastructure Forum under the theme “Delivering Inclusive, Sustainable Infrastructure” on 22 April 2017 in Washington DC and its outcome statement¹⁶ and the second meeting of the multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals, held on 15 and 16 May 2017, and its outcome.¹⁷ We call for a timely agreement on the modalities of future financing for development forums;

12. We stress that climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time and its widespread, unprecedented impacts disproportionately burden the poorest and most vulnerable countries, especially LDCs. We recognize that 2016 was the warmest year in recorded history and that the global average temperature that year was 1.1 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. We are further apprehensive that the melting of sea ice and glaciers due to rising temperatures will have deep and far reaching impact. We call upon all parties to undertake effective and progressive response to the urgent threat of climate change on the basis of the best available scientific knowledge. We must limit global warming to 1.5°C to protect lives and livelihoods, and this means global peaking of greenhouse gas emissions has to occur by 2020;

13. We welcome the Paris Agreement and its early entry into force, invite all its parties to fully implement the Agreement, and parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change that have not yet done so to deposit their instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, where appropriate, as soon as possible. We are concerned that LDCs are still far from addressing their actual finance needs to implement the Paris Agreement. We therefore call upon our development partners to ensure effective delivery on climate change commitments and access by the least developed countries to all relevant climate change-related funds, as applicable. We look forward to the successful conclusion of the 23rd session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 23) to the UNFCCC, which will be convened in Bonn, Germany, from 6-17 November 2017.

¹⁴ [E/2017/L.29-E/HLPF/2017/L.2.](#)

¹⁵ [E/FFDF/2017/L.1.](#)

¹⁶ <https://library.pppknowledge.org/documents/4707>.

¹⁷ [E/HLPF/2017/4.](#)

We also look forward to the dedicated climate summit in 2019 to be convened by the Secretary-General to undertake the critical first review of the Paris Agreement;

14. We call upon the development partners to operationalize fully and in a timely manner the Green Climate Fund, with the goals of mobilizing \$100 billion per year by 2020, promoting and facilitating clean development mechanism projects in the least developed countries and addressing the needs of people displaced as a result of extreme weather events. We appreciate countries that have contributed to the Green Climate Fund and express our concern that as of August 2017, the Green Climate Fund has only raised USD 10.3 billion equivalent in pledges from 43 state governments.¹⁸ We encourage our development partners to further accelerate their contributions to fulfil the \$100 billion yearly benchmark. We also stress that the allocation of adaptation and mitigation funds should be additional to official development assistance commitments and should be fair, equitable and proportionate to the impact of climate change;

15. We welcome the decision of the Board of the Green Climate Fund to aim for a 50:50 balance between mitigation and adaptation over time on a grant equivalent basis and to aim for a floor of 50 per cent of the adaptation allocation for particularly vulnerable countries, in particular the least developed countries;

16. We welcome the holding of the United Nations Conference to support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, sea and marine resources for sustainable development in New York from 5 to 9 June 2017, and its intergovernmentally agreed outcome entitled “Our ocean, our future: call for action”.¹⁹ We call upon the development partners and other stakeholders to accord preferential treatment to LDCs and to provide financial, and technical support and the transfer of marine technology, taking into account the challenges and capacity constraints that LDCs are facing, with a view to enabling them to effectively implement “Our ocean, our future: call for action” in the broader context of the Istanbul Programme of Action for LDCs (2011–2020);

17. We welcome the successful conclusion of the fourth and final session of the Preparatory Committee established by General Assembly resolution 69/292: Development of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, and adoption its report and substantive recommendations to the General Assembly. We strongly recommend convening an intergovernmental conference, under the auspices of the United Nations in 2018, to consider the recommendations of the Preparatory Committee on the elements and to elaborate the text of an international legally binding instrument under the Convention. We attach great importance to the principle of ‘common heritage of mankind’ for the underlying premise for this international legally binding instrument. We stress on the notion of fair and equitable sharing of benefits accrued from the sustainable use and application of marine genetic resources;

18. We recognize the importance of building productive capacity as a critical enabler for the development and graduation of the least developed countries. We emphasize that the development of physical infrastructure is an important prerequisite for sustained economic growth and sustainable development, and that significant amounts of investment and technology are essential, including through public-private partnerships, innovative financing, regional integration and appropriate institutions and regulation, to bridge the existing savings-investment

¹⁸ <http://www.greenclimate.fund/how-we-work/resource-mobilization>.

¹⁹ General Assembly resolution 71/312.

gap in the least developed countries. In this regard, we will strengthen the underlying investment climate, with enhanced support provided by the development partners and international financial institutions, including by improving predictability, governance and transparency, as well as in procurement practices and policies. We call upon the development partners to provide enhanced financial and technical support to the least developed countries for their infrastructure development and management. We look forward to the effective functioning of the multi-stakeholder forum to bridge the infrastructure gap, which should give special priority to the needs and challenges of the least developed countries;

19. We recognize that agriculture, food and nutritional security and rural development are vitally important for the least developed countries. Agriculture plays a crucial role both in promoting food security and as the major economic activity for much of the population, with direct linkages to the eradication of poverty and hunger, rural development and gender equality and empowerment of women, as well as exports, commodity and production diversification and agro-processing capacity. We therefore underline the need for adequate investment in physical infrastructure, scientific and technological development, research and agricultural extension services in the least developed countries. We recognize that commodity diversification and value addition as well as the effective participation of the least developed countries in regional and global value chains by upgrading and increasing the domestic value added and technology content of their products are vitally important so that they can gain the maximum benefit from their agricultural products;

20. We reiterate that official development assistance continues to be the largest and a critical source of external financing for the development of the least developed countries and that it provides a buffer to weather the impacts of the unstable and volatile global economic environment. We express our deep concern that total ODA from OECD-DAC countries to LDCs declined in nominal terms from US\$41 billion in 2014 to US\$37.3 billion in 2015 and the preliminary data for 2016 shows that bilateral net ODA to LDCs further decreased by 3.9 per cent in real terms compared to 2015. We welcome the decision by the European Union, which reaffirms its collective commitment to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of the official development assistance/gross national income within the time frame of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and undertakes to meet collectively the target of 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of official development assistance/gross national income to least developed countries in the short term and to reach 0.20 per cent of official development assistance/gross national income to least developed countries within the time frame of the 2030 Agenda.²⁰ We also welcome the provisions of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda that encourage official development assistance providers to consider setting a target to provide at least 0.20 per cent of official development assistance/gross national income to least developed countries, and express encouragement to those providers that are allocating at least 50 per cent of their official development assistance to least developed countries. These are some qualitative and quantitative changes in the decades-long target on official development assistance for the least developed countries. We call upon all development partners to fulfil these targets;

21. We reiterate our call upon the donor countries to provide 0.20 per cent of their gross national income to the least developed countries by 2020 and 0.25 per cent of their gross national income by 2030 or at least 50 per cent of net official development assistance to the least developed countries;

²⁰ See General Assembly resolution [69/313](#), annex.

22. We underline the fact that the allocation of global official development assistance resources should take into account the structural handicaps and constraints which are unique to the least developed countries. We call upon development partners to ensure the right balance in the allocation of official development assistance among various sectors, with particular focus on productive sectors, including infrastructure, agriculture and information and communications technology;

23. We welcome the targets contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development related to migration and remittances, and strongly urge partner countries to start taking action, specifically with respect to reducing to less than 3 per cent the transaction costs of migrant remittances by 2030 and eliminating remittance corridors with costs higher than 5 per cent, and to facilitate the orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies;

24. We recognize the positive contribution of migrants for inclusive growth and sustainable development. We also recognize that international migration is a multidimensional reality of major relevance for the development of countries of origin, transit and destination, which requires coherent and comprehensive responses. We underline the urgent need to cooperate internationally to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration, involving full respect for human rights and the humane treatment of migrants, regardless of migration status, refugees and displaced persons at their countries of origin, transit and destination. Such cooperation should also strengthen the resilience of communities hosting refugees, particularly in developing countries. We also underline the right of migrants to return to their country of citizenship, and recall that States must ensure that their returning nationals are duly received;

25. We express our commitment to improve cooperation on sustainable return and reintegration strategies, including by providing support for source countries' initiatives to enhance their absorption capacity, particularly through community-based investments in return areas, and by sharing information and good practices;

26. We express our firm commitment to develop a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, which will be adopted at an intergovernmental conference on international migration to be held in 2018. We take note of the outcome of the informal thematic sessions on facilitating safe, orderly and regular migration, which provides substantive inputs and concrete recommendations to inform the development of the global compact on migration;

27. We recognize that while official development assistance must remain central and play a catalytic role, there is a need to tap additional resources, including through innovative financing mechanisms which can provide more stable and predictable resources for development and are based on new partnerships between countries at different levels of development and public and private actors. Specific mechanisms for innovative financing should be operationalized to mobilize additional resources for financing sustainable development. We stress that the innovative sources of financing should be additional, substantial and predictable and disbursed in a manner that respects the priorities and special needs of the least developed countries and does not unduly burden them;

28. We welcome the work of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters, including its subcommittees. We call for the realization of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda agreement that all companies, including multinationals, pay taxes to the Governments of countries where economic activity

occurs and value is created, in accordance with national and international laws and policies;

29. We recognize that international trade is an important determinant of global growth and development and that there remains considerable untapped potential in least developed countries to exploit the benefits of international trade. There has been an increasing prevalence of new-generation regional trade agreements, which can diminish incentives for universal negotiations and may have adverse effects on countries not included in the regional trade agreements, especially least developed countries. We also express our concern that the continuous lack of progress on most of the issues of the Doha Development Agenda undermines the aspiration of least developed countries to gain the development benefits of a fair and equitable trading system;

30. We express our deep concern that in 2015, merchandise exports of the least developed countries contracted by 25 per cent, a significantly bigger drop than in 2014. As a result, the share of least developed countries in world merchandise exports decreased to 0.97 per cent and LDCs' collective merchandise trade deficit widened to US\$ 87 billion. We therefore call upon the members of the World Trade Organization to strongly commit to addressing the marginalization of least developed countries in international trade and to improve their effective participation in the multilateral trading system. We also call upon the members to fully and faithfully implement all the least developed country-specific provisions contained in the existing World Trade Organization agreements, ministerial decisions and declarations;

31. We call upon developed country members and developing country members of the World Trade Organization declaring themselves in a position to do so to realize timely implementation of effective duty-free and quota-free market access on a lasting basis for all products originating from all least developed countries, consistent with World Trade Organization decisions, with a view to realizing the Sustainable Development Goals target of doubling the least developed countries' share of global exports by 2020;

32. We also call upon developed country members and developing country members of the World Trade Organization declaring themselves in a position to do so to take steps to facilitate market access for least developed countries' products, including by developing simple and transparent rules of origin applicable to imports from least developed countries, in accordance with the Decision adopted by members of the World Trade Organization at the Tenth Ministerial Conference, held in Nairobi. We note with appreciation the introduction by the European Union, Norway and Switzerland of a system of self-certification of origin for registered exporters from LDCs. We welcome the ministerial decision of the World Trade Organization on the implementation of preferential treatment in favour of services and service suppliers of least developed countries and increasing least developed countries' participation in services trade,²¹ and underline the need for its full implementation;

33. We welcome the entry into force of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, which will address high trade costs incurred by LDCs and other developing countries, and facilitate the integration of these countries in regional and global value chains. We call upon the development and trading partners to provide targeted assistance and support to LDCs to help them build sustainable capacity to implement their commitments under the TFA, especially its Articles 13 and 21;

²¹ WT/MIN(15)/48-WT/L/982, 15 December 2015.

34. We welcome the commitment from the recent G-20 Summit in Hamburg to make the Eleventh WTO Ministerial Conference (MC11) a success. We underline the importance of delivering a development oriented outcome at the MC-11 scheduled to be held from 10 to 13 December 2017 in Buenos Aires, Argentina with significant progress on LDCs issues, including duty-free quota-free market access, preferential rules of origin and the application of the LDCs' services waiver;

35. We call for the lifting of and total elimination of unilateral economic measures imposed on developing countries, including on the least developed countries, which have negative impacts on the development and prosperity of these countries and adversely impact the efforts towards their graduation;

36. We take note of the submission by the group of least developed countries of the World Trade Organization to receive special priority and preference in services sectors and modes of supply of export interest to the least developed countries.²² We appreciate the twenty four members of the WTO that have submitted their notifications of preferential treatment to LDC by the end of 2016,²³ and strongly urge other developed and developing countries to do so and to take measures to extend specific preferences to the services and service suppliers of least developed countries so that they can enhance their participation in services trade;

37. We underline the importance of aid for trade initiatives in trade-related capacity-building; overcoming supply-side constraints; infrastructure development; and facilitating the integration of least developed countries' economies in regional and global trade. To this end, we call upon members to accord priority to the least developed countries' projects and ensure that at least 50 per cent of the aid for trade is allocated to least developed countries. We welcome the extension of the Enhanced Integrated Framework into phase two, and urge members to further intensify their efforts to secure the necessary level of contributions for the timely replenishment for effective implementation without any disruption of the Framework from 2016 to 2022;

38. We express our deep concern that the FDI flows to LDCs contracted by 13 per cent to \$38 billion in 2016 compared to the previous year with continued concentration on extractive and related industries. We underline the need for undertaking necessary measures at all levels to reverse this trend and further accelerate FDI to LDCs to meet their growing needs to realize the 2030 Agenda. We welcome the decision contained in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to adopt and implement investment promotion regimes for least developed countries and the offer to provide financial and technical support for project preparation and contract negotiation, advisory support in investment-related dispute resolution, access to information on investment facilities and risk insurance and guarantees, such as through the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency. In this regard, we take note with appreciation of the initiatives undertaken by UN-OHRLLS aiming at providing legal and technical support to LDCs in investment-related negotiations and dispute settlement and at improving the capacity of the investment promotion agencies of LDCs to attract, diversify and retain FDI and derive maximum benefit from it;

39. We reaffirm our invitation to the Secretary-General, in his capacity as the Chair of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, to include the issue of investment promotion regimes for the least developed countries in the agenda of the Board, with a view to enhancing the overall effectiveness of United Nations system support that can contribute to enhancing the flow of foreign

²² World Trade Organization, document S/C/W/356.

²³ Available from www.wto.org/english/news_e/news15_e/serv_03aug15_e.htm.

direct investment to the least developed countries and the ability of those countries to attract such investment. We request the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly on the progress made in this regard. We take note with appreciation of the programmatic recommendations prepared by UN-OHRLLS and UNCTAD to help increase the coverage, scope and effectiveness of the UN system's support for investment promotion to the LDCs which were adopted by the CEB in March this year;

40. We welcome the decision of the Economic and Social Council²⁴ to discuss, at its next annual forum on financing for development follow-up, adopting and implementing investment promotion regimes for the least developed countries, pursuant to the relevant resolutions on the matter, including General Assembly resolution [69/313](#) of 27 July 2015 on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, and the mandate of the annual forum on financing for development follow-up set out therein, and recall that the intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations of the forum will be fed into the overall follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the high-level political forum on sustainable development;

41. In this regard, we call upon Member States to take a decision at the seventy-second session of the General Assembly to establish an international investment support centre for the least developed countries under the auspices of the United Nations to provide a one-stop arrangement to help stimulate foreign direct investment in the least developed countries, which can make available the following interrelated and mutually reinforcing services, as already agreed upon in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda: (a) an information depository for investment facilities in the least developed countries; (b) provision of technical support to assist the least developed countries in preparing project documents and negotiating complex large-scale contracts; (c) provision of advisory support in dispute resolution; and (d) risk insurance and guarantees in close collaboration with the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development;

42. We also welcome the establishment of the Technology Bank for the LDCs and the adoption of its Charter by the General Assembly. We appreciate the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States for its support provided in the operationalization of the Bank;

43. We welcome with deep appreciation the signature of the host country and contribution agreements between the United Nations and the Government of Turkey, leading to the operationalization of the Technology Bank for LDCs by 2017 as set out in the 2030 Agenda under target 17.8. We take note with appreciation the pledges that the Government of Turkey has made for financial and in-kind contributions for Technology Bank. We also take note with appreciation the contributions that LDCs and other countries have made and call upon other donor countries and development partners to make substantial contributions to the successful start-up of the Bank and its effective functioning. We also call upon them to increase their assistance dedicated to addressing the science, technology and innovation challenges of the least developed countries. We request the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to support the Technology Bank, especially in its start-up phase;

²⁴ [E/2017/L.32](#).

44. We underline the fact that the long-term framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development should not only ensure that the goals and targets are achieved, but also secure the sustainability of the achievements. We are concerned that the biggest part of the risks and uncertainties that could derail global human progress over the next decades relates to climate change and other severe shocks and crises. We note with concern that the spread of the Ebola virus disease in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu, a devastating earthquake in Nepal and recent widespread floods in Bangladesh, Nepal and Myanmar have wreaked havoc in the lives and livelihoods of these countries. We therefore call for the timely establishment and operationalization of a crisis mitigation and resilience-building mechanism for the least developed countries, as proposed in the 2030 Agenda and the outcome document of the International Conference on Financing for Development;

45. In this regard, we recall the decisions contained in the Political Declaration of the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 and the General Assembly resolution 71/238, to undertake an in-depth analysis on crisis mitigation and resilience-building for the least developed countries, at the national and international levels, with a view to building and further strengthening crisis mitigation and resilience in the least developed countries;

46. We take note with appreciation the findings and recommendations of the report of the Secretary-General on Crisis Mitigation and Resilience Building for LDCs. We are deeply concerned that LDCs are disproportionately affected by a variety of systemic shocks, including economic crisis, commodity price volatility, health epidemics, natural disasters and other environmental shocks. These shocks not only halt the pace of economic progress and deteriorate poverty, but also undermine the capacity of LDCs to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is therefore vitally important to reduce the vulnerability of LDCs to economic, health and environmental shocks, including natural disasters and climate change, to strengthen their resilience and enhance their ability to meet these and other challenges;

47. We also note with concern that the multilateral risk reduction strategies and mechanisms are proven insufficient for LDCs, as they are often inadequately funded, call for cumbersome administrative procedures and regulatory reforms and require complex and technical proposals to access various funds. In this regard, we invite the General Assembly to decide on the establishment of a “comprehensive multi-stakeholder resilience-building mechanism for LDCs”, leveraging the existing measures and initiatives. The mechanism would entail a number of measures to be established or revitalized at the national, regional and global levels to respond to various types of disasters and shocks as elaborated in the report of the Secretary-General;

48. We underline the fact that the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative and the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative have created additional fiscal space in many least developed countries. However, we are concerned that there are risks of re-indebtedness because of the huge development needs in the least developed countries and it is a matter of deep concern that in spite of the Initiatives, many least developed countries still struggle with a high debt burden. As of 01 August 2017, 4 LDCs are in debt distress and 11 others of them are at high risk of debt distress.²⁵ We call upon development partners to take effective measures to cancel all multilateral and bilateral debts owed by all least developed countries to creditors,

²⁵ <https://www.imf.org/external/Pubs/ft/dsa/DSAlist.pdf>.

both public and private, and to arrange debt standstill and debt swaps until the debt cancellation is fully realized. We also call upon creditors, both public and private, for additional effective measures to facilitate financing of our economic development, including access to both concessional and non-concessional resources for investment in critically needed infrastructure and development projects. We also underline the need for multilateral frameworks for sovereign debt restructuring and welcome the adoption by the General Assembly on 10 September 2015 of its resolution [69/319](#) on Basic Principles on Sovereign Debt Restructuring Processes;

49. We recall the goal in the Istanbul Programme of Action to enhance capacities in energy production, trade and distribution with the aim of ensuring access for all by 2030, as well as the targets established under the SDG 7 on ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all. We note with concern that the average access to electricity in LDCs was only at 38.3 per cent in 2014 and in seven LDCs the average rate of access to electricity is declining and in some LDCs population growth outpaces the rate of new connection installations. We call upon all actors, including development partners, intergovernmental financial institutions, the private sector and civil society, to work together to ensure universal, seamless and affordable access to energy, especially renewable energy to LDCs, with the establishment of modern generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure;

50. We emphasize that in globalized and interconnected world, information and communication technologies are key to allow individuals and businesses to participate in the knowledge economy including e-health, e-education e-banking and e-governance. Affordable and easily accessible broadband connectivity is an important enabler of economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. We are concerned that only 15 per cent of households in the least developed countries was online in 2015, displaying a very low level of penetration compared to 80 per cent developed countries and 40 per cent in developing countries.²⁶ We call upon our development partners to substantially scale up their support to infrastructure development and make available the financial resources and expertise to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020 in line with target 9.c of the SDGs;

51. We reaffirm that achieving gender equality, empowering all women and girls, and the full realization of the human rights of all people are essential to achieving sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth and sustainable development. We reiterate the need for gender mainstreaming, including targeted actions and investments in the formulation and implementation of all financial, economic, environmental and social policies;

52. We underline that North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation is vital to the least developed countries, particularly in regard to technical assistance, sharing of best practices in terms of their development, especially in areas of productive capacity-building, infrastructure, energy, science and technology, trade, investment and transit transport cooperation, and we call upon the countries of the South to further strengthen their support provided to the least developed countries in all of these areas in a predictable manner;

53. We reiterate our call to the international community, especially the United Nations system, to extend necessary support to the least developed countries in strengthening their national statistical capacities to develop their national databases that contain national and international data on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with related metadata that are available to all interested

²⁶ [E/2017/66](#).

users. We request the Secretary-General to mobilize adequate resources for the least developed countries to enable them to actively participate in all review and follow-up activities at the national, regional and global levels;

54. We recall the ambitious goal of the Istanbul Programme of Action to enable half the number of least developed countries to meet the criteria for graduation by 2020 and commit to take the steps necessary to complete the graduation process. We underline the fact that each instance of successful graduation will constitute an extraordinary success not only for the countries themselves, but also for the United Nations and for development cooperation by the international community. We congratulate Equatorial Guinea for its recent graduation from the category of LDCs. We are encouraged that notwithstanding persisting challenges and constraints, several least developed countries have met the criteria for graduation and some others have announced their intention to reach the status of graduation by or around 2020;

55. We acknowledge that the graduation of a country symbolizes its irreversible long-term socio-economic progress prevailing over the structural handicaps to socio-economic development. However, it also brings a lot of challenges in the form of losing the entire package of LDC-specific benefits and waivers from compliance with international obligations and commitments. We note with concern that in most cases, the graduated countries still remain far below the benchmarks under most of the SDG indicators and continue to face insurmountable challenges and vulnerabilities to various shocks and crises;

56. We note with appreciation that some development partners have extended some of the LDC-specific benefits to the graduated countries, taking into account the challenges they continue to face. However, most of these measures were taken on an ad-hoc rather than a systematic manner and benefits were granted by some partners rather than all. We reiterate that the existing processes related to graduation and smooth transition should be strengthened so that graduating and recently graduated countries will not face any disruption of their development trajectory, including challenges and uncertainties in achieving the SDGs;

57. We therefore call upon the Member States to agree on a package of benefits from development partners that the graduated countries will continue to enjoy in some critical areas of their economy for a certain period of time consistent with their development situations and needs. This can serve as a safeguard measure for the graduated countries to sustain their development path and not to relapse to the category of LDCs, thereby facilitating the achievement of the SDGs by 2030. We request the Secretary-General to make concrete recommendations in this regard in his report to the General Assembly on the implementation, effectiveness and added value of smooth transition measures, as mandated in the UNGA resolution [A/70/216](#);

58. We recall paragraph 26 of General Assembly resolution [68/224](#), in which the Assembly requests all relevant organizations of the United Nations system, led by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, to extend necessary support in a coordinated manner to the countries that have expressed their intention to reach the status of graduation by 2020 in preparing their graduation and transition strategy, and we invite the organizations of the United Nations system, led by the Office of the High Representative, to extend the necessary technical support to the countries aspiring to graduation in developing their graduation and smooth transition strategies. We call upon the development partners to provide support for the implementation of the graduation strategy with a view to enabling those countries to graduate from least developed country status. Likewise, we call for

providing support for the implementation of the smooth transition strategy after graduation, taking into account each country's development situation, in order to ensure its sustainable development without any disruption;

59. We emphasize that graduation should not be seen as an end goal, but should rather be regarded as a means to achieve structural change, poverty eradication and economic diversification in the country and thereby contribute to the sustainable development goals in an accelerated and effective manner. We recognize the urgent need to undertake a comprehensive review of the graduation criteria for least developed countries, taking into account the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement. In this regard, we recall the decisions made in the Midterm Review that the review of the graduation criteria by the Committee for Development Policy should be comprehensive, taking into account all aspects of the evolving international development context, including relevant agendas and take note of the work programme of the CDP, adopted at its nineteenth session, to undertake a review of the basic structure of the least developed country criteria and its application principles aiming to identify additional indicators that could significantly improve the least developed country identification, which would become effective in 2021.²⁷ In this regard, we invite the CDP to provide significantly higher weightage to the environmental vulnerabilities;

60. We recognize that the United Nations development system is challenged to meet the growing demands for more varied assistance by doing more, quicker and better. We invite all organizations of the United Nations system and other multilateral organizations, including the World Bank Group and international and regional financial institutions, to contribute to the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action, including by implementing scaled-up programmes of financial and technical cooperation, to integrate it into their programmes of work, to participate fully in its review at the national, sub-regional, regional and global levels, and to include in their annual reports to the Executive Boards and to the Economic and Social Council the progress made in this regard, as mandated by the Council in paragraph 9 of its resolution 2013/46;

61. We express our serious concerns at the fact that the share of expenditure for operational activities for development of the United Nations system in the least developed countries is declining, urge the United Nations development system to continue to prioritize allocations to least developed countries including by allocating at least 75 per cent of their programme resources in least developed countries,²⁸ while reaffirming that the least developed countries, as the most vulnerable group of countries, need enhanced support to overcome structural challenges that they face in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and requests the United Nations development system to provide assistance to graduating countries in the formulation and implementation of their national transition strategies and to consider country specific support for graduated countries for a fixed period of time and in a predictable manner;

62. We recognize that the income-based classifications of countries are becoming less and less relevant and unable to take into account fragility and other structural constraints, while least developed countries represent the most homogenous group of countries with very low variations. We therefore stress that the least developed country category should be universally recognized to facilitate the coordinated and coherent follow-up and monitoring of the implementation of

²⁷ E/2017/33.

²⁸ Currently 74 per cent of core programme resources of the United Nations Development Programme is allocated for work in least developed countries.

progress made in these countries. We invite the General Assembly to take necessary measures in this regard during its seventy-second session;

63. We request the Office of the High Representative to extend necessary support to the least developed countries in the implementation and monitoring of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through coordination with various United Nations entities, raising global awareness, mobilizing international support and resources in favour of the least developed countries, building multi-stakeholder partnerships and reaching out to all stakeholders, including by establishing partnerships with civil society and the private sector, to enhance support for the three groups of countries;

64. We recall paragraph 26 of General Assembly resolution [67/220](#), in which the Assembly invites the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, to include implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action as a standing item on the agenda of the Board, and we call upon the Board to continue to follow up on the implementation of the Programme of Action and to keep the Assembly informed on a regular basis;

65. We take note of the ongoing exercise on repositioning the UNDS and underline that a stronger UN is needed more than ever in pursuit of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda to its fullest scale and ambitions. We recognize that the strength of the UN lies in its stronger resource base, especially the core resources, a set of highly efficient and skilled human resources, and transparent and accountable business practice, which should get special priority in the reform exercises. We also underscore that the reform of the UN development system must be centered on the 2030 Agenda and called for strengthening accountability of the UN development system; and ensuring effective and efficient funding structures that would offer greater value-for-money and reporting on system-wide results;

66. We invite the UNDS to implement the QCPR resolution by addressing the special challenges facing LDCs, as they are the most vulnerable group of countries in the world and they need support from the UNDS for their implementation of the IPoA and the SDGs. We emphasize that eradicating poverty and hunger, access to public health, education and other social services, addressing the impacts of climate change and building productive capacity and infrastructure in LDCs should remain at the centre of the United Nations development cooperation efforts. The system also needs to support LDCs in data, statistics, knowledge platforms and support for the national implementation of the Goals through monitoring and reporting;

67. We take note of the survey conducted by the CDP on reasons and consequences of the non-application of the least developed country category by United Nations development system entities and its findings that United Nations development system entities should not only to recognize the least developed countries category, but also to consistently apply the least developed countries category by providing international support measures, and request the United Nations development system entities to adopt common guidelines in this regard. We also request international financial institutions, in particular the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and regional development banks, also to consider the least developed country category in their procedures for allocating resources and to design policies that consider the special situation of the least developed countries;²⁹

²⁹ [E/2017/33](#).

68. We express our deep concern that least developed countries are hugely underrepresented in the decision-making processes of the global financial architecture. Forty-seven least developed countries, with 13 per cent of the global population, collectively enjoy only 3.27 per cent of the voting power of the International Monetary Fund and 3.78 per cent of the voting power of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. This needs to be addressed for the legitimacy and effectiveness of the global financial system. We recommit to broadening and strengthening the voice and participation of least developed countries in international economic decision-making and norm-setting and global economic governance. We invite the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision and other main international regulatory standard-setting bodies to continue efforts to increase the voice of least developed countries in norm-setting processes to ensure that their concerns are taken into consideration;

69. We welcome the appointment of Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu as the Under Secretary-General and High Representative of UN-OHRLLS and look forward to working closely with her in addressing the key challenges that LDCs have been facing;

70. We most sincerely acknowledge the supportive role being played by the Group of Friends of Least Developed Countries, and invite the Group to further strengthen its support for the effective realization of the Istanbul Programme of Action, the outcome of the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the outcomes of all other international and regional conferences and processes as they relate to the least developed countries.
