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Développement agricole, sécurité alimentaire et nutrition

Vers des partenariats mondiaux

Lettre datée du 6 octobre 2021, adressée au Secrétaire général par le Représentant permanent du Malawi auprès de l'Organisation des Nations Unies

En ma qualité de Président du Bureau de coordination internationale des pays les moins avancés, j'ai l'honneur de vous faire tenir ci-joint le texte de la déclaration ministérielle adoptée à la Réunion annuelle des ministres des pays les moins avancés, tenue à New York le 17 septembre 2021 (voir annexe).

Je vous serais reconnaissant de bien vouloir faire distribuer le texte de la présente lettre et de son annexe comme document de l'Assemblée générale, au titre des points 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 a), 24, 25 et 26 de l'ordre du jour.

L'Ambassadeur,
Représentant permanent du Malawi
auprès de l'Organisation des Nations Unies,
Président du Bureau de coordination internationale
des pays les moins avancés
(*Signé*) Perks Master **Ligoya**

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Merci de recycler

Annexe à la lettre datée du 6 octobre 2021 adressée au Secrétaire général par le Représentant permanent du Malawi auprès de l'Organisation des Nations Unies

Annex-A

Africa Regional Review Meeting in preparation of the Fifth United Nations Conference on LDCs (LDC5)
22–26 February 2021

Lilongwe, Malawi

Political Declaration

Introduction

1. We, Ministers and representatives of the African least developed countries (LDCs) and Haiti participating in the Africa Regional Review Meeting in preparation of the Fifth United Nations Conference on LDCs (LDC5), are gathered in Lilongwe, Malawi from 22–26 February 2021 to undertake a comprehensive appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action by the least developed countries and their development partners, share best practices and lessons learned and identify obstacles and constraints encountered as well as actions and initiatives needed to overcome them; to identify effective international and domestic policies in the light of the outcome of the appraisal as well as new and emerging challenges and opportunities and the means to address them; to reaffirm the global commitment to addressing the special needs of the LDCs made at the major United Nations conferences and summits, including in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework; and to mobilize additional international support measures and action, in addition to domestic resources, in favor of the LDCs and, in this regard, to formulate and adopt a renewed partnership between the LDCs and their development partners, including the private sector, civil society and governments at all levels. In the context of Africa, we reaffirm our commitment to the goals and aspirations of the African Union Agenda 2063.

2. We welcome the participation at this meeting of a number of development partners and while appreciating their ongoing support, strongly call upon them for renewed and strengthened global partnerships for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in African LDCs and Haiti. We collectively committed ourselves to finding lasting solutions to the complex and mutually exacerbating structural challenges and problems faced by LDCs, who constitute the poorest and most vulnerable countries of the world.

3. We are concerned that the impact of COVID-19 has further jeopardized the limited progress towards achieving the goals of the IPoA as outlined in the 2020 report of the Secretary General on the implementation of the IPoA and the ECA report on the implementation of the IPoA in African LDCs. COVID-19 has made the vulnerabilities of African LDCs and Haiti, including their structural challenges more pronounced, and it is expected that they will be further impacted in the long-term owing to the fragility of their health-care systems, limited coverage of their social protection systems, limited financial and other resources and high levels of debt and illicit financial flows and vulnerability to external shocks. Besides slower growth, the pandemic is expected to reverse gains achieved in African LDCs and Haiti in recent years particularly in areas of gender equality, poverty eradication and reductions in

income inequality, education, and employment, thereby jeopardizing prospects for the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. We recognize that African LDCs and Haiti have made good progress in raising per capita spending on primary education which has contributed to increased primary enrolment and completion rates and improved gender parity in primary and secondary schools. Furthermore, they have been notably successful in politically empowering women through increased representation in national parliaments and local government, as appropriate. They have also reduced export concentration by diversifying their primary commodity exports.

4. While half of the 6 LDCs that have graduated from the category so far are from Africa, namely Botswana, Cabo Verde and Equatorial Guinea, we are concerned that the slow and uneven development in African LDCs and Haiti results in limited progress to meet the graduation criteria, against the target of the Istanbul Programme of Action, which specified that half the number of LDCs should qualify for graduation.

5. We recognize that African LDCs and Haiti represent an enormous human and natural resource potential, with its population structure and youth optimism; coupled with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), provides opportunities for LDCs to participate in world economic growth, welfare, prosperity and food and energy security, and that they have made considerable efforts in implementing the commitments of the IPoA. Therefore, a successful, renewed and strengthened global partnership that effectively addresses the special needs of African LDCs and Haiti will contribute to peace, prosperity and sustainable development for all. Further strengthening of our collective actions towards enabling LDCs' young populations and women will more effectively contribute to equitable and inclusive development, poverty eradication, job creation and social justice. We recognize that Youth from African LDCs and Haiti constitute an essential partner and resource for the achievement of the goals of the IPoA. We recommend the meaningful inclusion of youth's voices at all levels of the preparatory process, aiming at the inclusion of the challenges impacting young people, as well as their innovative solutions for a strengthened inter-generational partnership.

6. We therefore underline the need for revisiting the current system of support for the LDCs in the lead-up to the Fifth United Nations Conference on LDCs, 23–27 January 2022 in Doha with a view to ensuring that the international support measures provide the levels of assistance necessary for the African LDCs and Haiti to address the structural barriers to development that they face and overcome their vulnerabilities. It is thus crucial that a new Programme of Action will not only support the required acceleration of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda as well as the Agenda 2063, but also, strengthen African LDCs and Haiti's systems and policy frameworks to more effectively integrate and fairly compete in the global economy and eventually move towards convergence with other more developed economies.

Call for Action

7. We call upon our development partners to provide enhanced support to LDCs to achieve the overarching goal, set out in the Istanbul Programme of Action, of enabling half of them to meet the criteria for graduation by removing structural constraints through eradication of poverty and the achievement of accelerated, sustained, inclusive and equitable growth and sustainable development. Especially with the setbacks in development progress through COVID-19, this requires effective and sound national government policies and commitments, enhanced global support and appropriate mechanisms at all levels. We also call for genuine solidarity with the

aspirations expressed by LDCs during this meeting with a view to fostering and strengthening new partnerships for achieving SDGs and Agenda 2063 in LDCs.

7bis. We recognize that, 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 next programme of action.

8. We recall the "Statement dated 28 April 2020 of the Group of LDCs on the coronavirus disease (COVID-19): burgeoning challenges and a global stimulus package for the least developed countries" contained in document A/74/843. We reiterate our call for a global stimulus package for the least developed countries to be funded and implemented with immediate effect to address the impacts of COVID-19 which includes, among others, emergency public health package including PPEs, ventilators, tele-health and telemedicine facilities; support for social protection systems; development and dissemination of robust information, education and communication campaigns to demystify myths and fears surrounding COVID-19 vaccines; education support for students in the form of digital equipment, as well as educational radio and television programmes; fulfilment of ODA commitments of 0.15–0.20 per cent at the earliest with grants-based ODA; full debt cancellation of all multilateral, bilateral and commercial debts owed by LDCs and the debt standstill with immediate effect until the decision of the debt cancellation; richer countries could apportion some of their SDRs to multilateral institutions to pay for debt payment cancellation for LDCs; lifting trade barriers and scaling up aid for trade; and additional allocations, including increased special drawing right allocations for LDCs to the tune of $50 billion.

9. Furthermore, in the medium- to long-term, the stimulus package includes ensuring an adequate, affordable and rapid supply of vaccines/immunization and antiviral drugs related to COVID-19; providing technology, technical know-how and free license to manufacture antiviral drugs and vaccines; launching stimulus packages to stabilize the agricultural sector with seed distribution and fertilizer programmes and subsidies; taking into account structural constraints and longer-term investment requirements for the implementation of the SDGs in the debt sustainability framework for LDCs; launching a renewed and revitalized equitable global trade framework to promote export earnings of LDCs; promoting the use of digital transfers of remittances and reduce remittance transaction fees; enhancing the quality, availability and affordability of the Internet and other online-related facilities, especially in rural areas; and providing countries graduating from the LDC category with continued and scaled up international assistance to support export sectors in order to avoid the reversal of development gains.

10. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, we reaffirm our commitment to strengthen our healthcare systems by meeting the African Union Abuja Declaration of 2001 target of allocating at least 15% of our annual budget and urge development partners to scale up support in this sector. Specifically, we call the development partners to support access to equipment like Personal protective equipment (PPE), sanitization and other protective measures for frontline workers, provide sufficient number of ventilators, and other supplementary equipment as well as an uninterrupted supply of essential medicines and equitable and affordable access to vaccines and medication.

11. 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. We also recognize the need of ensuring full, equal, and meaningful participation in decision-making as well as equal access to leadership and representation for all women at all levels and in all spheres of society, as well as strengthening their voice, while ensuring a safe and enabling environment for them and taking action to eliminate any barriers in this regard.

12. We recognize the importance of building productive capacity as a critical enabler for the development and graduation of the LDCs and reducing the dependence on exports of few and primarily raw commodities. We emphasize that the development of physical infrastructure is an important prerequisite to reach the IPoA target and SDG 8.1 of 7 per cent 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 gap in the LDCs. 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.

13. We recognize that LDCs face key challenges with respect to their economic structure. We will therefore further strengthen our efforts to accelerate capital accumulation, knowledge development, technology acquisition, and employment creation, including for low-skilled labor, especially women, for the expansion of higher-value-addition and competitiveness, including in high-productivity services, like ICTs, tourism and financial services. In this regard, we commit to spending at least 1 per cent of GDP on Research and Development, as called for during the 2006 Khartoum Decision of the Executive Council of the African Union and to implement the AU Science, Technology, and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2024 (STISA-2024).

14. We recognise the need to provide the rapidly growing youth population in LDCs with education, training, job opportunities and prospects for a decent life. Addressing the increased challenges from the COVID-19 crisis for young women and men in LDCs will require expanding existing cash transfers schemes, in-kind support and other transfers to vulnerable households and workers including in the informal economy; developing comprehensive national plans for a job-rich recovery, with close coordination across government agencies, reliable labour market information to facilitate monitoring of progress, and social dialogue to ensure accountability; reshaping skills development systems and addressing key skills gaps due to changes in demand and the digital revolution and capacity development for youth to develop and implement sustainable business.

15. We recognize that technology plays a crucial role in the promotion of inclusive development and the achievement of the SDGs as well as Agenda 2063 for the African LDCs and Haiti. The critical importance of technology for development has been made even clearer by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has further amplified the need to address and close the digital and technological divide. We call upon the international community to come up with specific measures which support the transfer of technology to enable LDCs to reap the benefits of frontier technologies for achieving SDGs, including through access to and adapting modern technologies, technological know-how, infrastructure, and necessary logistics. We call on the development partners to consider the provision of concessional start-up finance for least developed countries' businesses, which invest in new technologies.

16. We welcome the new targets adopted by the Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development in 2018, in support of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, within the context of the new challenges of a digital world. The

Commission called for, inter alia, by 2025, Broadband-Internet user penetration should reach 35% in LDCs; all countries should have a funded national broadband plan or strategy, or include broadband in their universal access and services definition; entry-level broadband services should be made affordable in developing countries, at less than 2% of monthly gross national income per capita; 60% of youth and adults should have achieved at least a minimum level of proficiency in sustainable digital skills; and, 40% of the world's population should be using digital financial services. We call upon the development partners, the private sector, international organisations, and other relevant stakeholders to contribute to the achievement of these targets as well as those of the Secretary General roadmap for digital cooperation and those of the Smart Africa Alliance, especially since digital technology has become a necessity in all socio-economic sectors, including remote learning, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

17. We note that while access to electricity in African LDCs and Haiti increased significantly wide disparities persist across countries. We express our concern that that without urgent and enhanced action, LDCs will not be able to reach the international target on energy. Closing the energy gap will require increased investment in off-grid, mini-grid, decentralized grid-connected solutions to reach remote populations, fostering investments for renewables and clean cooking fuels, climate-proofing existing hydro generation systems and rehabilitation of degraded watershed areas, improving technology transfer, using new business models such as pay-as-you-go and, enhancing regional integration. We call upon development partners to enhance financial and technical cooperation and assistance for generation and distribution of sustainable energy as well as enhancing energy efficiency. We welcome the launch of the Coalition on Sustainable Energy Access for the Least Developed Countries at the Secretary-General's Climate Action Summit, led by Morocco and Ethiopia, aiming at responding to the vital needs of the global population, particularly those located in remote areas of the LDCs, in terms of electricity access, clean cooking, clean water supply, irrigation, cooling and heating with the ambition of "*leaving no one behind*". We call upon development partners to provide necessary support to this coalition and request the Secretary-General to undertake necessary measures for the implementation of the Coalition and the LDC REEEI (the LDCs Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Initiative for Sustainable Development).

18. We welcome the specific initiatives presented under the nine action areas at the Climate Action Summit, which have high potentials to curb greenhouse gas emissions and increased global action on adaptation and resilience. We reaffirm our commitment to address climate change in accordance with our capabilities and national circumstances. We recall the LDC Initiative for Effective Adaptation and Resilience (LIFE-AR), which steps up the climate ambition of LDCs with its vision to deliver climate-resilient development pathways by 2030 and net-zero emissions by 2050, which complements the LDC work programme under the UNFCCC in providing strategic direction for supporting the LDCs in addressing climate change. We call for multi-stakeholder partnerships that will bring together government, private sector, civil society, academia and communities focusing on integrated adaptation, mitigation and resilience planning at national and local levels. We recognize the importance of youth-led initiatives to counterbalance the existing negative effects of climate change and the necessity to support such initiatives while establishing strong institutions and clear regulatory frameworks for environmental accountability.

19. We reiterate the critical role of the National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) under the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement in addressing adaptation needs in the LDCs, and underscore the importance of supporting all LDCs in producing their first NAP by end of 2021; implementing their priority adaptation needs in the NAPS under the

Green Climate Fund (GCF) as well as other sources; and developing indicators for measuring progress on adaptation on the ground in LDCs. The allocation of 50% of adaptation funding under the GCF to the LDCs, SIDS and vulnerable countries in Africa should be fully implemented, to supplement dedicated funds for addressing the climate crisis by LDCs, for example the LDC Fund established by the UNFCCC. The LDCs face great capacity constraints in accessing these funds. We call upon the developed countries to operationalize the Green Climate Fund fully and in a timely manner, with the goal of mobilizing $100 billion per year by 2020, promoting and facilitating low carbon and resilient-building projects in the LDCs and addressing the needs of people adversely impacted by climate changes and extreme weather events.

20. We underline that given the impact of the food crisis on food security in African LDCs, there is a need for the international community to increase funding for short-term food emergencies. We call for accelerated and aligned actions including adequate investment in physical infrastructure, scientific and technological development, research and agricultural extension services in the LDCs, incorporation of producers from LDCs in regional and global value chains, supported by all stakeholders and countries, including more integrated support from the United Nations and the international community to free our world from poverty, inequalities, hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition in all its forms. We recall the commitment made by African leaders to allocate at least 10 per cent of public expenditure to agriculture and to ensure its efficiency and effectiveness. We also call for establishing a regional and global system of food stockholding in dealing with humanitarian food emergencies in African LDCs.

21. We stress the urgency of facilitating access to credit, technology and skills to support agricultural development and building up inclusive value chains that support smallholder farmers and private sector development to create the synergies between nutrition, poverty reduction and the structural transformation of the economies of the African LDCs and Haiti.

22. We note with great concern that LDCs suffer disproportionately high human and economic losses owing to climate changes and disasters; acknowledge that the compounded impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on systems already stressed by the climate crisis demonstrate the complex and systemic nature of disaster risk and that hazards can combine with each other to cause cascading impacts. We recognise the urgency of implementing the Sendai Framework and the Paris Agreement as an integral part of the 2030 Agenda and that prevention, disaster risk reduction and resilience-building are central to a country's sustainable development strategies and investment, to reduce poverty and inequalities, and protect the human, economic and natural capital. We acknowledge that financing for disaster risk reduction presents a considerable challenge to the implementation of national and local disaster risk reduction strategies in the LDCs and call for all public and private, domestic and international investment, as well as bilateral and multilateral support, to be risk informed and aligned with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies. We further acknowledge that available climate finance under the GCF (and other funds) remains a major challenge for many LDCs to access efficiently and effectively owing to many capacity issues and complexity of access modalities and call for simplified access procedures and enhanced efforts to ensure LDCs are able to develop bankable projects that lead to measurable resilience on the ground.

23. In order to build back better and enhance preparedness for future disasters we reaffirm our invitation to the General Assembly (in A/RES/72/231) to decide on the establishment of a "comprehensive multi-stakeholder resilience-building mechanism for LDCs", leveraging the existing measures and initiatives. In this regard, we request the Secretary-General and the General Assembly of the United Nations to undertake

necessary measures to improve resilience building for LDCs which would help them to build and strengthen their national adaptation and mitigation capacity, provide technical support to prepare project documents to access and utilize available climate funds and critical technologies; provide risk insurance and guarantees for weather insurance and derivates; and draw together bilateral initiatives and support by multilateral institutions, private sector, NGOs and foundations, building on existing regional and international initiatives. We encourage investments and partnerships to strengthen understanding of climate risk and more broadly systemic risk and its application in decision-making in the LDCs, including through disaster risk reduction education, comprehensive risk management, building academic and scientific capacity, utilization of frontier technologies, and supporting traditional, indigenous and local knowledge and practices.

24. We are concerned that the LDCs are disproportionally affected by the collapse of value chains and declining commodity prices due to COVID-19, after their share in world merchandise exports deteriorated in five successive years. As the African LDCs and Haiti have highly concentrated exports with a heavy reliance on few products we will target diversification of our economies as a key part of our development strategies, including through the implementation of the AfCFTA. In this context, there is also need to step up investments in green recovery to enhance growth, create decent jobs and accelerate intra-regional trade through the effective implementation of the AfCFTA.

25. We reaffirm our determination to complete the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) and call upon the members of the World Trade Organization to strongly commit to addressing the marginalization of LDCs in international trade and to improve their effective and equitable participation in the multilateral trading system. We also call upon the members to fully and faithfully implement all the LDC-specific provisions contained in the World Trade Organization agreements, ministerial decisions and declarations, including the LDC decisions taken in Bali and Nairobi Ministerial Conferences, as well as decisions adopted in the regular work of the WTO. We further call upon the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference to deliver concrete outcomes in favor of the LDCs. We invite the WTO secretariat to undertake a comprehensive study on the lack of progress in achieving SDG 17.11 and to make specific recommendations on the way forward to achieve this SDG by 2030.

26. We welcome the entry into force of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), which will address high trade costs incurred by African LDCs and Haiti 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 African LDCs and Haiti to help them build sustainable capacity to implement their commitments under the TFA, in accordance with Articles 13 and 21.

27. We also call on developed country Members to provide preferential market access and rules of origin to all business to consumer goods and services that are exported from LDCs with special preference to those using an e-commerce platform directly from suppliers in LDCs. In this regard, we look forward to intensified and concerted action of the G20 countries to enhance the ability of LDCs to more fully engage in digital trade, as committed in the G20 Summit in Germany in 2017 and further call on relevant organizations to enhance support including, capacity-building to assist LDCs to address gaps in legal and regulatory frameworks and develop digital skills.

28. We recognize that the operationalization of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA), which started on 1 January 2021, is expected to boost intra-African trade expansion by 15–25 per cent by 2040, stimulate sustained economic growth (increasing GDP by 1–3 per cent) and foster inclusive development.

The success of AfCFTA, however, hinges on improved financial integration, trade facilitation, conducive trade policies, regulations and mechanisms as well as reliable and responsive infrastructure.

29. We recognize that domestic resource mobilization is key for achieving the SDGs and Agenda 2063 but was seriously impacted by COVID-19. We commit to enhance efforts towards taxation, savings mobilization and financial inclusion, aiming at reducing inequalities. We stress the importance of conducive international regulatory frameworks and transparency as well as national and regional financial institutions, including development banks in this respect. We call for enhanced international tax cooperation to avoid base erosion and profit shifting and welcome support through initiatives including Tax inspectors without borders.

30. We are concerned about the decline in bilateral ODA to LDCs during 2020, when it is most needed. We reiterate our call upon donor countries to fulfill their ODA commitments in the Istanbul Programme of Action and strive to provide 0.25 per cent of their gross national income by 2030 or at least 50 per cent of net official development assistance to the LDCs. We also call upon them to ensure quality and effectiveness of aid, especially through predictability and accountability, use of recipient country's system and elimination of tied aid. We call upon the development partners to provide enhanced financial and technical support to the LDCs, in line with their priorities, including for project preparation and capacity building for project development.

31. 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 are based on new partnerships between countries at different levels of development as well as public and private actors, in line with the characteristics of each country and sector. We stress that the innovative sources of financing, including blended finance, should be additional, substantial, predictable, with preferential rates especially tailored to LDCs and disbursed in a manner that respects the priorities and special needs of the LDCs and does not unduly burden them. We furthermore stress that it will be critical that blended finance approaches address currency exchange risks, ticket size and risk tolerance among others. Furthermore, we call for new financial instruments that harness the potential of digital innovations for the financing of the SDGs, including e.g. digital financing platforms, innovative digital services, Micro- Small and Medium- sized Enterprises (MSMEs) digitization and domestic resource mobilization. We also call for a dedicated financing mechanism that delivers catalytic investment capital for SMEs and small investment projects in African LDCs and Haiti to mobilize sustainable private investments that advance the SDGs and act as a crisis facility to mitigate the effects of COVID-19.

32. We are concerned about the high and rising levels of illicit financial flows from African LDCs, which are estimated to amount to more than USD 588 billion over the period 1980–2018 and commit to enhance efforts to curtail illicit financial flows at all levels, enhance disclosure practices and promote transparency in financial information. We commit to promote policies and programmes, including the involvement of civil society organizations to track and bring back any illicit capital outflows. This needs to be complimented by measures to prevent the transfer abroad of stolen assets and assistance in their recovery and return.

33. We commit to redouble efforts to substantially reduce illicit financial flows by 2030, with a view to eventually eliminating them, including by combating tax evasion and corruption through strengthened national regulation and increased international cooperation, in line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and the strengthening of international cooperation to combat illicit financial flows. We encourage efforts to

strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and the identification of good practices for the return of stolen assets in support of sustainable development.

34. We are concerned that since 2012 but exacerbated by COVID-19 the external debt stock and debt service of many African LDCs has drastically increased, resulting in 4 African LDCs being in debt distress as of November 2020 and additional 10 African LDCs and Haiti at high risk of debt distress. We acknowledge the efforts of the global community to deal with the financial impacts of the pandemic, including the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI), which is open to LDCs, but recognise their limitations in terms of scope and participation of creditors as they do not cancel any debt. We call upon development partners to take effective measures to reduce unsustainable debt levels owed by LDCs, including through debt cancellation and restructuring of existing high debt. We call for improved debt management and responsible lending and borrowing, including by providing financing on more concessional terms by official creditors and ensuring that lending practices are fully in line with sustainable financing practices. We call on bilateral and multilateral development partners to use new instruments like debt swaps and state-contingent lending, taking into account risks beyond the control of government like natural disasters and climate risks. We also call for technical assistance and capacity building for LDCs to strengthen their debt management.

35. We call upon development partners, Multilateral Development Banks and the IMF to introduce new and comprehensive debt relief initiatives for African LDCs and Haiti in this respect. We also call upon creditors, both public and private, for additional effective measures to facilitate financing of our economic development, including access to grants and concessional resources for investment in critically needed infrastructure and development projects to avoid further indebtedness. The debt sustainability framework for LDCs should systematically take into account their structural constraints and longer-term investment requirements for the implementation of the SDGs.

36. We recognize the critical importance of the work of the Technology Bank for LDCs in improving LDCs' scientific research and innovation base, promote networking among researchers and research institutions, help LDCs access and utilize critical technologies, and draw together bilateral initiatives and support by multilateral institutions and the private sector, and to implement projects contributing to the use of STI for economic development in LDCs. We take note with appreciation of the contributions made to the Bank by the host country Turkey and other countries and call upon all members, especially donor countries and other development partners to make substantive contributions to the Bank for its effective functioning. We also call upon member States to raise awareness on the activities of the Technology Bank in their countries and to collaborate with the Technology Bank to ensure that technology is used as a critical tool for development. We therefore support the UN Technology Bank as the focal point for LDCs to strengthen their science, technology and innovation capacity towards building sustainable productive capacities and promoting structural economic transformation.

37. We are concerned that COVID-19 accelerated the decline of FDI to African LDCs and Haiti, which remains heavily concentrated in the extractive industries. We underline the need for undertaking necessary measures to further accelerate FDI to LDCs in areas where it contributes to achieving the SDGs, including measures to reduce risks. 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 LDCs 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 through the Investment Support Programme, implemented by the International Development Law Organization (IDLO) and at improving the capacity of the investment promotion agencies of LDCs to attract, diversify and retain FDI and derive maximum benefit from it. We take note with appreciation of the Capacity Development Programme for the investment promotion agencies of LDCs, developed by UN-OHRLLS jointly with UNCTAD, UNIDO, ILO, EIF and WAIPA; and call for financial support to this programme.

38. We recall the SDG target 17.5 which decides to "adopt and implement investment promotion regimes for LDCs" and express deep concern at the lack of progress in its implementation. We call upon Member States to establish "an international investment support center for the LDCs" 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 LDCs; (b) provision of technical support to assist the LDCs 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.

39. We call on the international community to support the adoption of sustainability reporting by companies from African LDCs and Haiti through capacity building so as to improve the private sector contribution to sustainable development, while enhancing firms' competitiveness and their ability to participate in global value chains.

40. We recognize the contributions of migrants in mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in both their countries of origin and destination, and note with concern the significant socioeconomic consequences that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on migrant workers and refugees from least developed countries, including those in the low wage informal economy as well as the effects that the projected significant decline in remittances will have on the millions of people that depend heavily on them, 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 to facilitate the orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.

41. We underline that North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation is vital to the LDCs, noting that South-South cooperation is not a substitute but a complement to North-South cooperation, 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, we call upon the countries of the South to further strengthen their support provided to the LDCs in all these areas in a predictable manner along the lines of the outcome document of the Second High-Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation.

42. We will implement our commitments under various regional and international conventions, especially the Agenda 2063 to improve governance, ensure human rights and promote peace and security. Strengthening the rule of law, enforcing property

rights, combating corruption, building strong institutions, fostering social cohesion and enhancing accountability in public service delivery are all essential to improving governance and thereby sustainable development. We express deep concern that LDCs are hugely underrepresented in the decision-making processes of the global financial architecture. This needs to be addressed for the legitimacy and effectiveness of the global financial system. We call upon the international community to broadening and strengthening the voice and participation of LDCs in international economic decision-making and norm-setting and global economic governance.

43. We recognize that peace and security is a condition sine qua non for growth and sustainable development. Enhanced efforts are required to help build durable peace and sustainable development in LDCs. We call upon the international community, including the United Nations, to extend support of the international community, for strengthening national, sub-regional and continental efforts aimed at peace-building, including capacity for conflict mediation, resolution and management and post-conflict consolidation. We also recognize the importance of the participation of women and youth in the design, implementation and evaluation of peace-building processes. Special support should be provided to post-conflict countries to enable them to achieve a smooth transition from relief to development.

44. We acknowledge that ensuring equal access to vital services plays a crucial role in reducing disparities and promoting trust in public institutions and can therefore have significant implications for development, peace and security across the continent. In this regard, we reaffirm our commitment to place social inclusion and transparency in the use of public resources at the center of our agenda, particularly as we embark on building back better in the post-COVID-19 scenario. We appeal to on all actors to subscribe to the UN Secretary-General's call for a Global Ceasefire and we call upon the international community to support the implementation of the African Union Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa in order to create enabling conditions for social and economic cohesion and resilience.

45. We recognize the importance of supporting Agenda 2063 and its first 10-year implementation plan (2014–2023) and acknowledges the programme of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, both of which are integral to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and underscore in this regard the importance of a coherent and coordinated implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda.

46. We request the OHRLLS and UNECA to extend necessary support to the LDCs in the implementation and monitoring of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as the new programme of action through coordination with various United Nations entities, raising global awareness, mobilizing international support and resources in favor of the LDCs, 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 Least Developed Countries. In this regard, we strongly urge the SecretaryGeneral and the Member States to strengthen the OHRLLS to enable it to provide substantive support to LDCs in their pursuit to meaningfully engage in the intergovernmental discussions and implement the programme of action for LDCs and the 2030 Agenda.

Vote of thanks

47. We express our profound gratitude to the people and the Government of the Republic Malawi for organizing this meeting. We express our gratitude to the Governments of Turkey and Qatar for their generous contributions to the successful organization of the meeting. We note with appreciation the substantive support of the

Office of the High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa, the Office of the Resident Coordinator in Malawi, the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO). We also note with appreciation the active participation and substantive contributions of development partners and the UN system, as well as other international and regional organizations. We also express our thanks to parliamentarians as well as the representatives of the Private Sector, Civil Society, youth and other stakeholders.

Annex-B

The Asia-Pacific Regional Review Meeting in preparation of the Fifth United Nations Conference on LDCs (LDC5) 30 August–2 September 2021

Geneva, Switzerland

Political Declaration

Introduction

48. We, Ministers and representatives of the Asia-Pacific least developed countries (LDCs) including Yemen participating in the Asia-Pacific Regional Review Meeting in preparation of the Fifth United Nations Conference on LDCs (LDC5), are gathered in Geneva, Switzerland from 30 August–2 September 2021 in a hybrid format (both in person and online) to undertake a comprehensive appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action by the least developed countries and their development partners, share best practices and lessons learned and identify obstacles and constraints encountered as well as actions and initiatives needed to overcome them; to identify effective international and domestic policies in the light of the outcome of the appraisal as well as new and emerging challenges and opportunities and the means to address them; to reaffirm the global commitment to addressing the special needs of the LDCs made at the major United Nations conferences and summits, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework; and to mobilize additional international support measures and actions, in addition to domestic resources, in favour of the LDCs and, in this regard, to formulate and adopt a renewed partnership between the LDCs and their development partners, including the governments, private sector and civil society at all levels.

49. We are having this meeting at an unprecedented time. The world is truly in a challenging situation. Massive and rapid spike in new cases of COVID-19 have further worsened the already shattered health and economic systems. Hospitals are more overwhelmed than before. Many of our countries are experiencing third or fourth wave of COVID-19, mostly affected by the deadly Delta Variant. Our countries are particularly hard hit due to the combination of weak health infrastructure, low levels of resilience to external shocks, and limited fiscal space and resilience capacity to address the impacts of various shocks and crises. The significant slowdown in growth that our economies are experiencing are reversing years of progress in poverty reduction and other socio-economic indicators. Widespread extreme poverty, lack of social protection system and potential food shortages will have profound impacts on our development prospects. We acknowledge that the compounded impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on systems already stressed by the climate and financial crises demonstrate the complex and systemic nature of disaster risk and that hazards can combine with each other to cause cascading impacts. A renewed global action plan is warranted for LDCs to protect their economy and people from the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

50. We note with great concern that LDCs suffer disproportionately high human and economic losses owing to climate change and disasters. We welcome the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Working Group I report entitled “Climate Change 2021: the Physical Science Basis” which flagged that carbon dioxide concentration has been the highest in at least 2 million years. The report found that human activity, primarily the production of atmospheric CO2 from the burning of fossil fuels, has driven global warming at a rate that is unprecedented in the last

2,000 years. Due to climate change, human communities everywhere on Earth are affected by extreme weather events that are longer, more intense, and more frequent. The Earth has already warmed by about 1.1 degrees Celsius, or about 2 degrees Fahrenheit and every fraction of a degree of warming would bring ever more destructive floods, deadlier heat waves and worsening droughts as well as accelerating sea-level rise that could threaten the existence of some island nations. If current warming continues, Earth will exceed 2.7 degrees Fahrenheit (1.5 degrees Celsius) of warming and reach 3.6 F (2 degree C) by 2050, which will further intensify the severity of extreme weather. The report warned that unless there are immediate, rapid and large-scale reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, limiting warming to close to 1.5°C or even 2°C will be beyond reach. While LDCs have contributed the least to climate change, they are the most vulnerable to and the worst affected by its consequences. We are running out of time and there is an increasing moral and economic imperative to respond to the consequences of the climate change. Developed and larger polluting countries should immediately reduce their planet-warming pollution, compensate the loss and damage faced by the LDCs and provide them with adequate funding and technology on a sustained and predictable basis to overcome the challenges posed by climate change and build resilience against future shocks and crises.

51. The Asia-Pacific LDCs and Yemen are more vulnerable than other countries to the effects of climate change for several reasons. First, many of them, such as small island States and low-lying coastal States, are the most exposed to the consequences of global warming, such as a rise in sea level. Second, this vulnerability has been intensified by the high proportion of their economies that is accounted for by agriculture. Third, the melting of the glaciers in the Himalayas threaten the very source of major rivers upon which millions of livelihoods depend including the looming threat of Glacier Lake Outburst Floods (GLOF] and also creating far-reaching negative consequences to both upstream the downstream countries. Fourth, the increased frequency of natural disasters has further aggravated their vulnerability and reduced their ability to mitigate the impacts of natural disasters. The island least developed countries are even more prone to the existential threat of climate change, with some are already experiencing internally displaced climate change refugees. Their small, open and narrow economies, which rely heavily on the trade of a few primary commodities and services, make them highly susceptible to external shocks and commodity price volatility. The international community should urgently support their adaptation and mitigation programmes.

52. The Asia-Pacific LDCs including Yemen are facing multiple challenges as out of the 12 LDCs in the region, four are land-locked and 5 are small island developing states. Moreover, three LDCs in the region are trapped in conflict and post-conflict situations, causing humanitarian crisis and severely impeding progress towards goals and targets of the IPoA. Steady economic growth helped to reduce income poverty in these countries and facilitate their progress towards meeting several targets of the SDGs. In the implementation of the Programme of Action, however, the LDCs encountered significant challenges and continued to face vulnerabilities. The severe impacts of climate change and increased frequency of natural disasters in the Asia-Pacific LDCs, together with their inability to address the impacts, has increased their vulnerability, undermining their economic development. These challenges, if not addressed, will have an enduring impact on the resilience of the countries, even if they manage to graduate from the category of LDCs.

53. We note with satisfaction that the issue of graduation bears special significance to the Asia Pacific LDCs. Ten out of twelve LDCs in the region (including Yemen) are at varying stages of graduation, which testifies commendable progress that the countries of this region have achieved. We are, however, mindful that the progress

achieved so far is far from adequate, as many of our countries are struggling to achieve the SDGs. As we take stock of the implementation of the Istanbul Program of Action (IPoA) and prepare for a new ten-year program of action, our ultimate objective is the attainment of graduation by all LDCs in the region by 2030.

Status of implementation of the IPoA

54. We note with satisfaction that during the implementation period of the IPoA 2011–2021, the Asia-Pacific LDCs made considerable progress in their socio-economic development. Their aggregate gross domestic product (GDP) growth was 6.4 per cent during the period 2011–2019, while the simple average growth was less than 5 per cent. It is likely that economic growth in the final year of the implementation period of the Istanbul Programme of Action will be lower in most countries, with an estimated weighted average of 2.5 per cent in 2020 because of severe COVID-19-related disruptions.[1] Government revenue (excluding grants) increased from 19.1 per cent of GDP in 2011 to 22.8 per cent in 2019, driven primarily by the rise in tax revenues.

55. We, however, note that most of the Asia-Pacific LDCs achieved only small changes in the composition of their GDP by major sectors, reflecting only limited progress in productive capacity and structural transformation. Limited structural transformation makes the countries less resilient to economic shocks. The share of manufacturing value added in GDP has either fallen or remained almost unchanged. Low private investment, infrastructure gaps, lack of skilled labour, poor capacity of public sector institutions and difficulty in diversifying export markets are some of the impediments to manufacturing growth and productive capacity development. Further efforts will therefore be required to expand and diversify the manufacturing base, seek out new markets, adopt new and innovative forms of manufacturing technologies, invest in new skills, and improve investment climates to increase productive capacity.

56. We note that, overall, the provision of physical infrastructure has improved across most Asia-Pacific least developed countries. However, the general poor quality of road, port and digital infrastructure contributes to high transportation costs. Although mobile cellular subscriptions in the Asia-Pacific LDCs surged remarkably, from 38.1 per 100 people in 2010 to 89.5 in 2018, Internet penetration was only 47 per cent in 2019, while the Istanbul Programme of Action target was to provide 100 per cent access to the Internet by 2020. Access to electricity in Asia-Pacific LDCs rose sharply, from 55.4 per cent in 2010 to 87.3 per cent in 2018.

57. We are concerned that the Asia-Pacific LDCs as a group missed the IPoA target to double the share of exports as their combined share in world goods and services exports increased from 0.23 per cent in 2011 to only 0.38 per cent in 2019. While Asia-Pacific LDCs are important beneficiaries of the preferential schemes that many of their trading partners offer, many of LDCs of this region have not been able to take full advantage of these measures, owing to often complex non-tariff barriers and supply-side constraints.

58. We note that modest progress has been made by Asia-Pacific LDCs in achieving human and social development. Poor health services are making Asia-Pacific LDCs more vulnerable to pandemics such as COVID-19. It has also proven existing healthcare and social protection systems in most of the region’s LDCs inadequate. Indeed, only 19 per cent of the population in the Asia-Pacific LDCs was covered by at least one social protection benefit in 2019, compared to 58 per cent for other

[1] World Economic Situation and Prospects 2021 (United Nations publication, 2021).

developing countries in the region. As a result, this has left many workers, particularly those in the informal sector, vulnerable to external shocks. On average, LDCs in the region invest only 0.9 per cent of GDP in social protection, compared to the average of 6.3 per cent for other developing countries.

59. We also note that despite progresses in education, the average net enrolment rate for primary education has remained at approximately 90 per cent over the implementation period of the IPoA. Moreover, enrolment and completion rates for tertiary education remain low, which has far-reaching implications for the structural transformation agenda of the LDCs. Lack of access to quality education, which is compounded by lack of access to basic services, continues to particularly affect young people living in remote areas, as well as those living in displaced or poor communities, where there is a lack of human resources as well as technical and digital tools to secure quality education and relevant skills development. Lack of economic opportunities along with poor basic facilities and infrastructure, such as the lack of computers and access to safe drinking water or electricity, along with insufficient trained teachers and the limited or lack of adequate learning and teaching materials, seriously affect the quality of education in LDCs.

60. We recognize that the Asia-Pacific LDCs represent an enormous human and natural resource potential, provides opportunities for LDCs to participate in world economic growth, welfare, prosperity and food and energy security, and that they have made considerable efforts in implementing the commitments of the IPoA. Therefore, a successful, renewed and strengthened global partnership that effectively addresses the special needs of the Asia-Pacific LDCs will contribute to peace, prosperity and sustainable development for all. Further strengthening of our collective actions towards enabling LDCs' young populations and women will more effectively contribute to equitable and inclusive development, poverty eradication, job creation and social justice. Going forward, we recognize that Youth from Asian LDCs constitute an essential partner and resource for the achievement of the goals of the new programme of action. We recommend the meaningful inclusion of youth's voices at all levels of the preparatory process, aiming at the inclusion of the challenges impacting young people, as well as their innovative solutions for a strengthened inter-generational partnership.

61. While LDCs in the Asia-Pacific region are still primarily "young", they are moving towards ageing societies resulting from rapid fertility declines and increased life expectancy. There are more older women than older men. This further calls for strengthening social protection, including access to healthcare and providing specific healthcare catering to the needs of older persons including long-term care.

62. While net ODA to Asia-Pacific LDCs increased in nominal terms between 2011 and 2018, the ratio of ODA to gross national income in fact declined from 4.3 per cent to 2.7 per cent during the same period. In light of rising spending needs and economic contraction due to the COVID-19 pandemic, public debt in most Asia-Pacific least developed countries is estimated to have increased in 2020 by 5.9 percentage points of GDP and a higher debt service burden is anticipated in the future. These developments are worrying as they point to a reduced fiscal space that these countries face, in times where pressures on their development are increasing.

63. Net foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows to Asia-Pacific LDCs have increased from approximately $5.7 billion in 2011 to $8.4 billion in 2018. Personal remittances sent to the Asia-Pacific LDCs have steadily grown, from $17.5 billion in 2011 to $31.9 billion in 2018. The average cost of sending remittances to Asia-Pacific LDCs, however, remains high, ranging in 2017 from 4.4 per cent to 16.6 per cent of the amount transferred, which is much higher than the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development target of

reducing such transaction costs to 3 per cent by 2030. The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to have adverse implications for remittances to LDCs, although several countries saw a considerable uptick in remittance inflows during the second half of 2020.

64. Of the current 12 Asia-Pacific LDCs (including Yemen), 9 have met the criteria for graduation for at least two consecutive times at the latest triennial review of the CDP in 2021 and one met the graduation criteria for the first time, effectively placing 10 Asia-Pacific LDCs at some point on the graduation pathway. Three countries from this region (Maldives, Samoa and Vanuatu) graduated from the LDCs category in the past decade. Hence, at the end of the current decade, most LDC are likely to have graduated in Asia and the Pacific. This would be a remarkable sign of progress and an achievement in line with Agenda 2030.

Impacts of COVID-19

65. The most severe recent challenge encountered by the LDCs is the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which has dimmed prospects for graduation and smooth transition as well as for realizing the SDGs. Although initially viewed as a public health disaster, COVID-19 rapidly turned into an unprecedented economic and social crisis. The Asia-Pacific LDCs have experienced considerable reductions in economic growth, widespread unemployment, sharp contractions in international trade, a slowdown in the flow of external resources and an almost complete halt in the travel and tourism sectors. The impact of the crisis has been particularly harsh on those employed in the informal sector, including women and migrants, as they had no access to social protection. Despite the relatively small number of COVID-19 cases reported in the LDCs in the initial phase, the pandemic continues to ravage these countries with its new and deadly variants and developed into a multidimensional crisis, owing in part to their high levels of external dependency and exposure as well as their low levels of resilience, defined as the capacity to prepare for, absorb and recover from economic and non-economic shocks.

66. The GDP growth rate of the Asia-Pacific LDCs has sharply declined and reached 2.1 per cent at a weighted average rate (with a simple average of -2.5 per cent) in 2020. Education systems have been severely disrupted by the pandemic as well. A lack of technological capability and digital connectivity and an inability of many households to access ICT have constrained the feasibility of remote learning in LDCs, as has the absence of educators trained in handling and operating digital technologies. Consequently, many children and young people, particularly girls from poor households, have dropped out of schools, which adversely impacts school enrolment, literacy rates and future job prospects. In least developed countries in particular, missing school meals will have a serious impact on child nutrition and lead to increased stunting.

67. All of the Asia-Pacific LDCs witnessed sharp drops in tourist arrivals when travel bans were imposed, leading to a 47 per cent decline in earnings from tourist arrivals in 2020 compared to 2019, with cascading impacts on tourism-related enterprises and services. Exports from LDCs dropped by 17.5 per cent during the second and third quarters of 2020 compared to the same period in 2019. Education systems have been severely disrupted by the pandemic as well. Many children and young people, particularly girls from poor households, have dropped out of schools, which adversely impacts school enrolment, literacy rates and future job prospects.

68. We are concerned that the impact of COVID-19 has further jeopardized the limited progress towards achieving the goals of the IPoA as outlined in the 2021 report of the Secretary General on the implementation of the IPoA and the ESCAP

Development Report 2021 on the Asia-Pacific Countries with Special Needs. COVID-19 has made the vulnerabilities of Asia-Pacific LDCs, including their structural challenges more pronounced, and it is expected that they will be further impacted in the long-term owing to the fragility of their health-care systems, limited coverage of their social protection systems, limited financial and other resources and high levels of debt and illicit financial flows and vulnerability to external shocks. Besides slower growth, the pandemic is expected to reverse gains achieved in the Asia-Pacific LDCs and Yemen in recent years particularly in areas of gender equality, poverty eradication and reductions in income inequality, education, and employment, thereby jeopardizing the progress in the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. The risk of another lost decade of development and a failure to achieve the SDGs is high and rising. Therefore, building back better, stronger, and more resilient is an imperative for LDCs.

69. The pandemic has also demonstrated that LDCs have limited buffers and capacities to respond effectively to external shocks. These factors have been compounded by bleak external conditions surrounding ODA, international trade, FDI and remittances in the aftermath of the pandemic, forcing the LDCs to reassess their development strategies, including preparations for graduation and achieving the SDGs.

70. We therefore underline the need for revisiting the current system of support for the LDCs in the lead-up to the Fifth United Nations Conference on LDCs, 23–27 January 2022 in Doha with a view to ensuring that the international support measures provide the levels of assistance necessary for the Asia-Pacific LDCs to meet their financing needs for SDGs, address the structural barriers to development that they face and overcome their vulnerabilities. It is thus crucial that a new Programme of Action will not only support the required acceleration of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, but also, strengthen Asia-Pacific LDCs' systems and policy frameworks to more effectively integrate and fairly compete in the global economy and eventually move towards convergence with other developed countries.

Call for Action

71. We underline the urgency of an ambitious and transformative development finance and policy response package for LDCs – both domestic and external – to enable sustainable recovery from the pandemic and the implementation of the SDGs. We call upon our development partners to provide enhanced support to LDCs to achieve the overarching goal, set out in the IPoA, of enabling half of them to meet the criteria for graduation by removing structural constraints through eradication of poverty and the achievement of accelerated, sustained, inclusive and equitable growth and sustainable development. Especially with the setbacks in development progress through COVID-19, this requires effective and sound national government policies and commitments, enhanced global support and appropriate mechanisms at all levels. We also call for genuine solidarity with the aspirations expressed by LDCs during this meeting with a view to fostering and strengthening new partnerships for achieving SDGs in LDCs.

72. We recognize that, 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 LDCs in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the next programme of action

for LDCs for the decade 2022–2031, which will be adopted in Doha, Qatar at the LDC5 to be held in January 2022.

73. We recall the "Statement dated 28 April 2020 of the Group of LDCs on the coronavirus disease (COVID-19): burgeoning challenges and a global stimulus package for the least developed countries" contained in document A/74/843. We reiterate our call for a global stimulus package for the least developed countries to be funded and implemented with immediate effect to address the impacts of COVID-19 which includes, among others, emergency public health package including PPEs, ventilators, tele-health and telemedicine facilities; support for social protection systems; development and dissemination of robust information, education and communication campaigns to demystify myths and fears surrounding COVID-19 vaccines; education support for students in the form of digital equipment, as well as educational radio and television programmes; fulfilment of ODA commitments of 0.15–0.20 per cent at the earliest with grants-based ODA; full debt cancellation of all multilateral, bilateral and commercial debts owed by LDCs and the debt standstill with immediate effect until the decision of the debt cancellation; richer countries could apportion some of their SDRs to multilateral institutions to pay for debt payment cancellation for LDCs; lifting trade barriers and scaling up aid for trade; and additional allocations, including increased special drawing right allocations for LDCs to the tune of $50 billion.

74. Furthermore, in the medium- to long-term, the stimulus package includes ensuring an adequate, affordable and rapid supply of vaccines/immunization and antiviral drugs related to COVID-19; providing technology, technical know-how and free license to manufacture antiviral drugs and vaccines; launching stimulus packages to stabilize the agricultural sector with seed distribution and fertilizer programmes and subsidies; taking into account structural constraints and longer-term investment requirements for the implementation of the SDGs in the debt sustainability framework for LDCs; launching a renewed and revitalized equitable global trade framework to promote export earnings of LDCs; promoting the use of digital transfers of remittances and reduce remittance transaction fees; enhancing the quality, availability and affordability of the Internet and other online-related facilities, especially in rural areas; and providing countries graduating from the LDC category with continued and scaled up international assistance to support export sectors in order to avoid the reversal of development gains.

75. We underline that robust and comprehensive social protection systems can support people in times of unanticipated shocks, stabilize aggregate demand and prevent an economy from falling into a deep recession. They can also protect the poorest and most vulnerable people, especially those employed in the informal sector, from the vagaries of economic cycles and help to prevent them falling into poverty. Most least developed countries lack such systems. In the medium-to-long term, least developed countries need to prioritize strengthening their social protection systems and explore options to consolidate their financial viability. Strengthening productive capacity and promoting economic diversification will also play an important role in addressing multidimensional poverty.

76. We will introduce innovative social protection schemes especially provide social protection floors and ensure that for those in the most vulnerable situations such as persons employed in the informal sector, young men and women, indigenous, ethnic and religious minorities, young persons living with disabilities, unemployed, NEET or those coming from economically deprived households are adequately covered.

77. We commit to establishing and strengthening social protection mechanisms, including through mobilizing domestic resources and with full and predictable

support from our development partners, to protect the poor and vulnerable populations, including provision of direct support in the form of cash or food to at least 350 million people living in extreme poverty in LDCs. In this regard, we call upon the development partners to provide $5 billion allocation in emergency assistance as fresh funds for cash transfer to the extreme poor people living in LDCs.

78. We reaffirm our commitment to strengthen our healthcare systems by significantly increasing the annual budget for the health sector and urge development partners to scale up support in this sector and improve the quality of healthcare, including access for al population-age-groups. Specifically, we call the development partners to support access to equipment like personal protective equipment (PPE), sanitization and other protective measures for frontline workers, provide sufficient number of ventilators, and other supplementary equipment as well as an uninterrupted supply of essential medicines and equitable and affordable access to vaccines and medication.

79. We recognize the importance of building productive capacity as a critical enabler for the development and graduation of the LDCs and reducing the dependence on exports of few and primarily raw commodities. We emphasize that the development of physical infrastructure is an important prerequisite to reach the IPoA target and SDG 8.1 of 7 per cent 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 gap in the LDCs. 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 will substantially increase economic and export diversification with a view to reaching the level of other developing countries in export concentration by 2030.

80. We recognize that LDCs face key challenges with respect to their economic structure. We will therefore further strengthen our efforts to accelerate capital accumulation, knowledge development, technology acquisition, and employment creation, including for low-skilled labor, especially women, for the expansion of higher-value-addition and competitiveness, including in high-productivity services, like ICTs, tourism and financial services.

81. We recognise the need to provide the growing youth population in LDCs with education, training, job opportunities and prospects for a decent life. Addressing the increased challenges from the COVID-19 crisis for young women and men in LDCs will require expanding existing cash transfers schemes, in-kind support and other transfers to vulnerable households and workers including in the informal economy; developing comprehensive national plans for a job-rich recovery, with close coordination across government agencies, reliable labour market information to facilitate monitoring of progress, and social dialogue to ensure accountability; reshaping skills development systems and addressing key skills gaps due to changes in demand and the digital revolution and capacity development for youth to develop and implement sustainable business.

82. We recognize that older persons have experienced income losses from the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of them are dependent on family transfers or work in the informal sector, which makes their incomes highly vulnerable. Because of their limited access to ICTs, older persons often have limited access to telemedicine and require special efforts to be connected.

83. We commit to developing and implementing modern, smart and dynamic education policies and programmes, with full engagement of the youth population in decision making processes, with a view to providing skills development, diversified capacity-building, and dynamic and lifelong learning programmes to increase young people's employability and preparedness for the labour market-both domestic and international. In this regard, we call upon the international community to invest heavily in alternative and innovative educational programmes in LDCs that provide learning solutions and tools to ensure that the young people can acquire the necessary skills and competencies to tap the full potentials offered by modern technologies and the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

84. We call upon the development partners to support the LDCs to access digital equipment, including low-cost laptops or other devices, as well as educational radio and television programmes and the distribution of equipment such as radios and textbooks to the poorest and marginalized households, especially for girls. We further commit to supporting large-scale national efforts to utilize technology in support of remote learning and online education.

85. We also invite our development partners including Governments, the private sector and academia to enhance interaction, collaboration and exchange programmes of students as well as share scientific studies and research papers between academic institutions of LDCs and the rest of the world. We also invite them to significantly increase the number of scholarships to LDCs and invite, higher education institutes to allocate places and scholarships for students and trainees from LDCs, in particular in the fields of science, technology, engineering, medicines and business administration in developed countries and other developing countries.

86. We call for a global agreement and consensus on the establishment of an online university for LDCs with high academic excellence and international standard and global recognition of its certification, primarily dedicated to teaching graduate and post-graduate studies on STEM for citizens of LDCs and graduated countries. In this regard, we invite the development partners to host this university and provide predictable financing to fully cover tuition fees and other expenses of the students related to their digital access and reading materials ensuring 50-50 gender balance and we request the Secretary-General to submit a report in full consultation with LDCs and their development partners as well relevant UN entities to the General-Assembly for its consideration at its 77th Session in outlining the modalities, terms of references and its sustainable funding sources.

87. We recognize that technology plays a crucial role in the promotion of inclusive development and the achievement of the SDGs. The critical importance of technology for development has been made even clearer by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has further amplified the need to address and close the digital and technological divide. We call upon the international community to come up with specific measures which support the transfer of technology to enable LDCs to reap the benefits of frontier technologies for achieving SDGs, including through access to and adapting modern technologies, technological know-how, infrastructure, and necessary logistics. We call on the development partners to consider the provision of concessional start-up finance for least developed countries' businesses, which invest in new technologies.

88. We welcome the new targets adopted by the Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development in 2018, in support of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, within the context of the new challenges of a digital world. The Commission called for, inter alia, by 2025, Broadband-Internet user penetration should reach 35% in LDCs; all countries should have a funded national broadband plan or strategy, or include broadband in their universal access and services definition; entry-level broadband services should be made affordable in developing countries, at

less than 2% of monthly gross national income per capita; 60% of youth and adults should have achieved at least a minimum level of proficiency in sustainable digital skills; and, 40% of the world's population should be using digital financial services. We call upon the development partners, the private sector, international organisations, and other relevant stakeholders to contribute to the achievement of these targets as well as those of the Secretary General roadmap for digital cooperation, especially since digital technology has become a necessity in all socio-economic sectors, including remote learning, during the COVID-19 pandemic. By 2025 broadband-internet user penetration should reach 35 per cent in LDCs. By 2031 double the broadband-internet user penetration in LDCs to reach 70 per cent mark.

89. We call upon the international community to provide enhanced financial and technical support to LDCs to establish and strengthen national and regional science institutes to promote research and development in science, technology and innovations as well as adaptation and application of modern technologies for domestic uses. We will also promote local innovation capabilities of LDCs for inclusive and sustainable economic development by bringing together local scientific, vocational and engineering knowledge. We will address gender disparities by enhancing participation of women and girls in science, technology and innovation activities.

90. We note that while access to electricity in the Asia-Pacific LDCs increased significantly wide disparities persist across countries. We express our concern that without urgent and enhanced action, LDCs will not be able to reach the international target on energy. Closing the energy gap will require increased investment in off-grid, mini-grid, decentralized grid-connected solutions to reach remote populations, fostering investments for renewables and clean cooking fuels, climate-proofing existing hydro generation systems and rehabilitation of degraded watershed areas, improving technology transfer, using new business models such as pay-as-you-go and, enhancing regional integration. We call upon development partners to enhance financial and technical cooperation and assistance for generation and distribution of sustainable energy as well as enhancing energy efficiency. We welcome the launch of the Coalition on Sustainable Energy Access for the Least Developed Countries at the Secretary-General's Climate Action Summit, led by Morocco and Ethiopia, aiming at responding to the vital needs of the global population, particularly those located in remote areas of the LDCs, in terms of electricity access, clean cooking, clean water supply, irrigation, cooling and heating with the ambition of "leaving no one behind". We call upon development partners to provide necessary support to this coalition and request the Secretary-General to undertake necessary measures for the implementation of the Coalition and the LDC REEEI (the LDCs Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Initiative for Sustainable Development).

91. We call for doubling international public finance to meet the urgent need for investments in power generation, along with grid reinforcement and upgrading of technology, in order to provide modern, reliable and sustainable energy to all through improved generation, transmission and distribution facilities and enhanced energy efficiency in LDCs. We also call for scaled up and targeted support to LDCs in the implementation of the United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All, including the global plan of action for the Decade. We also urge our development partners to provide financial and technical support to LDCs on a priority basis to double generation of electricity per capita in LDCs by 2030 and double the share of renewable energy in the total final energy consumption in LDCs by 2030.

92. We reaffirm our commitment to addressing climate change in accordance with our capabilities and national circumstances. We recall the LDC Initiative for Effective Adaptation and Resilience (LIFE-AR), which steps up the climate ambition of LDCs with its vision to deliver climate-resilient development pathways by 2030 and

net-zero emissions by 2050, which complements the LDC work programme under the UNFCCC in providing strategic direction for supporting the LDCs in addressing climate change. We call for multi-stakeholder partnerships that will bring together government, private sector, civil society, academia and communities focusing on integrated adaptation, mitigation and resilience planning at national and local levels. We recognize the importance of youth-led initiatives to counterbalance the existing negative effects of climate change and the necessity to support such initiatives while establishing strong institutions and clear regulatory frameworks for environmental accountability.

93. We reiterate the critical role of the National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) under the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement in addressing adaptation needs in the LDCs and underscore the importance of supporting all LDCs in producing their first NAP by end of 2021; implementing their priority adaptation needs in the NAPS under the Green Climate Fund (GCF) as well as other sources; and developing indicators for measuring progress on adaptation on the ground in LDCs. The LDCs face great capacity constraints in accessing these funds. We call upon the developed countries to operationalize the Green Climate Fund fully and in a timely manner, with the goal of mobilizing $100 billion per year by 2020, promoting and facilitating low carbon and resilient-building projects in the LDCs and addressing the needs of people adversely impacted by climate changes and extreme weather events. We welcome the decisions 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 a floor of 50 per cent of the adaptation allocation for particularly vulnerable countries, including LDCs. In the same vein, we call for providing 50 per cent of the total climate finance provided by all developed countries and multilateral development banks to adaptation and resilience and 50 per cent of these funds for particularly vulnerable countries, including LDCs.

94. We recognise the urgency of implementing the Sendai Framework and the Paris Agreement as an integral part of the 2030 Agenda and that prevention, disaster risk reduction and resilience-building are central to a country's sustainable development strategies and investment, to reduce poverty and inequalities, and protect the human, economic and natural capital. We acknowledge that financing for disaster risk reduction presents a considerable challenge to the implementation of national and local disaster risk reduction strategies in the LDCs and call for all public and private, domestic and international investment, as well as bilateral and multilateral support, to be risk informed and aligned with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies. We further acknowledge that available climate finance under the GCF (and other funds) remains a major challenge for many LDCs to access efficiently and effectively owing to many capacity issues and complexity of access modalities and call for simplified access procedures and enhanced efforts to ensure LDCs are able to develop bankable projects that lead to measurable resilience on the ground.

95. In order to build back better and enhance preparedness for future disasters we reaffirm our invitation to the General Assembly (in A/RES/72/231) to decide on the establishment of a "comprehensive multi-stakeholder resilience-building mechanism for LDCs", leveraging the existing measures and initiatives. In this regard, we request the Secretary-General and the General Assembly of the United Nations to undertake necessary measures to improve resilience building for LDCs which would help them to build and strengthen their national adaptation and mitigation capacity, provide technical support to prepare project documents to access and utilize available climate funds and critical technologies; provide risk insurance and guarantees for weather insurance and derivates; and draw together bilateral initiatives and support by multilateral institutions, private sector, NGOs and foundations, building on existing regional and international initiatives. We encourage investments and partnerships to

strengthen understanding of climate risk and more broadly systemic risk and its application in decision-making in the LDCs, including through disaster risk reduction education, comprehensive risk management, building academic and scientific capacity, utilization of frontier technologies, and supporting traditional, indigenous and local knowledge and practices.

96. We underline the need for building and strengthening a multi-hazard early warning system and a comprehensive multi-hazard crises mitigation and resilience building mechanism for each LDC as key instruments to build resilience against and mitigate the impacts of various shocks. We invite the Secretary-General to undertake a comprehensive study involving all relevant UNDS and other entities on the existing arrangements, lessons learned, gap identified and make recommendations on the modalities, terms of reference, institutional mechanism and funding modalities of a multi-hazard early warning system and a comprehensive multi-hazard crises mitigation and resilience building mechanism for LDCs at national and regional levels and submit it to the 77th session of the General Assembly for its consideration.

97. We underline that given the impact of the food crisis on food security in many LDCs, there is a need for the international community to increase funding for short-term food emergencies. We call for accelerated and aligned actions including adequate investment in physical infrastructure, scientific and technological development, research and agricultural extension services in the LDCs, incorporation of producers from LDCs in regional and global value chains, supported by all stakeholders and countries, including more integrated support from the United Nations and the international community to free our world from poverty, inequalities, hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition in all its forms. We underline the need for allocating at least 10 per cent of public expenditure to agriculture and to ensure its efficiency and effectiveness.

98. We call upon the international community to establish a system of stockholding for LDCs at regional and subregional basis in dealing with humanitarian food emergencies or as a means to limit price volatility. In this regard, we invite the Secretary-General to explore the feasibility, effectiveness and administrative modalities of such stockholding and report to the General Assembly at its 77th session for its consideration.

99. We stress the urgency of facilitating access to credit, technology and skills to support agricultural development and building up inclusive value chains that support smallholder farmers and private sector development to create the synergies between nutrition, poverty reduction and the structural transformation of the economies of the Asia-Pacific LDCs.

100. We are concerned that the LDCs are disproportionally affected by the collapse of value chains and declining commodity prices due to COVID-19, after their share in world merchandise exports deteriorated in five successive years. As the Asia-Pacific LDCs have highly concentrated exports with a heavy reliance on few products we will target diversification of our economies as a key part of our development strategies, including through the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In this context, there is also need to step up investments in green recovery to enhance growth, create decent jobs and accelerate intra-regional trade through the effective implementation of the SDGs.

101. We reaffirm our determination to complete the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) and call upon the members of the World Trade Organization to strongly commit to addressing the marginalization of LDCs in international trade and to improve their effective and equitable participation in the multilateral trading system. We also call upon the members to fully and faithfully implement all the LDC-specific

provisions contained in the World Trade Organization agreements, ministerial decisions and declarations, including the LDC decisions taken in Bali and Nairobi Ministerial Conferences, as well as decisions adopted in the regular work of the WTO. We further call upon the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference to deliver concrete outcomes in favor of the LDCs. We invite the WTO secretariat to undertake a comprehensive study on the lack of progress in achieving SDG 17.11 and to make specific recommendations on the way forward to achieve this SDG by 2030.

102. We welcome the entry into force of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), which will address high trade costs incurred by LDCs 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, in accordance with Articles 13 and 21.

103. We also call on developed country Members to provide preferential market access and rules of origin to all business to consumer goods and services that are exported from LDCs with special preference to those using an e-commerce platform directly from suppliers in LDCs. In this regard, we look forward to intensified and concerted action of the G20 countries to enhance the ability of LDCs to more fully engage in e-commerce and further call on relevant organizations to enhance support including, capacity-building to assist LDCs to address gaps in legal and regulatory frameworks and develop digital skills and platforms.

104. We need robust international support-both financial and technical- to promote e-commerce in our countries by building digital eco-system and providing capacity building support. We urge the development partners to provide additional and substantial support to LDCs to build required infrastructure in energy, electricity, internet penetration; data protection; upgrade workforce skills, ensure affordable and reliable access to broadband and mobile networks and Wi-Fi connectivity; facilitate mobile banking with low or no fee of digital payment; build the ability of LDCs suppliers to participate fairly in, and establish their own, e-commerce platforms to directly trade their goods and services; strengthen productive capacity and structural transformation along with transparent and fair regulations for promoting e-commerce and integration of LDCs in the global economy.

105. We call upon the international community to increase the proportion of Aid for Trade going to LDCs, provided according to development cooperation effectiveness principles, aiming at doubling it by 2031 from 2018 level. We urge our development partners to increase Aid for Trade support for least developed countries, including through the Enhanced Integrated Framework for Trade-Related Technical Assistance to Least Developed Countries. We also call for increased support from multilateral development banks and the private sector to fill trade financing needs, particularly of small businesses. We urge private and public sector actors to work together to address trade finance gaps, by enabling a rapid transition to paperless trading and addressing regulatory constraints that hinder trade finance.

106. We recognize that domestic resource mobilization is key for achieving the SDGs but was seriously impacted by COVID-19. We commit to enhance efforts towards taxation, savings mobilization and financial inclusion, aiming at reducing inequalities. We stress the importance of conducive international regulatory frameworks and transparency as well as national and regional financial institutions, including development banks in this respect. We call for enhanced international tax cooperation to avoid base erosion and profit shifting and welcome support through initiatives including Tax inspectors without borders.

107. We are concerned about the decline in bilateral ODA to LDCs during 2020, when it is most needed. We reiterate our call upon donor countries to fulfil their ODA commitments in the Istanbul Programme of Action and strive to provide 0.25 per cent of their gross national income by 2030 or at least 50 per cent of net official development assistance to the LDCs. We also call upon them to ensure quality and effectiveness of aid, especially through predictability and accountability, use of recipient country's system and elimination of tied aid. We call upon the development partners to meet the target of 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of GNI for ODA to LDCs in the short term and to set a target to provide at least 0.35 per cent of GNI for ODA to LDCs or provide at least 50 per cent of net ODA to LDCs by 2025.

108. We welcome the approval of the Board of Governors of the IMF of a general allocation of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) equivalent to US$650 billion. We invite the IMF to allocate at least $50 billion SDRs to LDCs through voluntary channeling of SDRs from wealthier countries to provide enhanced liquidity and to further support health needs, including vaccinations, and to help enable greener, more robust recoveries from the pandemic.

109. 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 are based on new partnerships between countries at different levels of development as well as public and private actors, in line with the characteristics of each country and sector. We stress that the innovative sources of financing, including blended finance, should be additional, substantial, predictable, with preferential rates especially tailored to LDCs and disbursed in a manner that respects the priorities and special needs of the LDCs and does not unduly burden them. Furthermore, we call for new financial instruments that harness the potential of digital innovations for the financing of the SDGs, including e.g. digital financing platforms, innovative digital services, Micro- Small and Medium- sized Enterprises (MSMEs) digitization and domestic resource mobilization. We also call for a dedicated financing mechanism that delivers catalytic investment capital for SMEs and small investment projects in Asia-Pacific LDCs to mobilize sustainable private investments that advance the SDGs and act as a crisis facility to mitigate the effects of COVID-19.

110. We are concerned about the illicit financial flows from various LDCs, and commit to enhance efforts to curtail illicit financial flows at all levels, enhance disclosure practices and promote transparency in financial information. We commit to promoting policies and programmes, including the involvement of civil society organizations to track and bring back any illicit capital outflows. This needs to be complimented by measures to prevent the transfer abroad of stolen assets and assistance in their recovery and return.

111. We commit to redoubling our efforts to substantially reduce illicit financial flows by 2030, with a view to eventually eliminating them, including by combating tax evasion and corruption through strengthened national regulation and increased international cooperation, in line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and the strengthening of international cooperation to combat illicit financial flows. We call upon the international community to strengthen their efforts for the recovery and return of stolen assets to their countries of origin and the identification of good practices for the return of stolen assets in support of sustainable development.

112. We are concerned that since 2012 but exacerbated by COVID-19 the external debt stock and debt service of many Asia-Pacific LDCs has drastically increased. We acknowledge the efforts of the global community to deal with the financial impacts of the pandemic, including the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI), which is open to LDCs, but recognise their limitations in terms of scope and participation of

creditors as they do not cancel any debt. We call upon development partners to take effective measures to reduce unsustainable debt levels owed by LDCs, including through debt cancellation and restructuring of existing high debt. We call for improved debt management and responsible lending and borrowing, including by providing financing on more concessional terms by official creditors and ensuring that lending practices are fully in line with sustainable financing practices. We call on bilateral and multilateral development partners to use new instruments like debt swaps and state-contingent lending, taking into account risks beyond the control of government like natural disasters and climate risks. We also call for technical assistance and capacity building for LDCs to strengthen their debt management.

113. We call upon development partners, Multilateral Development Banks and the IMF to introduce new and comprehensive debt relief initiatives for LDCs in this respect. We also call upon creditors, both public and private, for additional effective measures to facilitate financing of our economic development, including access to grants and concessional resources for investment in critically needed infrastructure and development projects to avoid further indebtedness. The debt sustainability framework for LDCs should systematically take into account their structural constraints and longer-term investment requirements for the implementation of the SDGs.

114. We invite the Secretary-General to constitute a High-level Panel of Experts, with adequate representation from LDCs, on the debt crises of LDCs with a view to undertaking the following tasks:

(a) In depth review of LDCs' external debt and their SDG financing needs

(b) Effects of pandemic on LDCs' debt servicing capacity

(c) Recommend policy options at national and international levels to urgently and effectively address the burgeoning external debt problem of LDCs; and

(d) The Panel should submit its report to the Secretary-General for consideration by the General Assembly at its 77th session.

115. We recognize the critical importance of the work of the Technology Bank for LDCs in improving LDCs' scientific research and innovation base, promote networking among researchers and research institutions, help LDCs access and utilize critical technologies, and draw together bilateral initiatives and support by multilateral institutions and the private sector, and to implement projects contributing to the use of STI for economic development in LDCs. We take note with appreciation of the contributions made to the Bank by the host country Turkey and other countries and call upon all members, especially donor countries and other development partners to make substantive contributions to the Bank for its effective functioning. We also call upon member States to raise awareness on the activities of the Technology Bank in their countries and to collaborate with the Technology Bank to ensure that technology is used as a critical tool for development. We therefore support the UN Technology Bank as the focal point for LDCs to strengthen their science, technology and innovation capacity towards building sustainable productive capacities and promoting structural economic transformation.

116. We underline the need for undertaking necessary measures to further accelerate FDI to LDCs in areas where it contributes to achieving the SDGs, including measures to reduce risks. 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 LDCs 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 through the Investment Support Programme, implemented by the International Development Law Organization (IDLO) and at improving the capacity of the investment promotion agencies of LDCs to attract, diversify and retain FDI and derive maximum benefit from it. We take note with appreciation of the Capacity Development Programme for the investment promotion agencies of LDCs, developed by UN-OHRLLS jointly with UNCTAD, UNIDO, ILO, EIF and WAIPA; and call for financial support to this programme.

117. We recall the SDG target 17.5 which decides to "adopt and implement investment promotion regimes for LDCs" and express deep concern at the lack of progress in its implementation. We call upon Member States to establish "an international investment support center for the LDCs" 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 LDCs; (b) provision of technical support to assist the LDCs 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.

118. We recognize the contributions of migrants in mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in both their countries of origin and destination, and note with concern the significant socioeconomic consequences that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on migrant workers and refugees from least developed countries, including those in the low wage informal economy as well as the effects that the projected significant decline in remittances will have on the millions of people that depend heavily on them, 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 to facilitate the orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.

119. We call upon the international community to invest in innovative solutions that facilitate mutual recognition of skills, qualifications and competences of migrant workers at all skills levels, and promote demand driven skills development to optimize the employability of migrants in formal labour markets in countries of destination and in countries of origin upon return, as well as to ensure decent work in labour migration.

120. We encourage appropriate steps to ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of migrants in the development of local solutions and opportunities, as well as efforts to improve public perceptions of migrants and migration and to address the special situation and vulnerability of migrant women and girls, particularly migrant women employed in the informal economy and in less skilled work, to abuse and exploitation, underlining in this regard the obligation of States to protect, respect and fulfil the human rights of all migrants.

121. We invite the international community and all relevant stakeholders, without prejudice to ongoing support, to cooperate and mobilize resources and expertise, including through financial and in-kind assistance, as well as direct aid to host countries, refugee populations, and countries of origin of refugees, especially least

developed countries, with a view to enhancing the capacity of and reducing the heavy burden borne by countries and communities hosting refugees and displaced persons in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations while fully respecting the humanitarian principles of humanity, independence, neutrality and impartiality for humanitarian action.

122. We underline that North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation is vital to the LDCs, noting that South-South cooperation is not a substitute but a complement to North-South cooperation, 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, we call upon the countries of the South to further strengthen their support provided to the LDCs in all these areas in a predictable manner along the lines of the outcome document of the Second High-Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation.

123. 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. We also recognize the need of ensuring full, equal, and meaningful participation in decision-making as well as equal access to leadership and representation for all women at all levels and in all spheres of society, as well as strengthening their voice, while ensuring a safe and enabling environment for them and taking action to eliminate any barriers in this regard.

124. We will implement our commitments under various regional and international conventions, to improve governance, ensure human rights and promote peace and security. Strengthening the rule of law, enforcing property rights, combating corruption, building strong institutions, fostering social cohesion and enhancing accountability in public service delivery are all essential to improving governance and thereby sustainable development. We express deep concern that LDCs are hugely underrepresented in the decision-making processes of the global financial architecture. This needs to be addressed for the legitimacy and effectiveness of the global financial system. We call upon the international community to broadening and strengthening the voice and participation of LDCs in international economic decision-making and norm-setting and global economic governance.

125. We recognize that peace and security is a condition sine qua non for growth and sustainable development. Enhanced efforts are required to help build durable peace and sustainable development in LDCs. We call upon the international community, including the United Nations, to extend support of the international community, for strengthening national, sub-regional and continental efforts aimed at peace-building, including capacity for conflict mediation, resolution and management and post-conflict consolidation. We also recognize the importance of the participation of women and youth in the design, implementation and evaluation of peace-building processes. Special support should be provided to post-conflict countries to enable them to achieve a smooth transition from relief to development.

126. We acknowledge that ensuring equal access to vital services plays a crucial role in reducing disparities and promoting trust in public institutions and can therefore have significant implications for development, peace and security across the continent. In this regard, we reaffirm our commitment to place social inclusion and transparency in the use of public resources at the center of our agenda, particularly as we embark on building back better in the post-COVID-19 scenario.

127. We note with concern that most graduating LDCs face a multitude of challenges, including poverty and inequalities, in particular gender inequalities, inadequate structural transformation and productive capacity, as well as vulnerability to economic and climatic shocks. Furthermore, we are concerned by the simultaneous loss of LDC specific support measures compounded by the negative social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis.

128. We call upon the international community to ensure an incentives-based international support structure to graduating and graduated least developed countries, including support for their smooth transition by development and trading partners, as well as the UN system, to make graduation sustainable and ensure post-graduation development momentum and achievements of SDGs.

129. We emphasize that a successful transition out of the LDC category needs to be based on a national smooth transition strategy, elaborated by each graduating country. We urge development and trading partners and the United Nations system to continue their support for the implementation of smooth transition strategies so as to avoid any abrupt reductions in either official development assistance, aid for trade or other technical and financial assistance provided. This includes the need for better planning and coordination of transition finance by ODA providers both during preparatory period and in the post-graduation phase.

130. We request development and trading partners to extend to graduated countries the LDC-specific trade preferences and technical assistance and capacity building programmes for a period of 12 years after their graduation from the LDC status. We also invite all members of the WTO to extend to graduated countries the LDC-specific special and differential treatment measures and exemptions under the Agreements, Understandings and other relevant Decisions, including the flexibilities TRIPS Agreement and all LDC-specific technical assistance and capacity building programmes and facilities provided under the WTO system, for a period of 12 years after their graduation from the LDC status. We acknowledge the importance of subsidies in retaining and improving the competitiveness of LDCs and Graduated LDCs, including in the export markets. We request the WTO members to ensure the continuity of LDC-specific provisions of subsidies for the graduated LDCs. We also call upon the development partners to continue to provide special climate-change related finance and technological support to graduated countries for a period consistent with their vulnerabilities, sustainable development needs and other national circumstances and emerging challenges.

131. We encourage the LDCs and development partners to integrate graduation and smooth transition strategies into their respective national development and aid strategies, as appropriate, including capacity-building and technical assistance to diversify sources of financing; including blended finance and private finance.

132. We recognize the relevance of disaster risk and the impact of disasters in the process of graduation from the LDC category, including the impact assessment of the likely consequences of graduation and the vulnerability profiles, and encourage the integration of disaster risk reduction into the smooth transition strategies of graduating countries.

133. We recognize the need for enhanced support to countries before and after graduation, through appropriate predictable and additional incentives and support measures, including in the following areas:

- Technical assistance for preparing and implementing a smooth transition strategy, including capacity development and technical assistance for analysis and identification of support needs

- Enhanced availability of credit ratings and risk management measures, including through the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency
- Legal assistance to negotiate market access after trade preferences that are granted based on least developed countries status end
- Technical assistance to build and strengthen their intellectual property rights systems to enable them to comply with obligations related to intellectual property after graduation.
- Provide expanded and specific access provisions for the climate vulnerable - graduated countries to the dedicated funds for tackling adverse impacts of climate-change
- Provide access to concessional funds of IFIs and regional development banks by redefining eligibility threshold based on multidimensional criteria beyond income only measures
- Provide access to vertical funds such as GAVI by redefining upward eligibility threshold
- Extending access to Aid for Trade and Technology Bank for ten years after graduation

134. We welcome the work of the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on LDC Graduation, led by OHRLLS, to provide strengthened and coordinated UN System-wide support to the countries graduating from the LDC category and invite OHRLLS to advocate for appropriate predictable and additional incentives and support measures for graduating and recently graduated countries (mentioned in para above) and mobilize additional international support for the implementation of the smooth transition strategies. We invite all relevant UN entities to collaborate under the UN Inter-Agency Task Force and develop operational guidelines for their support to least developed countries, including assistance to graduating countries. We invite ESCAP to support regional efforts to enable the attainment of sustainable development in the least developed countries in Asia and the Pacific through the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action.

135. We welcome the establishment of a Sustainable Graduation Support Facility (SGSF) jointly by the OHRLLS as Chair of the UN Inter Agency Task Force on LDC graduation and UN DESA as the Secretariat for the UN Committee for Development Policy (CDP), as a concrete country-led solution of dedicated capacity development support. We call on member states to support this initiative operationalized under the umbrella of the UN Inter Agency Task Force to further strengthen coordinated and coherent UN System support and bring together country-specific integrated graduation-related advisory and capacity building services responding to the concerns of Member States regarding graduation and serving as a repository and clearing house of initiatives and projects pursued in support of these countries.

136. We call upon the international community to establish an International Investment Support Center (IISC) for LDCs and graduated countries involving all stakeholder to support bankable project preparation and contract negotiation, advisory support in investment-related dispute resolution, access to information on investment facilities and risk insurance and guarantees in partnerships with the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) and other relevant entities. In this regard, we invite donor countries to host the IISC and provide financial support for its establishment and ensure its effective operation with a view to achieving the SDGs and building resilience of the graduating and graduated countries against current and future shocks.

137. We call for a monitoring mechanism that is responsive to emerging crises and that better links monitoring to specific support, including possible extensions of the preparatory period. Enhanced monitoring by the Committee for Development Policy should include, among others:

- Establishing country-specific crisis response process within the monitoring mechanism to identify early warning signs of regression or a risk to fall back to the LDC category and to trigger specific action and support to respond to crises and emergencies happening within the annual monitoring cycle
- Mobilizing existing crisis management expertise of the UN System and other international entities to assist countries in responding to emergencies and building resilience
- Utilizing the convening power of the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, both in case of crisis and in case of regular monitoring

Expanding coverage of annual monitoring reports and the preparation process

138. We welcome the participation at this meeting of many development partners and while appreciating their ongoing support, strongly call upon them for renewed and strengthened global partnerships for achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals in Asia-Pacific LDCs. We collectively commit ourselves to finding lasting solutions to the complex and mutually exacerbating structural challenges and problems faced by LDCs, who constitute the poorest and most vulnerable countries of the world.

139. We request the OHRLLS to extend necessary support to the LDCs in the implementation and monitoring of the upcoming new programme of action for LDCs for decade 2022–20312, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement, Sendai Framework for Action and as well as through coordination with various United Nations entities, raising global awareness, mobilizing international support and resources in favor of the LDCs, 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 Least Developed Countries. In this regard, we strongly urge the Secretary-General and the Member States to strengthen the OHRLLS to enable it to provide substantive support to LDCs in their pursuit to meaningfully engage in the intergovernmental discussions and implement the programme of action for LDCs and the 2030 Agenda.

140. We invite the Office of the High Representative for the LDC, LLDC, and SIDS to prepare a comprehensive roadmap for accelerated implementation of this Programme of Action identifying specific roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders with a view to ensuring that the commitments in favor of LDCs lead to concrete deliverables that would facilitate implementation of the Programme of Action and help LDCs achieve the SDGs.

141. We invite the UN-OHRLLS to undertake research and analytical works to provide substantive support to LDCs in group consultations and their participation in other intergovernmental meetings and conferences to facilitate science and evidence-based decisions in favor of LDCs taking into account new and emerging challenges and opportunities; support the works of the General Assembly, Economic and Social Council, High-level Political Forum and the CEB as they relate to LDCs and foster debate and innovative thinking, promote consensus on ways forward, and coordinate efforts to achieve the implementation of the Programme of Action. We also invite

UN-ESCAP to provide substantive support to Asia-Pacific LDCs including through research and analytical works.

142. We welcome, with warm appreciations, the decision of the Government of Qatar to host the Fifth United Nations Conference on LDCs in Doha, Qatar from 23–27 January 2021 at the Heads of States and Governments level. We also commend the Government of Qatar for its generous support to undertake substantive preparations for the LDC5. We will participate in this Summit at the Heads of States and Governments level and invite our development partners to participate also at the Heads of States and Governments level and the agencies at the principals' level. We further invite other stakeholders to participate at the highest possible level.

143. We express our profound gratitude to the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, UN-OHRLLS and UN-ESCAP for jointly organizing this meeting. We express our gratitude to the Governments of Turkey and Qatar for their generous contributions to the successful organization of the meeting. We note with appreciation the substantive support of the Office of the High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, in collaboration with the United Nations Office at Geneva. We also note with appreciation the active participation and substantive contributions of the Asia-Pacific LDCs, development partners and the UN system and other international and regional organizations. We also express our thanks to parliamentarians as well as the representatives of the private sector, civil society, youth and other stakeholders.

Ministerial Declaration of the Least Developed Countries

New York, 17 September 2021

We, the Ministers and heads of delegation of the least developed countries, having virtually met on 17 September 2021, in an unprecedented global situation posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which is greatly impacting our countries.

Reaffirming the Istanbul Declaration[2] and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020,[3] adopted by the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held in Istanbul, Turkey, from 9 to 13 May 2011, and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 65/280 of 17 June 2011, in which the Assembly called upon all the relevant stakeholders to commit to implementing the Programme of Action, and recalling also 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,

Reaffirming further also the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,[4] the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development,[5] the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,[6] the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030[7] and the New Urban Agenda adopted in Quito by the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III),[8]

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,[9] and the flagship report of the UN-OHRLLS “State of the Least Developed Countries 2021: building back better in response to COVID-19.”

Adopt the following declaration:

1. We note that, having come to the end of the implementation period of the Istanbul Programme of Action, some progress has been achieved in LDCs which is manifested in a large and growing number of LDCs meeting the criteria for graduation from the category of LDCs., we remain concerned that despite some progress, significant gaps persist between the goals and targets set out in the IPoA and the 2030 Agenda and the achievements made on the ground. The limited progress achieved by LDCs during the past decade are now at a high risk to be reversed by the continued structural challenges that the LDCs face as well as new and emerging challenges and crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and financial crises, which have been disproportionately affecting LDCs. We underline the need for comprehensive action plans at the national, regional and global levels with reinvigorated global partnerships and a revitalized multilateralism to address interconnected challenges that the LDCs have been facing and to enable them to achieve the 2030 Agenda and SDGs.

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[2] *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9–13 May 2011* (A/CONF.219/7), chap. I.
[3] Ibid., chap. II.
[4] General Assembly resolution 70/1.
[5] General Assembly resolution 69/313.
[6] See FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1, decision 1/CP.21, annex.
[7] General Assembly resolution 69/283, annex II.
[8] [E/2017/L.32], General Assembly resolution 71/256, annex.
[9] A/76/71-E/2021/13.

2. We take note with satisfactions the preparations undertaken for the LDC5 and look forward to a highly ambitious, comprehensive, and forward-looking outcome. We welcome, with warm appreciations, the decision of the Government of Qatar to host the Fifth United Nations Conference on LDCs in Doha, Qatar from 23–27 January 2022 at the Heads of State and Government level. We also commend the Government of Qatar for its generous support to undertake logistical and substantive preparations for the LDC5. We will participate in the LDC5 at the Heads of State and Government level and invite our development partners to participate also at the Heads of State and Government level and the agencies at the principals' level. We further invite other stakeholders to participate at the highest possible level. We request the Secretary-General to mobilize the international community including the UN system in favour of the Fifth UN Conference on LDCs and secure a large number of participants at the highest political level in the Conference in Doha in 2022.

3. We welcome the convening of the two regional review meetings in preparation of the Fifth United Nations Conference on LDCs (LDC5): one for the African LDCs and Haiti and the other one for the Asia-Pacific LDCs and Yemen. We express our profound gratitude to the Government of the Republic Malawi, UN-OHRLLS and UN-ECA for jointly organizing the Africa regional review meeting virtually from 22–26 February 2021 in Lilongwe, Malawi and to the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, UN-OHRLLS and UN-ESCAP for jointly organizing the Asia-Pacific regional review meeting in a hybrid format from 30-August–2 September 2021 in Geneva, Switzerland. We welcome and endorse the political declarations adopted at the two regional review meetings, which are contained in the annexes to the present declaration. We also welcome the convening of the two preparatory Committee Meetings Co-Chaired by Bangladesh and Canada.

4. 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. We especially invite the Friends of LDCs to actively engage and continue to provide their support to the Fifth United Nations Conference on LDCs and its preparatory process.

5. We recall annex II of the Ministerial Declaration of Least Developed Countries entitled "Decision on a coordination mechanism for the least developed countries, adopted at United Nations Headquarters, New York, on 15 November 2001" (see A/C.2/56/5). We also recall the Ministerial Declaration of LDCs adopted on 26 September 2018, contained in document A/73/455, which endorsed the nomination by consensus of the Republic of Malawi to serve as the Chair and Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Senegal and Yemen as the Vice-chairs of the Global Coordination Bureau for three years (2018–2021); as well as the nomination by consensus of Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Tuvalu, on an exceptional basis, as the Vice-chair of the Global Coordination Bureau for one year each for the next three years. We decide to extend the term of the current bureau, namely the Republic of Malawi to serve as the Chair and Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Senegal, Tuvalu and Yemen as the Vice-chairs for one more year ending September 2022. We assure our full support and cooperation to the Bureau in discharging its responsivities.