



Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

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Doha

Preparatory Committee for the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

Second session

(regular)

New York, 26–30 July 2021

(resumed)

New York, 21 December 2021

Report of the Preparatory Committee for the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries on its second session

I. Organizational matters

A. Opening of the session

1. In accordance with General Assembly resolutions [73/242](#), [74/232](#) A and B and [75/227](#), the Preparatory Committee for the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries held its second session at United Nations Headquarters from 26 to 30 July 2021. Pursuant to Assembly decision 75/574, the Preparatory Committee held a meeting at its resumed second session, on 21 December 2021.
2. At the 1st meeting of the Preparatory Committee, on 26 July 2021, the session was opened by the Co-Chairs of the Committee, Rabab Fatima (Bangladesh) and Robert Keith Rae (Canada), who made statements. At the 3rd meeting (resumed second session) of the Committee, the Co-Chairs, Rabab Fatima (Bangladesh) and Robert Keith Rae (Canada), made statements.
3. The list of participants in the Preparatory Committee will be issued in document [A/CONF.219/2021/IPC/INF/1](#).

B. Officers

4. The officers of the Preparatory Committee were as follows:

Co-Chairs:

Rabab Fatima (Bangladesh)
Robert Keith Rae (Canada)



Vice-Chairs:

Marie Chatardová (Czechia)
Taye Atske Selassie Amde (Ethiopia)
Antonio Rodrigue (Haiti)
Amrit Bahadur Rai (Nepal)
Julio César Arriola Ramírez (Paraguay) (designated as Rapporteur of the Preparatory Committee)
Feridun Hadi Sinirlioğlu (Turkey)
Adonia Ayebare (Uganda)

Ex officio:

Perks Master Clemency Ligoya (Malawi)
Alya bint Ahmed bin Saif Al-Thani (Qatar)

II. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

5. At its 1st meeting, the Preparatory Committee adopted its agenda, as recommended at its first session, and approved its organization of work with the understanding that further adjustments would be made, as necessary, during the session, as follows (see [A/CONF.219/2021/IPC/4/Rev.1](#)):

1. Opening of the session.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work of the second session of the Preparatory Committee.
3. Organizational preparations for the Conference:
 - (a) Approval of the provisional agenda of the Conference;
 - (b) Approval of the provisional rules of procedure of the Conference;
 - (c) Decision on the modalities of the high-level thematic round tables of the Conference.
4. Substantive preparations for the Conference.
5. Draft outcome document of the Conference.
6. Other matters.
7. Adoption of the report of the Preparatory Committee.

III. Substantive preparations for the Conference

6. At its 1st meeting, the Preparatory Committee considered agenda item 4 (Substantive preparations for the Conference). Statements were made by the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and Secretary-General of the Conference; the Deputy Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations, Jassim Sayar Al-Maawda, in his capacity as a representative of the host country of the Conference; the youth representative from the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organisations, Fahmida Faiza; the Chair of LDC Watch, Demba Moussa Dembele; and the Secretary-General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Martin Chungong (through a pre-recorded video statement).

IV. Draft outcome document of the Conference

7. At its 1st meeting, the Preparatory Committee heard an introduction to the zero draft of the Doha Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries for 2022–2031 by the Permanent Representative of Malawi to the United Nations and Chair of the Group of Least Developed Countries.

8. At the same meeting, the Preparatory Committee heard general statements in connection with the zero draft of the Doha Programme of Action. Statements were made by the representatives of Guinea (on behalf of the Group of 77 and China), the European Union, Morocco, Indonesia, Antigua and Barbuda (on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States) and Turkey.

9. Between 26 and 29 July 2021, the Preparatory Committee held five informal consultations during which it deliberated on the draft outcome document of the Conference.

10. At the 2nd meeting, on 30 July 2021, statements were made under agenda item 5 (Draft outcome document of the Conference) by the representatives of Malawi (on behalf of the Group of 77 and China) and Nepal.

11. At the same meeting, statements were also made by the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and Secretary-General of the Conference and the Co-Chairs of the Preparatory Committee (Bangladesh and Canada).

12. At the 3rd meeting (resumed second session) of the Preparatory Committee, the Co-Chairs proposed an oral decision, which read as follows:

“The Preparatory Committee approves the draft Doha Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries (A/CONF.219/2021/IPC/CRP.2) and decides to recommend it to the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries for adoption.”

13. At the same meeting, statements were made by the representatives of Qatar, the Russian Federation, China, Cuba, Nepal, Malawi (on behalf of the least developed countries), South Africa and Belarus.

14. Also at the same meeting, the representative of the Russian Federation made a statement during which he introduced an amendment to the draft decision proposed by the Co-Chairs as follows:

“The Preparatory Committee notes that the consensus on the draft Doha Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries was not reached and decides to recommend the draft to the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries for further consideration and adoption.”

15. Also at its 3rd meeting, the Preparatory Committee rejected the proposed amendment by a recorded vote of 120 to 2, with 6 abstentions. The voting was as follows:

In favour:

Belarus, Russian Federation.

Against:

Albania, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Canada, Chad, Chile, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic,

Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Panama, Paraguay, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, South Sudan, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Uruguay, Yemen, Zambia.

Abstaining:

Cameroon, China, Egypt, Kiribati, Pakistan, Zimbabwe.

16. At its 3rd meeting, the Preparatory Committee adopted the oral draft decision proposed by the Co-Chairs to approve the draft Doha Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries and decided to recommend it to the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries for adoption by a recorded vote of 132 to 0, with 2 abstentions. The voting was as follows:

In favour:

Albania, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Chad, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Kiribati, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, South Sudan, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Uruguay, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

None.

Abstaining:

Belarus, Russian Federation.

17. At the same meeting, the representative of the Russian Federation made a statement in explanation of vote before the vote.
18. Also at the same meeting, after the vote, statements in explanation of vote were made by the representatives of the Russian Federation, Slovenia (on behalf of the

European Union and its member States), Guinea (on behalf of the Group of 77 and China), Australia (also on behalf of New Zealand), India, Hungary, Turkey, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the United States of America, Japan, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Egypt.¹

V. Action by the Preparatory Committee

A. Decisions of the Preparatory Committee

19. At its 1st meeting, the Preparatory Committee took the following decisions:

Decision I

Provisional rules of procedure of the Conference

20. The Preparatory Committee approved the provisional rules of procedure of the Conference ([A/CONF.219/2021/IPC/L.4](#)), to be recommended for adoption by the Conference.

Decision II

Modalities of the high-level thematic round tables of the Conference

21. The Preparatory Committee approved the draft decision on the modalities of the high-level thematic round tables of the Conference ([A/CONF.219/2021/IPC/L.5](#)).

Decision III

Extension of the work of the Preparatory Committee

22. The Preparatory Committee approved its recommendation to the General Assembly on the extension of its work (A/CONF.219/2021/IPC/CRP.1).

Decision IV

Draft provisional agenda of the Conference

23. At its 2nd meeting, the Preparatory Committee recommended to the Conference the adoption of the draft provisional agenda and the proposed organization of work of the Conference, as contained in documents [A/CONF.219/2021/IPC/L.3](#) and [A/CONF.219/2021/IPC/L.3/Add.1](#).

Decision V

Revised draft provisional agenda of the Conference²

24. At its 3rd meeting (resumed second session) the Preparatory Committee recommended to the Conference the adoption of the revised organization of work of the Conference as contained in document [A/CONF.219/2021/IPC/L.3/Add.1/Rev.1](#).

Decision VI

Draft Doha Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries

25. At its 3rd meeting (resumed session), the Preparatory Committee approved the draft Doha Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries and decided to

¹ Statements that were provided in writing to the Secretariat are available at <https://journal.un.org/en/new-york/meeting/officials/1484a158-7d5f-ec11-8314-0abf1fa886b5/2021-12-21>.

² At the 3rd meeting (resumed session) of the Preparatory Committee, the representative of the Russian Federation made a statement in connection with the revised proposed organization of work of the Conference as contained in document [A/CONF.219/2021/IPC/L.3/Add.1/Rev.1](#).

recommend it to the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries for adoption.

B. Adoption of the report of the Preparatory Committee

26. At its 2nd meeting, the Preparatory Committee adopted its draft report on its second session ([A/CONF.219/2021/IPC/L.6](#)) and entrusted the Rapporteur to finalize it with the support of the Secretariat.

27. At its 3rd meeting (resumed second session), the Preparatory Committee decided to authorize the Rapporteur to include the deliberations from the meeting at its resumed second session as part of the report on the second session.

VI. Statements

First meeting (26 July 2021)

28. The Co-Chair of the Preparatory Committee (Bangladesh) stated that the world was facing the devastating human and economic impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic – millions of lives lost, millions falling sick each day and the worst economic recession in 100 years. The least developed countries, with weak infrastructure and low capacity to respond to internal or external shocks, were bearing the brunt of that pandemic. Many least developed countries were currently facing the third wave of the pandemic, and in 2020, gross domestic product had declined by 1.3 per cent on average across them. Less than 2 per cent of the population in the least developed countries had been vaccinated. More than 32 million people in the least developed countries were at high risk of being pushed into extreme poverty, food insecurity was rising and school closures, coupled with a lack of online learning options, could lead to an entire generation of educational loss. Export earnings and remittances had shrunk, and about half the least developed countries were in a debt crisis or at a high risk of one. The Co-Chair emphasized that graduating and graduated countries needed special attention to ensure that they would not be at risk of sliding backward.

29. The Co-Chair of the Preparatory Committee (Bangladesh) underlined that historic global partnerships, from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to the Paris Climate Change Agreement and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, should be the guiding documents for the next Programme of Action. She underlined the need for a new paradigm in global partnerships that was stronger, dynamic and rapidly impactful on the ground.

30. The Co-Chair of the Preparatory Committee (Canada) spoke of the commitment and work of the Group of Least Developed Countries in developing the zero draft of the Doha Programme of Action and emphasized that Member States should be specific regarding concrete actions relating to the various topics that would be covered in discussions during the informal consultations. He encouraged constructive discussions during the meeting with the common objective of concluding an ambitious Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries.

31. The Secretary-General of the Conference spoke of the importance of building back better and enhancing resilience to future shocks, including climate risk, access to social protection systems and the capacity to scale them up as necessary, as well as of the need to focus on the most vulnerable people, including women, migrants and persons with disabilities.

32. The Secretary-General of the Conference noted that the zero draft outcome document was a true reflection of the priorities that would ensure that least developed countries achieved the Sustainable Development Goals and more. He recommended that intergovernmental negotiations conclude in New York by the end of the year.
33. The Secretary-General of the Conference highlighted the upcoming Asia-Pacific regional review meeting, to be held in Geneva from 30 August to 2 September 2021 in a hybrid format; the LDC Future Forum, to be held in Helsinki from 5 to 7 October 2021; and the Private Sector Forum, which would be held as part of the Fifth United Nations Conference. He appealed to all Member States to ensure participation in the Conference at the Heads of State or Government level.
34. The representative of Qatar, the host country of the Conference, reiterated that country's commitment to ensuring a successful Conference and readiness to provide the necessary support and cooperation to make that happen. He stated that Qatar was pleased to see that the zero draft of the Doha Programme of Action was the first Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries that was linked to the 2030 Agenda.
35. The representative of the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organisations spoke of the importance of youth engagement in the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries process and in other processes and highlighted four major issues of importance to youth: the post-COVID-19 reality, education and youth, mental health and climate change.
36. The representative of the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organisations noted that many schools had been shut down during the pandemic, meaning that students had had few learning opportunities; access to Internet learning was scarce, given unreliable access to broadband and expensive devices; many young people had lost their jobs; and marginalized young people – especially those with disabilities and from indigenous communities, and rural young people – had been further disadvantaged. Mental health support was rare, and in Bangladesh in 2020, there had been 70 per cent more deaths from suicide than from COVID-19.
37. The representative of the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organisations reported that young people made up most of the population in many least developed countries and therefore had the potential to make a great difference. The youth declaration expected to result from the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries should echo the concerns of young people on the ground.
38. The Chair of LDC Watch explained that that organization was mobilizing its members in all the least developed countries and international civil society to take part in the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and its preparations. LDC Watch welcomed the outcome document, which outlined the devastating economic and social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the least developed countries and called for greater action and extraordinary measures to tackle the challenges faced by those countries.
39. The Chair of LDC Watch recommended re-examining the criteria used to determine graduation thresholds; emphasized that solidarity and partnerships should be based on true policy ownership and priorities set by the least developed countries; reiterated his support for demands made regarding debt, resource mobilization, trade and related issues, climate change and global governance; and shared the deep concern expressed in the document for the under-representation of least developed countries in global decision-making processes.
40. The Secretary-General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (through a pre-recorded video) stated that fundamental human rights were still unmet in the least developed

countries and emphasized that the promise in the Goals of leaving no one behind must apply first and foremost to those countries. The way to keep that promise was through greater political will and stronger accountability within countries and globally.

41. The Secretary-General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union emphasized that the parliamentary track for the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries was meant to highlight that parliamentarians from everywhere, not just from the least developed countries, were key to bringing that agenda to fruition through the power of the purse and their legislative and oversight authority.

42. The Secretary-General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union announced that the organization would produce three reports over the coming months to focus attention on the role of parliaments in the least developed countries, in particular regarding gender equality, development cooperation and good governance. He also announced that the Inter-Parliamentary Union, along with the Shura Council of Qatar, would organize a parliamentary forum in Doha on 22 January 2022.

43. The representative of Malawi, speaking on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries, introduced the zero draft of the Doha Programme of Action, highlighting that it took on board the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda while attempting to set new and ambitious targets going forward. He stated that the Group had tried to maintain a delicate balance between ambition and realism.

44. The representative of Malawi reported that the document had six key focus areas for action, and he stated that there were some concrete proposals that needed further elaboration, such as an online university for the least developed countries, establishing investment promotion regimes, establishing an international investment support centre for the least developed countries and graduated countries and establishing crisis mitigation and resilience-building mechanisms to deal with a multitude of hazards.

45. The representative of Malawi stated that the draft document called for continued special and differential treatment for countries after they graduated from the least developed country category, and that gender mainstreaming, good governance, the rule of law, transparency, accountability and peace and security figured prominently in the draft. He appealed to delegates not to focus on the length of the draft, but rather on its substance.

General statements

46. The representative of Guinea, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, stated that the least developed countries remained a crucial part of the 2030 Agenda because they represented the change and progress that needed to occur for that Agenda to be successful. The Group welcomed the zero draft of the Doha Programme of Action and stressed the wish to move forward to engaging with colleagues to ensure a successful and consensual conclusion of the text by the end of the year. The Group noted the importance of keeping the focus on a text that responded to the needs of the least developed countries and contributed to the overarching objective of the 2030 Agenda: to leave no one behind.

47. The representative of the European Union stressed its willingness to engage constructively, with the full participation of its member States, in the negotiations with the aim of adopting a concise, action-oriented and operational document that would make a difference for the least developed countries in the difficult context of COVID-19 recovery. To ensure that the text received the best possible input from experts and consultation with civil society, he appealed to the Co-Chairs to allow enough time for the negotiations and for introducing proposals into the text, as well as an inclusive process to ensure ownership and successful implementation of the

programme. The representative highlighted that, for the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries to be a significant step in achieving the 2030 Agenda ambitions, it required balanced commitments on the side of the least developed countries and their development partners. Thus, the next Programme of Action should build on the outcome of other United Nations processes, notably the high-level political forum on sustainable development, the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and World Trade Organization negotiations. Lastly, he stated that the outcome document and the negotiation process would benefit from a shortening of the vast document and an agreement on a strategic set of objectives strictly linked to the Goals and accompanied by quantified targets with baseline data.

48. The representative of Morocco reiterated that country's support for the least developed countries, especially those in Africa, based on its commitment to South-South cooperation. He stressed that the COVID-19 pandemic had likely rolled back the progress of the least developed countries and that he looked forward to a Programme of Action that addressed that and provided the necessary solutions. He stated that the Fifth United Nations Conference would be an opportunity to renew support for the least developed countries and mobilize international support measures and that he welcomed the ambitious structure of the text and its emphasis on the six key action areas, including: ensuring affordable access to COVID-19 vaccines, debt relief measures for the least developed countries, boosting climate finance and enhancing climate resilience in those countries and capacity-building to accelerate the energy transition, which would be a pillar for post-pandemic recovery for the least developed countries.

49. The representative of Indonesia acknowledged the six key areas raised in the Programme of Action to address the core vulnerabilities of the least developed countries: leveraging the power of science, technology and innovation, promoting structural transformation, enhancing international trade and regional integration, addressing climate change, recovering from the pandemic, building resilience against future shocks and strengthening international solidarity. He stated that a major barrier for the least developed countries was resource constraints, which delayed the path to graduation from the least developed country category. He emphasized that commitments aligned with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda were urgently needed, as well as the engagement of the United Nations system and other stakeholders, such as the private sector, and philanthropy. He stressed that South-South cooperation could complement but not substitute for North-South cooperation.

50. The representative of Antigua and Barbuda (on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States) highlighted the importance of the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries for the Alliance of Small Island States, as eight of the least developed countries were members of small island developing States. Furthermore, the 2030 Agenda provided an overarching framework for the realization of sustainable development for the least developed countries, and the Programme of Action would provide tailored approaches for those goals. He insisted that the Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries should draw a nexus between the Samoa Pathway and the 2030 Agenda. In addition, he recognized the economic, social and environmental decline faced by the least developed countries because of the pandemic, stressing that the next iteration of the Programme of Action must conclude by the end of the year.

51. The representative of Turkey stated that, as host of the Conference on the Least Developed Countries in 2011, Turkey looked forward to an action-oriented outcome, and that it attached great importance to the multi-stakeholder nature of that process, including participation from international financial institutions, the private sector and United Nations agencies. He stressed the importance of not negotiating already agreed

targets, but delivering those commitments on the ground in a realistic and ambitious manner. He indicated that Turkey looked forward to elaborating more on the post-graduation process, including the paragraphs on the Agreement on Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights and duty-free calls to access.

Second meeting (30 July 2021)

52. The representative of Malawi (on behalf of the Group of 77 and China) stated that development partners needed to go beyond doubling their share of official development assistance to the least developed countries to meet the target of 0.2 per cent gross national income. Debt relief and debt swapping were also vitally important for the least developed countries. He stated that technology transfer on voluntary and mutually agreed terms to the least developed countries contradicted article 66.2 of the Agreement on Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, and that the flexibilities that the least developed countries enjoyed were meaningless without technology transfer. He stressed that COVID-19 vaccines must be recognized as a global public good. He called for a \$50 billion special drawing rights allocation to the least developed countries and for 12 years of support to graduating least developed countries to assist with structural transformation. He acknowledged concerns regarding the 50/50 balance of adaptation and mitigation in climate finance and stated that there was already a decision of the Board of the Green Climate Fund on that issue. He also called for an online university and an international investment support centre, which would be an enormous contribution to the socioeconomic and intellectual progress of the least developed countries.

53. The representative of Nepal commended the draft, which built on the lessons learned in the 10 years since the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 and addressed new issues, such as climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic. He stated that the Doha Programme of Action presented an opportunity to strengthen global partnership to address the special needs of the least developed countries. As a member of the Bureau, Nepal was committed to doing more, not less, and to remaining constructively involved in the process.

54. The Secretary-General of the Conference stressed that the suggested actions in the outcome document were of great importance for building back better and enhancing resilience to future shocks. He reiterated that social protection systems were at the core of the response to the socioeconomic effects of COVID-19. He reaffirmed the need to focus on the most vulnerable people, including women, migrants and people with disabilities, as highlighted at the recent session of the high-level political forum on sustainable development on restoring the conditions for Sustainable Development Goal progress in African countries, the least developed countries and landlocked developing countries. The Secretary-General of the Conference recalled that adaptation to climate risks was crucial for resilience in the least developed countries, and that sustainable energy could play a key role in that respect. He thanked the Member States for achieving an ambitious, forward-looking zero draft that was a true reflection of the priorities that would ensure that the least developed countries achieved the Goals and beyond. He commended the Chair of the Group of Least Developed Countries and other members of the Group for their tireless efforts in presenting a comprehensive document. He concluded by emphasizing the importance of concluding the intergovernmental negotiations in New York by the end of the year and briefed the Member States on progress on the preparations for the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

55. In her closing remarks, the Co-Chair of the Preparatory Committee (Bangladesh) thanked the delegations for their constructive engagement in the process. The Programme of Action would overlap with the 2030 Agenda and the recovery efforts of the least developed countries to bounce back from the pandemic

in a sustainable manner. She noted the productive conversations with civil society organizations and expressed her intention to work closely with them. She recognized a genuine willingness from development partners to help the least developed countries to bounce back from the crisis, and she acknowledged the areas of divergence in the zero draft document. Despite that, she remained confident that a consensus would be reached following more consultations. She stated that she and the Co-Chair would be on hand to support further consultations.

56. The Co-Chair of the Preparatory Committee (Canada) thanked the delegations for their constructive input and contributions. He recognized the importance of actions, not just words, and that graduation from the least developed country category should not lead to heartache but to greater success. He stressed the importance of a Programme of Action that acted as a clarion call for the necessary steps that delegates must take so that the least developed countries could face the unprecedented impacts of COVID-19, the climate change crisis and the digital divide crisis and demonstrate solidarity and partnership.

Third meeting (resumed second session) (21 December 2021)

57. The Co-Chair of the Preparatory Committee (Bangladesh) thanked the Preparatory Committee Bureau and stated that every effort had been made to accommodate the priorities of all sides. She thanked Mr. Ligoya and commended the ambitious commitments of the zero draft, namely, to an online university, a sustainable graduation support facility and increased aid for trade.

58. The Co-Chair of the Preparatory Committee (Bangladesh) urged development partners to remain engaged and committed to the implementation of the Programme of Action. She noted her awareness of the lack of resources of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and requested support for the Office so that it could strengthen its capacity to fully implement the Doha Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for the least developed countries. Lastly, she thanked the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations and the Government of Qatar for their extraordinary support for the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

59. The Co-Chair of the Preparatory Committee (Canada) thanked Member States for their engagement in the negotiations of the draft Doha Programme of Action and stated that the focus now needed to be on its implementation and on delivering the concrete actions agreed.

60. The representative of Qatar expressed his appreciation for the Co-Chairs of the Preparatory Committee, the Chair of the Group of Least Developed Countries, the Secretary-General of the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and all negotiating parties for the successful conclusion of the work of the Preparatory Committee, including the negotiations of the Doha Programme of Action. He reiterated the keenness of Qatar to host the Fifth United Nations Conference in Doha, which was in line with its national priorities to contribute to eradicating poverty and promoting sustainable development in the least developed countries. He reiterated the commitment of Qatar to supporting the successful implementation of the Doha Programme of Action and its follow-up in an effective, efficient and visible manner.

61. The representative of the Russian Federation stated that that country was a traditional and reliable partner of the least developed countries, providing the assistance through bilateral and multilateral channels. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it had not stood aside from the least developed countries; the Russian Federation had sent aid for the health-care response.

62. The representative of China stated that his delegation fully understood and respected the ownership and leadership of the least developed countries in their development, and it supported the Fifth United Nations Conference in adopting a balanced, targeted and actionable plan of action for the least developed countries for the next 10 years.

63. The representative of Malawi (on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries) thanked all the parties and stakeholders that had brought the process forward, as well as the constructive engagement demonstrated by all the delegations throughout the negotiation process. He stated that he appreciated the flexibility and solidarity shown to ensure that the interests of the least developed countries were first. The Group looked forward to continuing to coordinate and collaborate until the text was adopted. He stated that the text represented a major step in aligning the least developed countries with the 2030 Agenda and giving them a fighting chance in that decade of action. He noted that a successful conclusion of the programme would depend on fulfilment of commitments by both the least developed countries and development partners. He thanked Qatar for its generous support and the various preparations and measures that it was putting in place to make it a successful Conference.

64. The representative of Belarus remarked that the global community must do its utmost to fully implement the 2030 Agenda and ensure that no one was left behind. Noting that overcoming the socioeconomic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic required stepped up efforts to promote the development of that group of countries, the representative stated that the Belarus delegation reiterated its willingness to continue its cooperation with the least developed countries in the areas of services, agriculture and agricultural technology, mechanical engineering, innovation or humanitarian assistance, among others. She recognized that the upcoming Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and its preparatory process was an effective platform for creating a new road map in support of the sustainable development of the least developed countries and building a solid foundation for the graduation of those countries from the least developed country category. Therefore, Belarus would cooperate to ensure that the new Programme of Action addressed the increasing vulnerability of the least developed countries and helped them to become more resilient to shocks, especially those related to the climate crisis; achieve universal health-care coverage and social protection; receive support for digital transformation and the sustainable use of all sources of energy; and ensure security in the use of information and communications technologies.

65. The representative of Slovenia (on behalf of the European Union) recognized that the least developed countries faced an unparalleled set of challenges, which had been compounded by the past two years of the COVID-19 pandemic. She recalled that, to keep the collective promise to leave no one behind, the needs of the least developed countries must be at the forefront. She stated that the renewal of the commitment to collectively draw attention to their situation and continue to support the least developed countries could not have come at a more critical time. On behalf of the European Union and its member States, she thanked the Permanent Representatives of Bangladesh and Canada for guiding and steering the process. She recognized the critical supporting role played by the High Representative and his staff and thanked Qatar for hosting the Conference and for its great efforts to ensure a successful and safe Conference.

66. The representative of Australia (on behalf of Australia and New Zealand) expressed her deep appreciation to Canada, Bangladesh and the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States for their tireless efforts on the draft Doha Programme of Action. Both countries considered the outcome document an ambitious

statement of collective aspirations and commitment to the inclusive and sustainable development of the least developed countries. She expressed the critical importance of ensuring that the least developed countries could build back better from the COVID-19 pandemic and get on track to achieving the Goals. She emphasized the need to support the least developed countries in building resilience against future shocks and noted that Australia and New Zealand remained committed to working towards the Goals with a view to ensuring smooth and sustainable graduation from the least developed country category. She thanked Qatar for its generous offer to host the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

67. The Secretary-General of the Conference commended the Co-Chairs of the Preparatory Committee for so ably steering the process to a good conclusion. He expressed his appreciation for the flexibility demonstrated by the delegations to reach a Programme of Action that was a symbol of solidarity with the world's poorest people. He called for a focus on implementation and the concrete deliverables that would ensure that the world's ambitions for the least developed countries were met. To ensure that the programme was a success, he urged Member States to think about the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries not as a moment, but as the start of a movement for genuine and lasting change. He listed the numerous challenges that lay ahead, including financing gaps, debt burdens, lack of access to technology and other well-known structural issues, such as marginalization of the trade and financial flows that prevented the progress of the least developed countries. He emphasized the need for investing in young people as a building block for prosperity, therefore, investment in more science, technology, engineering and mathematics education must be a priority in the implementation. He stated how climate change disrupted the progress of the least developed countries and why building resilience was one of the main themes of the new Doha Programme of Action. He recalled that, among their most immediate needs, the least developed countries needed urgent action to vaccinate their populations. In his concluding remarks, he noted that that was the greatest test for the international community at that time. If the international community failed at that, future generations would rightly judge it.

Annex

Documentation

<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Title</i>
A/CONF.219/2021/IPC/4/Rev.1	Provisional agenda and organization of the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries
A/CONF.219/2021/IPC/L.3	Draft provisional agenda of the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries
A/CONF.219/2021/IPC/L.3/Add.1	Proposed organization of work of the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries
A/CONF.219/2021/IPC/L.3/Add.1/Rev.1	Revised proposed organization of work of the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries
A/CONF.219/2021/IPC/L.4	Provisional rules of procedure of the Conference
A/CONF.219/2021/IPC/L.5	Modalities of the high-level thematic round tables of the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries
A/CONF.219/2021/IPC/L.6	Draft report of the Preparatory Committee for the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries on its second session
A/CONF.219/2021/IPC/CRP.1	Draft recommendation of the Preparatory Committee on the extension of its work
A/CONF.219/2021/IPC/CRP.2	Draft Doha Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries