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Implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits: review and coordination of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020

Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Council on 22 July 2020

[on a proposal considered under silence procedure (E/2020/L.21)]

2020/16. Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling the Istanbul Declaration¹ and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020,² 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 Assembly in its resolution [70/294](#) of 25 July 2016,

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

Recalling the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,³ the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development,⁴

¹ *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9–13 May 2011 (A/CONF.219/7)*, chap. I.

² *Ibid.*, chap. II.

³ General Assembly resolution [70/1](#).

⁴ General Assembly resolution [69/313](#), annex.



the Paris Agreement,⁵ the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030⁶ and the New Urban Agenda adopted in Quito by the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III),⁷

Recalling also General Assembly resolution [74/232](#) of 19 December 2019,

Recalling further its resolution [2019/3](#) of 6 June 2019 on the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020,

Recalling General Assembly resolutions [59/209](#) of 20 December 2004 and [67/221](#) of 21 December 2012 on a smooth transition for countries graduating from the list of least developed countries,

Recalling also General Assembly resolutions [74/270](#) of 2 April 2020 on global solidarity to fight the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and [74/274](#) of 20 April 2020 on international cooperation to ensure global access to medicines, vaccines and medical equipment to face COVID-19,

Recognizing that the least developed countries will be severely hit in the long term owing to the fragility of their health systems, limited coverage of their social protection systems, limited financial and other resources, and vulnerability to external shocks,

Recognizing also the contributions of migrants in mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in both their countries of origin and destination, noting 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, and noting with concern also the effects that the projected significant decline in remittances will have on the millions of people that depend heavily on them,

Taking note of the 2019 Ministerial Declaration of the Least Developed Countries,⁸

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020;⁹

2. *Notes with concern* that, with only half a year left, significant gaps persist between the goals and targets set out in the Istanbul Programme of Action² and the achievements made on the ground, and in this regard calls upon the least developed countries, their development partners, the United Nations system and all other actors to further intensify their efforts to fully and effectively implement, in a coordinated, coherent and expeditious manner, the commitments that have been made in the Programme of Action in its eight priority areas, namely, (a) productive capacity, (b) agriculture, food security and rural development, (c) trade, (d) commodities, (e) human and social development, (f) multiple crises and other emerging challenges, (g) mobilizing financial resources for development and capacity-building and (h) good governance at all levels;

3. *Calls for* intensified international cooperation, including by fully implementing the International Health Regulations (2005),¹⁰ to contain, mitigate and defeat the COVID-19 pandemic, including by exchanging information, scientific

⁵ Adopted under the UNFCCC in [FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1](#), decision 1/CP.21.

⁶ General Assembly resolution [69/283](#), annex II.

⁷ General Assembly resolution [71/256](#), annex.

⁸ [A/74/475](#), annex.

⁹ [A/75/72-E/2020/14](#).

¹⁰ World Health Organization, document WHA58/2005/REC/1, resolution 58.3, annex.

knowledge and best practices and by applying the relevant guidelines recommended by the World Health Organization;

4. *Notes with concern* that estimates show that 80 per cent of the world's poor will live in fragile contexts by 2030, with a majority of them living in least developed countries, which poses a major global threat to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,³ stresses the need for global support for the least developed countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as ensuring that no one is left behind, and further recalls the objectives of the Istanbul Programme of Action of enhancing good governance at all levels, by strengthening democratic processes, institutions and the rule of law; increasing efficiency, coherence, transparency and participation; advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; protecting and promoting human rights; and reducing corruption, and strengthening least developed country Governments' capacity to play an effective role in their economic and social development;

5. *Reaffirms* that the least developed countries, as the most vulnerable group of countries, need enhanced global support to overcome the structural challenges, as well as recent devastating impacts of COVID-19, that they face in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in this regard calls upon the international community to prioritize and strengthen support from all sources to facilitate the coordinated implementation and coherent follow-up to and monitoring of the Istanbul Programme of Action, the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development⁴ in the least developed countries;

6. *Recognizes* that significant additional domestic public resources, including at the subnational level, supplemented by international assistance as appropriate, will be critical to realizing sustainable development and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda acknowledge the centrality of domestic resource mobilization underscored by the principle of national ownership, also recognizes that, while the least developed countries have made considerable efforts to mobilize domestic resources and attract private investment, further progress is needed, and underlines the importance of strengthening domestic enabling environments, including the rule of law and combating corruption at all levels and in all its forms;

7. *Welcomes* the increase in official development assistance to the least developed countries by 2.6 per cent between 2018 and 2019 according to preliminary data from the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, while expressing its concern that bilateral official development assistance to the least developed countries remains far from the target of 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of gross national income committed to by many developed countries, as set out in the Istanbul Programme of Action and reaffirmed in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and, expressing its appreciation to those few countries that have met or surpassed their commitments to 0.7 per cent of gross national income for official development assistance to developing countries and the target of 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of gross national income for official development assistance to the least developed countries, calls upon official development assistance providers to fulfil their respective official development assistance commitments to the least developed countries, and encourages official development assistance providers to consider setting a target to provide at least 0.2 per cent of gross national income for official development assistance to the least developed countries, while reiterating that an important use of international public finance, including official development assistance, is to catalyse additional resource mobilization from other sources, public and private;

8. *Expresses its concern* that the adverse effects of COVID-19 on trade will be severe, as the World Trade Organization projects that world merchandise trade is set to plummet by between 13 and 32 per cent in 2020; and that export earnings of least developed countries from external sources, which are primarily dependent on garments and apparel, commodities and tourism, are seriously affected, risking the livelihood of millions of people working in these sectors and their families, including a significant decline in remittances and owing to serious impacts on the balance of payments and revenue generation, further constraining the fiscal space of Governments; notes that immediate and comprehensive measures are needed to enable the least developed countries to overcome these challenges and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal target of doubling the share of global least developed countries' exports by 2020 from 2011 levels; and encourages donors to leverage the global Aid for Trade agenda to enable least developed countries to benefit from the opportunities afforded by global value chains and foreign investment as well as from trade facilitation, also with a view towards implementation of the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement in their sustainable recovery efforts;

9. *Emphasizes* that the acute energy gap faced by the least developed countries is a severe constraint on their structural transformation and economic development, and stresses that special attention should be given to the least developed countries, focusing on the specific sustainable energy challenges of the least developed countries with specific programmes and multi-stakeholder partnerships tailored to meet the needs of those countries, throughout the United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All (2014–2024) and beyond, with a view to ensuring the realization of the objective of access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all by 2030 and to addressing the infrastructure needs of the least developed countries;

10. *Reaffirms* that the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls, in accordance with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action¹¹ and the outcomes of relevant United Nations conferences and resolutions of the General Assembly, including through investing in the development of women and girls and promoting their economic and political participation and equal access to economic and productive resources and education, is of fundamental importance and has a multiplier effect for achieving sustained and inclusive economic growth, poverty eradication and sustainable development;

11. *Calls upon* Member States to integrate efforts required by new challenges relating to COVID-19 into efforts towards eliminating, preventing and responding to all forms of violence and harmful practices against all women and girls, in the public and private spheres, including in digital contexts, as well as human trafficking and modern slavery and other forms of exploitation and ensuring access to justice, and the provision of support services, including legal, health and social, to all women victims of violence;

12. *Welcomes* the increase in the share of expenditure for operational activities for development of the United Nations system in the least developed countries in 2018, which reached 48 per cent of total expenditure at the country level, urges the United Nations development system to continue to prioritize allocations to the least developed countries by developing operational guidelines, while reaffirming that the least developed countries, as the most vulnerable group of countries, need enhanced support to overcome structural challenges that they face in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, requests the United Nations development system to provide assistance to graduating countries in the formulation and

¹¹ *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

implementation of their national transition strategies and to consider country-specific support for graduated countries for a fixed period of time and in a predictable manner, and in this regard invites the United Nations development system to prioritize allocations to the least developed countries by developing operational guidelines with clear budget targets, as appropriate;

13. *Recalls* that, pursuant to General Assembly resolution [73/242](#) of 20 December 2018, the meetings of the preparatory committee for the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries will be preceded by two regional preparatory meetings, each no longer than three days, one in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa and the other in collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, in the context of the regular annual session of each Commission, with those regional meetings to be supported by broad-based and inclusive country-level preparations;

14. *Calls upon* Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, major groups and other donors to contribute in a timely manner to the trust fund in support of activities undertaken by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States to support the implementation, follow-up and monitoring of the Istanbul Programme of Action and the participation of the representatives from the least developed countries in the high-level political forum on sustainable development of the Economic and Social Council as well as in other relevant forums and the preparatory process of the Conference, and in this regard expresses its appreciation to those countries that have made voluntary contributions to the trust fund;

15. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the Council at its 2021 session, under the sub-item entitled “Review and coordination of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020” of the item entitled “Implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits”, a progress report on the implementation of the Programme of Action.

22 July 2020