DOHA PROGRAMME OF ACTION

FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES 2022-2031

LDC5
5TH UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

UN-OHRLLS

#LDC5

The Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2022-2031 (DPoA) manifests a new generation of renewed and strengthened commitments between the least developed countries and their development partners, including the private sector, civil society, and governments at all levels.

The final text of the DPoA was adopted during the first part of the LDC5 conference on March 17, 2022 and endorsed by the General Assembly through resolution A/RES/76/258 on April 1 of the same year.

Introduction: from Istanbul priorities to Doha

1. Forty years ago, in September 1981, the international community met in Paris for the First United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and launched the Substantial New Programme of Action for the 1980s for the Least Developed Countries with an ambitious objective of transforming the economies of the least developed countries towards self-sustained development and enabling them to provide at least internationally accepted minimum standards of nutrition, health, transport, communication, social infrastructure, including drinking water and sanitation, housing and education, as well as job opportunities for their citizens, in particular the rural and urban poor.

2. Now, we are meeting for the fifth time, in the most unprecedented of circumstances, in which a health and socioeconomic crisis has shaken everyone, individually and collectively. The world is plagued by growing poverty, hunger and malnutrition, inequality, human rights violations, digital divides, vaccine divides, complex humanitarian emergencies and armed conflict, insecurity, pandemics, environmental degradation, climate change and disasters. Of greatest concern is that one in three people in least developed countries still live in extreme poverty, and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has caused this figure to rise further. We are determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies that are free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.

3. We call for greater action and extraordinary measures by all countries and strengthened international and multilateral cooperation to address challenges affecting least developed countries on the basis of the concept of human security[1] and to ensure that no one is left behind.

4. We have entered the decade of action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals, the most critical time of our generation, to realize our collective ambitions of sustainable and inclusive recovery and increased resilience from COVID-19 in a sustainable and equitable manner and leaving no one behind. We reaffirm our commitment to enhancing our efforts from COVID-19 to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the Paris Agreement. We commit to taking more tangible steps to support the least developed countries in this endeavour and to reach the furthest behind first, recognizing the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on those in vulnerable situations.

5. The least developed countries saw their economies significantly shrink in 2020, amid a severe global recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The external debt burden and debt service obligations are rising significantly, gains made over the past decade in poverty reduction were wiped out, there were increases in food insecurity and malnutrition, and already fragile health systems saw resources shifted away from urgent health and life-saving treatments. Disrupted education is likely to have a lasting negative impact on countries' recovery and development. Global inequalities are being exposed and growing as a result of the pandemic, increasing the risk of conflict and fragility, with women and girls, young people, persons with disabilities, older persons, indigenous peoples, local communities, refugees, displaced persons and migrants disproportionately affected. While many advanced economies deployed massive fiscal stimuli to cushion the pandemic's impact and have applied adjusted health measures, the policy response in least developed countries was much more limited owing to weak fiscal conditions, major supply chain and logistic challenges, weak resilience capacity and static global support. For them, adequate access to vaccines remains many months, if not years, away, casting a shadow over their urgent and much-needed growth and development prospects.

6. The COVID-19 pandemic threatens not only to reverse some progress made during the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020, (Istanbul Programme of Action) but also to exacerbate persistent challenges in least developed countries. Global inequality has risen as a result of the pandemic, and the risk of conflict and fragility has increased, in particular in relation to democratic governance and the rule of law. Owing to preexisting conditions, namely, chronic underinvestment in health systems, poorly functioning food systems, weak social protection systems, lack of institutional capacity, high levels of vulnerability to external shocks and employment that is predominantly in the informal sector, the pandemic has caused serious negative effects on all priority areas of the Istanbul Programme of Action that will be felt for years to come. This might have a negative impact on the graduation process of some countries.

7. We recognize that the least developed countries, currently consisting of 46 nations and comprising some 14 per cent of the global population, are some of the poorest and most vulnerable in the world, accounting for only 1.3 per cent of global gross domestic product (GDP), 1.4 per cent of

1 The General Assembly, noting the decision, in its resolution 66/290, to continue its discussion on human security in accordance with the provisions of that resolution, stresses that actions arising from the present document should be in line with the provisions of paragraph 3 of resolution 66/290.

global foreign direct investment (FDI) and just under 1 per cent of global merchandising exports.

8. We recognize that, notwithstanding many challenges and constraints, the least developed countries represent an enormous human, cultural and natural resource potential for sustainable economic growth, welfare, peace, prosperity, and food and energy security. Millions of young people and a growing working-age population could become development leaders and the drivers of transformative change. It is imperative that action for the least developed countries by all stakeholders be aimed at addressing the challenges in a sustainable manner and leveraging the opportunities offered by new and emerging issues to catalyse the greatest multiplier effects on growth and development. Therefore, a strengthened and inclusive global partnership that effectively addresses the special needs of the least developed countries will contribute to the causes of people, planet, peace, prosperity, partnership and sustainable development for all.

9. We also recognize that many least developed countries continue to face multiple structural challenges and constraints, including narrow production and export bases, stagnant trade and investment flows, diminishing productivity growth, small size, isolation and remoteness from major markets, widespread poverty, hunger and malnutrition, lack of access to quality and inclusive education and lifelong learning opportunities, and underdeveloped human capital. Almost half of the least developed countries are landlocked or small island countries, with a weak land and natural resource base. These long-standing challenges are compounded by new and emerging challenges, brought about by climate change, increased incidences of disasters and public health emergencies, conflicts, fluctuating commodity prices and rising capital outflows. Without a structural transformation that prioritizes economic diversification and addresses institutional and capacity constraints, the least developed countries will remain vulnerable to various socioeconomic, health and environmental shocks.

10. We recognize that progress has been made with regard to the Istanbul Programme of Action in areas such as access to electricity, access to mobile telephony and mobile Internet, increased enrolment of girls and boys in primary education, increased access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, and reforms that have made it easier to start and register businesses.

11. We also recognize that progress has been made towards graduation from the least developed country category. However, there remain significant challenges in meeting the graduation criteria and in ensuring sustainable and irreversible graduation. The Istanbul Programme of Action set the goal of half of the least developed countries, of which there were 24 at the time, meeting graduation criteria by 2020. To date, 4 have graduated and 16 are at different stages of graduation.

12. We note with concern that progress fell short of the goals and targets set out in the Istanbul Programme of Action, including achieving sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth at a 7 per cent rate; poverty eradication, achieving structural transformation; doubling the share of trade, building productive capacity; securing full employment and decent work for all, reducing the number of children, in particular girls, out of school in primary and secondary education, which remains at least double the world average; manufacturing and trade gains, which were minimal and concentrated in only a handful of countries; tax-to-GDP ratios that increased very slowly; and disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

13. We note with concern that progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in the least developed countries has been uneven and is not on pace to achieve the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda. The number of people living in extreme poverty remained at approximately 32 per cent, and those suffering from hunger is on the rise, in particular among those in vulnerable situations. There is evidence of losses in jobs and incomes in least developed countries. Unemployment, in particular of young people, is rampant. The inequalities between least developed countries and the rest of the world, as well as among least developed countries, are rising. Infant and maternal mortality is exorbitantly high. Access to energy and broadband connectivity is moving at a slower pace. Structural transformation is not taking hold. Infrastructure investment and equitable access to infrastructure services are falling far behind actual needs. Productive capacity and export competitiveness are weak. Climate change is occurring much faster than anticipated, as evidenced by, inter alia, disproportionately high levels of economic losses, damage to critical infrastructure, disruption of basic services in the least developed countries, devastating impacts on oceans and seas, loss of vulnerable ecosystems, land degradation, the retreat of mountain glaciers and the continued rise in global temperatures, thereby threatening the lives of many people, in particular the poorest and people in vulnerable situations. Biodiversity loss, deforestation, water stress and global pollution from chemicals and waste remain major global challenges, while desertification, land degradation and coastal erosion continue to increase.

14. The Doha Programme of Action for the decade 2022–2031 is a new generation of renewed and strengthened commitments by the least

developed countries and their development partners grounded in the overarching goals of achieving rapid, sustainable and inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, building resilience against future shocks, eradicating extreme poverty, strengthening labour markets by promoting the transition from informal to formal employment, enabling graduation from the least developed country category, facilitating access to sustainable and innovative financing, addressing inequalities, within and among countries, leveraging the power of science, technology and innovation, mainstreaming tech driven-entrepreneurship, bringing about structural transformation and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, through a reinvigorated global partnership for sustainable development based on scaled-up and ambitious means of implementation and diverse support for the least developed countries in forging the widest possible coalition of multi-stakeholder partnerships.

15. We reaffirm that the least developed countries, as the most vulnerable group of countries, need enhanced global support to overcome the structural challenges and recent devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic that they face in implementing the 2030 Agenda, and call upon development partners, international organizations and other stakeholders to support least developed countries in its implementation. We also call upon in this regard the international community to prioritize and strengthen support from all sources to facilitate the coordinated implementation and coherent follow-up and monitoring of the Doha Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda in the least developed countries.

16. We underscore that the ownership, leadership and primary responsibility for development in least developed countries rests with the least developed countries themselves. Least developed countries should identify their own national priorities and formulate and execute coherent economic and development policies and strategies. Development partners commit to providing concrete and substantial support to these efforts, in a spirit of shared responsibility and mutual accountability, through a renewed and strengthened global partnership.

17. The Doha Programme of Action will be guided by the principles of shared responsibility, ownership and leadership of the least developed countries; an integrated and comprehensive approach; resilience-building and risk reduction; genuine and reinvigorated partnerships; result orientation; peace, security, development and human rights; respect for cultural diversity, inclusion and equity; and voice and representation and a balanced role of State and market considerations as reflected in the Istanbul Programme of Action. The Doha Programme of Action represents the enhanced commitments of the least developed countries, which have the ownership of and primary responsibility for their own development, and their development partners to a renewed and strengthened global partnership.

18. This partnership also includes the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, other multilateral institutions and regional development banks, within their relevant mandates and international obligations.

19. Guided by the spirit of solidarity with least developed countries, developing countries, consistent with their capabilities, will provide support for the effective implementation of the Doha Programme of Action in mutually agreed areas of cooperation within the framework of South-South and triangular cooperation, which is a complement to, but not a substitute for, North-South cooperation.

20. The private sector, civil society and foundations will be encouraged to contribute to the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action in their relevant areas of competence in line with the national priorities of least developed countries and in collaboration with relevant national government institutions.

21. We also underscore that good governance and the rule of law, inclusiveness and transparency, as well as domestic resource mobilization, are crucial to the development process of the least developed countries. These efforts need to be given concrete and substantial international support in a spirit of shared responsibility and mutual accountability through a renewed and strengthened global partnership.

22. We reaffirm that achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and the full realization of their human rights are essential to achieving sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth and sustainable development for all.

23. We recognize that investment in the care economy is needed to spur sustainable economies, restore and create jobs, recognize, reduce and redistribute women's disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work, and close the gender gap in labour force participation.

24. The COVID-19 pandemic, the Ebola outbreaks, the financial crisis and climate change have demonstrated that we live in a highly globalized and interconnected world, where a crisis or a virus in a small part of a country can spread to the entire world in a short span of time and have devastating impacts globally. COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of holistic, all-hazard and One Health approaches that consider interdependencies among the health of humans, animals and plants and

their shared environment. Looking beyond crises and bearing in mind the core principles of the 2030 Agenda, it is our shared responsibility to ensure that no one is left behind and to reach the furthest behind first.

25. We will undertake action to leverage the opportunities offered by the 226 million young people in least developed countries who are real agents of change for structural transformation, through productive capacity development in agricultural, manufacturing, cultural and creative industries and services sectors, including tourism; building and maintaining quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure to improve the movement of goods and services, promoting life-cycle approaches; expanding energy access and broadband connectivity; tapping into emerging technologies; mainstreaming technology-driven entrepreneurship and developing innovative digital ecosystems; delivering digital services and applications; harnessing the demographic dividend that will yield economic and health gains that come with ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education; and lifelong learning for all, including persons with disabilities, while combating all forms of discrimination.

26. We are committed to building stronger, multifaceted and resilient systems in the least developed countries. With the support of the international community, least developed countries need to design systems, including infrastructure in transportation and communications, energy and information and communications technology (ICT), supply chains, economic, financial, public health and food systems, and universal social protection, that are resilient, sustainable, comprehensive, shock-responsive, gender-sensitive and risk-informed. Such action has the potential to make the national economic system stronger and more resilient against any future shocks and ensure sustainable and irreversible graduation from the least developed country category and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

27. We affirm that the integrated and indivisible nature of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 requires the involvement of all relevant stakeholders at all levels – local, national and international – in solutions that are context-appropriate, respond to the needs and rights of populations, in particular those furthest behind, and tap into the full range of existing knowledge and experience. It is, in fact, encouraging that national and local governments, civil society, academia, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders have engaged with the Sustainable Development Goals and the objectives of the Paris Agreement and are developing innovative approaches and practices. International financial institutions and several central and national development banks have started to better reflect the Goals as a whole in their strategies and policies.

28. We note with concern that the international support measures that have been put in place are not sufficient to contribute to addressing the full range of needs that exist in the least developed countries, including the new and emerging ones. We urge the international community to fulfil its existing commitments and push beyond "business as usual" to agree on innovative and effective support measures for the least developed countries that contribute to closing their funding gaps in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals.

29. We reaffirm our commitment to a comprehensive, results-oriented, enhanced, quantifiable, forward-looking, coherent, renewed and strengthened global partnership for least developed countries based on the principles of leaving no one behind that is fully aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. We also reaffirm our commitments to supporting the least developed countries through, inter alia, fulfilling all internationally agreed goals and targets related to respective official development assistance (ODA) commitments, market access, debt relief, when appropriate, technology transfer on mutually agreed terms, technical assistance and capacity-building. These commitments must be met and action must be taken beyond existing commitments to bring about transformational change in least developed countries. The United Nations system, including its specialized agencies, including the World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as well as the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and other relevant institutions, to provide finance, technical support, assistance and policy advice to all priority areas for the least developed countries, and this support will be improved, including through additional concessional finance and the coordination between agencies and departments, using approaches such as the integrated national financing frameworks.

30. We affirm that Governments play a very important role in articulating and implementing the policies and programmes that will support a sustainable future that leaves no one behind. National parliaments will have a great role to play in enacting legislation and allocating funds that serve all in order to leave no one behind, as well as holding Governments to account for the commitments that they have made.

31. The Doha Programme of Action will have six key focus areas for action, as follows:

(a) Investing in people in least developed countries: eradicating poverty and building capacity to leave no one behind;

(b) Leveraging the power of science, technology, and innovation to fight against multidimensional vulnerabilities and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals;

(c) Supporting structural transformation as a driver of prosperity;

(d) Enhancing international trade of least developed countries and regional integration;

(e) Addressing climate change, environmental degradation, recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and building resilience against future shocks for risk-informed sustainable development;

(f) Mobilizing international solidarity, reinvigorated global partnerships and innovative tools and instruments: a march towards sustainable graduation.

I. Investing in people in least developed countries: eradicating poverty and building capacity to leave no one behind

32. We recognize that people, especially the large youth and working-age population in least developed countries, are critical assets for their development. It is estimated that, between 2020 and 2030, the population in the least developed countries will increase by 256 million, to 1.3 billion people.

33. We are concerned that poverty remains a key challenge for least developed countries. Even before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was estimated that nearly 30 per cent of the population in least developed countries would remain in extreme poverty by 2030. Upward trends in extreme poverty and gender inequality in least developed countries since the COVID-19 outbreak suggest compounding impacts of the crisis caused by the pandemic.

34. In addition to having a low income, people living in poverty in least developed countries experience higher mortality rates and food insecurity and all forms of malnutrition, limited or no access to quality inclusive education and health-care services, and a lack of access to opportunities to gain income through decent employment. Poor people in the least developed countries live in underserved areas with poor infrastructure and limited access to water and sanitation and have limited access to social protection. We respect and value the diversity of situations and conditions of women and girls and recognize that some women face specific barriers to their empowerment. We also stress that, while all women and girls have the same human rights, women and girls in different contexts have specific needs and priorities, requiring appropriate responses.

35. We reaffirm our commitment to diversity in cities and human settlements, to strengthening social cohesion, intercultural dialogue and understanding, tolerance, mutual respect, gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, inclusion, and the identity, safety and dignity of all people, and to taking steps to ensure that local institutions promote pluralism and peaceful coexistence within increasingly heterogenous and multicultural societies.

36. We are guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including full respect for international law. We are further guided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights treaties. We emphasize the importance of fundamental freedoms for all. We are also informed by other instruments such as the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and core international human rights instruments. We recognize that good governance at all levels, strong institutions, democracy, the rule of law, transparency and accountability, and affording individuals access to the health-care services and education, knowledge and skills needed for productive capacity and full participation in decision-making processes are crucial to achieving sustainable development. Least developed countries still face challenges in ensuring universal access to inclusive, equitable and quality education, social protection and essential health-care services, and their vulnerabilities and limited capacities exacerbate the impact of external shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic, natural hazards and the adverse impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss.

37. We aim to eradicate poverty, including extreme poverty, hunger and malnutrition, in all its forms and dimensions, to advance human development in an inclusive and sustainable way for all in the least developed countries by the end of the decade and to provide equal opportunities for all, with special attention given to the poorest and most vulnerable, including women and girls in vulnerable situation, young people and children, older persons and persons with disabilities, as well as those affected by violence and conflict, in order to leave no one behind.

Universal social protection systems

38. Limited social protection exacerbates vulnerabilities across all dimensions of human development in least developed countries and constitutes a major obstacle to economic, environmental and social development. Notwithstanding the commitment made by many least developed countries and their development partners, a lack of capacities and limited resources in least developed countries are major constraints to providing comprehensive and sustainable social protection.

    Targets

    - Achieve a sustainable increase in coverage of nationally appropriate comprehensive and universal social protection systems and measures, including floors, for all in the least developed countries.
    - End hunger and malnutrition and ensure access by all people in least developed countries, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe and healthy diets through sustainable year-round food systems.
    - Provide food and emergency assistance everywhere to those in need.

We commit to taking the following actions:

39. We will reinforce social protection policies and programmes that are risk-informed, take into account the specific needs of women and girls, age and persons with disabilities, and contribute to strengthening the ability of communities and people, in particular the poorest and most vulnerable, to withstand poverty and risks to their livelihoods and well-being, throughout their life course. We call upon Governments to extend social protection for all, including workers in the informal economy. We will also build social protection systems that are resilient and can respond to shocks, including by integrating disaster risk reduction into social protection strategies.

40. We recognize that significant additional domestic public resources, supplemented by international assistance, as appropriate, will be critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. In this regard, we commit to providing fiscally sustainable and nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all. We commit to supporting predictable finance, including ODA, domestic resource mobilization, trade and private sector financing and tax and public transfer reforms, where appropriate.

41. We commit to increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the public sector at the national, subnational and local levels in delivering inclusive social protection programmes, including by expanding the digital infrastructure and ICT capabilities of the public administration, by establishing national social registry systems, by enhancing and digitalizing cash transfers and payment of entitlements, and by increasing transparency and access to information.

42. We recognize the need for dealing with severe food insecurities. In this regard, we request the Secretary-General to explore the feasibility, effectiveness and administrative modalities of a system of stockholding for the least developed countries on a regional and subregional basis, or alternative means, such as cash transfers, taking into account possible economic implications and risks, and to report thereon to the General Assembly for its consideration at its seventy-seventh session.

Achieving universal access to quality education, skills and lifelong learning

43. Notwithstanding progress in increasing enrolment rates for primary education, 16.2 per cent of children of primary school age were out of school in least developed countries in 2019 and almost half of children out of school in the world are in least developed countries, with girls, children with disabilities and other children in vulnerable situations disproportionately represented.

44. Enrolment and completion rates for tertiary education remain low, which has far-reaching implications for the structural transformation agenda of the least developed countries. Most of them depend on aid for their education budgets. At the secondary and tertiary levels, gender disparities and disparities for the poorest and most vulnerable exist. Lack of economic opportunities and poor basic facilities and infrastructure, such as the lack of access to digital technologies, the Internet and electricity, safe drinking water and sanitation facilities, especially for girls, and public transport, as well as insufficient trained teachers and the limited or lack of adequate learning and teaching materials, seriously affect the quality of education in least developed countries.

45. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on schooling is a generational catastrophe. School closures resulting from the pandemic have had devastating consequences for children's learning and well-being. Millions of children and young people are falling behind in their learning, making it even more difficult to successfully make the transition from education and training to employment, which will have long-term impacts on

human capital, including reduced earnings and career advancement. More than a year and a half into the COVID-19 crisis, almost all learners in least developed countries have faced full school closures, which has also deprived them of childcare, school meals and other vital school health services. In particular, the crisis poses a series of mental health challenges to young people and may aggravate the state of those with pre-existing mental health conditions. These children, especially girls, who are unable to gain access to quality remote learning and who face economic hardship are at an increased risk of never returning to school and even of being subject to harmful practices, including child labour and child, early and forced marriage. The situation of young girls is particularly alarming because they are more vulnerable and exposed to the risks of exploitation, including the risk of early pregnancies. In addition, the pandemic threatens to undo many of the global gains of the last two decades in girls' education and employment.

Targets

- Ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable, inclusive and quality primary and secondary education, leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes and inclusive, sustainable economic growth.
- By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable, inclusive and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.
- Achieve universal access to inclusive and quality education at all levels, eliminate the gender gap in enrolment and completion, and increase the quality of education for all in least developed countries.
- Substantially expand globally the number of places and scholarships for students and trainees from least developed countries, in particular in the fields of science, education technology, business management and economics, and encourage the full uptake of scholarships available to students of least developed countries.
- Substantially increase access to the Internet, electricity, school meals that support healthy diets, water and other vital school health services, and adequate hygiene and sanitation facilities in all primary, secondary and tertiary schools in least developed countries by 2030.
- Undertake feasibility studies to explore the possibility of establishing an online university or other equivalent platforms for least developed countries.

- Expand professional training and quality apprenticeships and promote other active labour market policies to facilitate a smooth school-to-work transition for young people, especially young women.
- Urge the international community to join forces to have children return to school in the wake of COVID-19 and ensure 12 years of safe and quality education for all children, specifically girls.

We commit to taking the following actions:

46. We commit to supporting least developed countries and providing financing to strengthen national inclusive and efficient education systems in order to harness the demographic dividend, for both remote and on-site classes, including through better curricula that respond to the dynamic nature of education, training and the job market; local contexts, including country-specific challenges and local cultural contents; teacher development, retention and deployment, especially in rural areas; and improvements in basic infrastructure and providing adequate supplies that suit the learning requirements of all children.

47. We also commit to supporting least developed countries in increasing enrolment and decreasing dropout rates through measures such as abolishing school fees, providing school feeding programmes that support healthy diets, water and sanitation facilities, vaccinations, various school health services and improving the quality of education and especially foundational learning. We commit to supporting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in and through education and ensuring equal access to all levels of education, including vocational and technical education for people in vulnerable situations.

48. We will strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet, substantially increase access to electricity, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all in all academic institutions in least developed countries, and provide digital literacy skills, technology-enabled lifelong and dynamic learning systems and human capital development by 2030.

49. We further commit to supporting the least developed countries in gaining access to and effectively utilizing digital tools and technologies to improve education outcomes for all learners, including through educational radio and television programmes, to meet learning and educational requirements according to the local context. We also commit to distributing equipment and teaching materials, such as radios and textbooks, both in physical and digital formats, including to the poorest

and vulnerable households, especially for girls. We further commit to supporting large-scale national efforts to utilize all forms of distance learning technology, including low-cost technology, in support of remote learning and online education, including through digital technologies, for better resilience in national equitable and efficient education systems, as well as training to develop the digital skills of students and educators.

50. We recognize the importance of education for sustainable development and global citizenship education in helping countries to achieve a sustainable and inclusive recovery after COVID-19, and will strengthen education for sustainable development and global citizenship education in the period 2021–2030.

51. We will encourage interaction, collaboration and exchange programmes of students and the sharing of scientific studies and research papers among academic institutions of least developed countries and the rest of the world. We commit to substantially expanding globally the number of scholarships for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training, and we will encourage higher education institutes to allocate places and scholarships for students and trainees from least developed countries, especially for young women, in particular in the fields of science, technology, engineering, medicine and business administration, in developed countries and other developing countries and encourage the full uptake of scholarships offered by higher education institutes to least developed countries.

52. We commit to undertaking feasibility studies to explore the possibility of establishing an online university or other equivalent platforms to support online graduate and post-graduate university-level science, technology, engineering and mathematics education in least developed countries and recently graduated countries with a view to, inter alia, providing policy support to promote distance education and open learning for graduate and post-graduate studies in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, ensuring a 50/50 gender balance at all levels while guaranteeing special access for the poorest and people in vulnerable situations; creating a virtual network of educational institutions within and beyond least developed countries; assisting in course design and curriculum development; and leading to scale and sustainability of the education system, taking into account all pre-existing initiatives developed by the relevant partners in a comprehensive manner. In this regard, we request the Secretary-General to submit a report, outlining, inter alia, the mapping of existing initiatives, possible new modalities, resource requirements, accreditation and sustainable funding sources, to the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session for its consideration.

Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and young people to address inequality and drive economic growth

53. Women and girls continue to face barriers, such as a lack of access to inclusive and quality education and digital skills, in particular at the secondary and tertiary levels, to health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health-care services, and to social protection, decent work and opportunities in the labour market, and are subject to harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage, gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, sexual harassment and other harmful practices. Women were disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, including in terms of loss of jobs, income and livelihoods, while continuing to bear the disproportionate brunt of unpaid care and domestic work. Investment and a focus on the rights of women and girls are required to provide and enable access to inclusive and quality education, social protection, online health services, including sexual and reproductive health-care services, property and capital and productive assets throughout the life course; to ensure financial inclusion through expanding access to financial services such as credit; and to eliminate harmful practices and all forms of violence. Together, these actions will help to address barriers to women's full, equal, effective and meaningful participation in all spheres of society, including in decision-making and leadership, in order to achieve gender equality and empower women and girls and further enhance the contribution of women to economic and social development. The disproportionate impact of the pandemic on the social and economic situations of women and girls, along with gender-based violence, also pose challenges to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the least developed countries.

Targets

- Achieve women's full, equal and meaningful participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.
- Support women's equal opportunities in education, training, business, entrepreneurship and decent jobs.
- Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.
- Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and

reproductive rights, as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.

- Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- Support the transition from informal to formal work in all sectors.
- Achieve the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and girls online.
- Achieve equitable access to social protection for women and girls.

We commit to taking the following actions:

54. We commit to establishing policies and programmes to improve an enabling environment for the enjoyment of human rights by women and girls, expand women's access to inclusive and quality education and training, online services, health services, entrepreneurship, job opportunities and economic opportunities, expand access to gender-sensitive social protection and ensure women's full, equal, meaningful and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, cultural, economic and public life, including through institutional reforms and policies that address multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. We commit to supporting mechanisms that provide access to finance for women for both personal and business use.

55. We commit to eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including sexual and gender-based violence, trafficking, sexual and other types of exploitation, as well as all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation, through the development, implementation and enforcement of appropriate policies and laws.

56. We commit to establishing inclusive and gender-responsive support programmes to prevent and respond to sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict least developed countries, and to assist victims and survivors of sexual violence, including through long-term health-care services, psychosocial support, access to justice and safe accommodation and shelter and inclusion in peacebuilding initiatives.

57. We commit to providing access to family planning to all women in least developed countries and ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.

Population and health

58. We note that the least developed countries have the fastest growing populations in the world, rising at an annual rate of 2.3 per cent, and that many are projected to see their population double between 2019 and 2050. Appropriate policies and measures need to be put in place to leverage the potential offered by the demographic dividend.

59. We will work together to support the acceleration of the demographic transition, where relevant, and champion the importance of increased investment in human development, including universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, and public services, infrastructure and job creation that keep pace with population growth and create healthier, better educated citizens and drive economic growth.

60. Least developed countries face major challenges in improving the health of their population owing to a lack of adequate health-care facilities and services, investment and a trained health workforce, as well as adequate commodities and supplies and weaknesses across other systems, in particular food systems. Newborn, child and maternal mortality remains unacceptably high in least developed countries. Prevailing high rates of undernutrition continue to be a major cause of disease, child mortality and lifelong losses in productivity and income, with many people unable to afford or gain access to nutritious food and healthy diets. They also experience an increase in obesity and non-communicable diseases, as well as other preventable or treatable conditions.

Targets

- Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and nutrition, and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines, diagnostics, vaccines and other health technologies for all.
- Reduce maternal deaths and eliminate preventable maternal, infant and child deaths and improve access to affordable quality health-care services.

- Ensure birth registration to all newborns in least developed countries and provide a national legal identity to them.

We commit to taking the following actions:

61. We commit to providing financial and technical support and investment to promote and upscaling education and training, in tandem with job creation, for the burgeoning population of young people in least developed countries to leverage the opportunities presented by the demographic dividend and to enable children and young people, especially girls and young women, to develop their personalities, talents and abilities and to participate fully in society. Least developed countries, with the support of their development partners, will upgrade science and technology-based education systems that lead to dynamic and emerging critical thinking skills of the young generation and ensure their successful integration into national and international labour markets, ensuring full and productive employment and decent work for all.

62. We commit to providing the financial and technical support necessary for least developed countries to strengthen integrated and inclusive national health systems and the design, implementation of and access to modern health infrastructure and systems, which is accessible to all members of the population, develop adequately skilled professionals and medical facilities and supplies, strengthen health-care information systems and the use of disaggregated data for decision-making, improve essential integrated health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health, and provide incentives to retain national health workers in order to achieve universal health coverage in least developed countries, with a special emphasis on primary health care as a cornerstone of a sustainable health system for all in least developed countries.

63. We also commit to supporting the strengthening of food systems in least developed countries, including by using holistic, all-hazard and One Health approaches, so that they deliver better outcomes for people's health and nutrition, alongside ensuring the health of animals, plants and ecosystems, while also ensuring that least developed countries are more resilient and sustainable in the face of climate change and biodiversity loss. This includes making safe, sufficient and nutritious food more available, affordable and accessible and creating more enabling food environments. We welcome the Committee on World Food Security voluntary guidelines on food systems and nutrition.

64. We reaffirm the decision of the Council for Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights on the extension of the transition period under article 66.1 of the TRIPS Agreement for least developed country members for certain obligations with respect to pharmaceutical products until 1 January 2033 and the decision of the Council on the transition period under article 66.1 of the TRIPS Agreement until 1 July 2034, and the commitment of World Trade Organization (WTO) developed country members to providing incentives to enterprises and institutions in their territories for the purposes of promoting and encouraging technology transfer to least developed countries, as obligated under article 66.2 of the TRIPS Agreement. We also encourage the voluntary transfer of technology on mutually agreed terms with a view to enabling least developed countries to produce life-saving medicines, including COVID-19 vaccines.

65. We commit to providing the support necessary to least developed countries to assist in the birth registration for all newborns in least developed countries and the provision of a national legal identity to them.

Investing in young people

66. In 2020, 66.9 per cent of the population was under 30 years of age. By 2030, one in five of the projected number of young people in the world will have been born in the least developed countries. In 2019, more than one in five young people around the world were not in employment, education or training, which is almost unchanged since 2005. Given that young women were already twice as likely to be unemployed and not in education or training as young men, and because women have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the COVID-19 crisis is likely to worsen not in employment, education or training gender gaps among young people.

    Targets

    - Ensure, by 2030, that all young people achieve literacy and numeracy.
    - Ensure access to lifelong digital learning opportunities for skills development.
    - Increase youth participation and inclusion in decision-making processes.
    - Increase access to safe and healthy working conditions, decent work opportunities, knowledge and skills for all young people in the least developed countries.

- Promote entrepreneurial training to young people, including through financial and technical assistance.

We commit to taking the following actions:

67. We commit to strengthening youth participation mechanisms to facilitate young people's meaningful engagement, especially young women and young people in vulnerable situations, in policies and activities that enhance sustainable development efforts. We will increase youth involvement in national sustainable development coordination councils, working with national youth councils, expanding the United Nations Youth Delegate Programme and other opportunities for youth representation, as appropriate, and ensuring that young people contribute to the implementation and review of the Doha Programme of Action.

68. We commit to adopting an inclusive, results-based and employment-generating approach to development planning and implementation in accordance with national priorities. We commit to ensuring fluency, including digital fluency, lifelong learning opportunities, appropriate training, including vocational training, creativity, entrepreneurship skills and the best opportunities for full employment and decent work for all people, especially young women and men in the least developed countries. We commit to supporting the least developed countries in reforming and strengthening equitable and efficient education systems to allow for the development of skills and talents that are consistent with the demands of the national and global job markets, which include preparing young people for frontier technologies and the new digital age. We also commit to strengthening national legislative frameworks, in accordance with international labour standards.

Water, sanitation and hygiene

69. The proportion of the population with access to safe drinking water services was 64.6 per cent in 2018, with 84.1 per cent who had access in urban areas, compared with 55 per cent in rural areas. Access to basic sanitation services remains very low in the least developed countries, at an average 34 per cent of the population, in particular in rural areas.

    Target

    - Achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water and access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all in least developed countries by 2030.

We commit to taking the following actions:

70. We reaffirm the importance of regional and international cooperation for safe drinking water and sanitation and commit to expanding international cooperation and capacity-building support, for accelerating access to inclusive, affordable and climate-resilient water and sanitation services and improving institutional capacity and increasing access to technology to develop water and sanitation infrastructure in the least developed countries and water- and sanitation-related activities and programmes, including the development and implementation of integrated water resources management interventions and wastewater treatment solutions. We also commit to providing access to safe and affordable drinking water, adequate sanitation and hygiene facilities for all, with particular attention given to women and girls in terms of the provision of safe and affordable drinking water, adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene services, which include menstrual hygiene, and services for schools, health facilities and other public spaces.

Urbanization and shelter

71. On average, almost 60 per cent of the urban population in least developed countries live in slums, where conditions carry especially high risks, owing to overcrowding, limited access to water and sanitation, insufficient waste management, inadequate rainwater drainage systems, poor health-care systems and a lack of other basic services. Financing sustainable urbanization remains a challenge in least developed countries. Sustainable funding at the municipal level through additional resources is key to supporting the investment needs of growing cities in least developed countries.

    Targets

    - By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services.
    - By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport system for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport.

We commit to taking the following actions:

72. We reaffirm our commitment to providing financial and technical support to least developed countries in strengthening government housing agencies, including at the local level, and ensuring improved access to land, in accordance with national legislation; affordable housing and basic services; upgraded slums; and sustainable transport and communication systems for all. In this regard, we further reaffirm the need to take account of the special needs of least developed countries devastated by natural and human-made hazards and conflict.

73. We commit to supporting least developed countries, including through financial and technical assistance, in building sustainable, culturally sensitive and resilient housing utilizing local materials and in increasing affordable housing, including by leveraging public-private partnerships and sharing good practices among least developed countries.

Migration and mobility

74. We recognize that migrants make positive contributions to inclusive growth and sustainable development in their countries of origin, transit and destination, and to the response and recovery to the crisis caused by COVID-19. We duly acknowledge that migrants face significant barriers to safe and secure movement and livelihoods, which in turn expose them to additional risks and vulnerabilities.

    Targets

    - Facilitate the orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.
    - Enhance the positive contribution of migrants to inclusive growth and sustainable development.
    - Invest in the skills development of migrants and facilitate mutual recognition of skills, qualification and competences.
    - Ensure inclusive access to basic social (education, nutrition, health care) and protection services, in particular for migrants in vulnerable situations, in line with national policies and legislation and international obligations.

We commit to taking the following actions:

75. We recommit to cooperating internationally to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration involving the full respect for human rights and the humane treatment of migrants, regardless of their migration status, and to supporting countries of origin, transit and destination in the spirit of international cooperation, taking into account national circumstances. In this regard, we recognize the positive contributions of migrants to inclusive growth and sustainable development in their countries of origin, transit and destination, and in the response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. We note national policy measures and good practices to facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration, and also note the decision to convene the first official meeting of the International Migration Review Forum, under the auspices of the General Assembly, in 2022.

76. We commit to promoting inclusive access to basic social and protection services, in particular for migrants and refugee children and young people, in line with national policies and legislation and international obligations. We intend to coordinate and cooperate at all levels, as appropriate, to provide vital services, especially equal access to education, which is a human right and is critical to equipping them with the necessary life-saving and -enhancing knowledge and skills.

77. We encourage investment in innovative solutions that facilitate the mutual recognition of skills, qualifications and competences of migrant workers at all skill levels and promote demand-driven skills development in order to optimize the employability of migrants in formal labour markets in countries of destination and in countries of origin upon return, and to ensure decent work in labour migration.

78. We encourage the taking of 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, in particular 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.

79. 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, including 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.

80. We commit to designing and implementing policies and measures supporting the outward and inward mobility of artists and cultural professionals from and to least developed countries, where no suitable pathway exists, including South-South mobility, as a key enabler for vibrant and dynamic cultural and creative industries.

Good and effective governance at all levels

81. Many least developed countries have made progress in governance in the past decade. However, more needs to be done. Sustainable development cannot be realized without peace and security, and peace and security will be at risk without sustainable development. Three in four least developed countries are in situations affected by conflict and post-conflict situations. Conflict-affected least developed countries require context-specific approaches to address poverty, security and governance in an integrated manner. In 2018, 33 million forcibly displaced people originated from least developed countries, which is a growing problem, negatively affecting the governance situation in their countries of origin. The average e-government development index developed by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs for the delivery of public services in least developed countries increased from 0.23 in 2010 to 0.34 in 2020 but remains below the world average of 0.6.

82. We recognize the importance of enhancing good governance at all levels by strengthening democratic processes, institutions and the rule of law, increasing efficiency, coherence, transparency and participation, protecting and promoting human rights, and reducing corruption and strengthening the capacity of Governments of least developed countries to play an effective role in their economic and social development.

83. We reaffirm the importance of the principle of sovereign equality enshrined in Article 2.1 of the Charter of the United Nations. Broadening and strengthening the voice and participation of least developed countries in international economic decision-making, norm-setting and global economic governance is related to target 10.6 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

84. We reaffirm our continued support for the strengthened and effective participation of least developed countries in the global decision-making processes in the economic, social, and environmental fields.

Targets

- Strengthen good governance and the rule of law at all levels.
- Provide continued support for the strengthened and effective voice and participation of least developed countries in relevant international forums.
- Step up the fight against corruption and illicit financial flows.
- Build up efficient public administration institutions.
- Strengthen justice institutions and the rule of law.

We commit to taking the following actions:

85. We commit to strengthening good governance, democratic processes and the rule of law by ensuring transparent and accountable governance, equal access to justice and independent judicial institutions, based on the respect for human rights, gender equality and the empowerment of those experiencing poverty, marginalization or vulnerability, especially women and girls. We also commit to increased democratic participation, enhancing institutional capacity at all levels and strengthening civil society. We will also strengthen efforts to fight corruption, bribery and money-laundering, the illegal transfer of funds and other illicit activities by strengthening anti-corruption and other laws and regulations and their effective enforcement.

86. We commit to supporting least developed countries in the establishment of egovernment services, and digital government solutions, services and applications to facilitate access to public sector offices and services, while providing for an encompassing protection of personal data, and disseminate key information about laws, regulations and government activities to citizens.

87. We commit to ensuring that the least developed countries are well represented in the decision-making and governance structures of international organizations, as appropriate. We also commit to providing continued support for the strengthened and effective voice and participation of least developed countries in international dialogue and action on development, as well as in decision- and rule-making and standard- and norm-setting processes in all areas affecting their development, and in relevant international forums.

88. We commit to promoting policy coherence and coordination of international financial, trade and development institutions, processes and mechanisms, taking into account the diverse and special development needs and challenges of least developed countries.

Building and sustaining peace for sustainable development

89. A total of 24 of 46 least developed countries had active conflicts in 2019. The link between peace, security, stability and sustainable development are emphasized in the 2030 Agenda. Peace, security, development, human rights and humanitarian efforts are complementary and need to reinforce one another. Greater cooperation, coherence, coordination and complementarity among development, disaster risk reduction, humanitarian action and sustaining peace are fundamental to most efficiently and effectively addressing needs and attaining the Sustainable Development Goals. We recognize the positive role that sustainable development can play in mitigating drivers of conflict, disaster risks, humanitarian crises and complex emergencies, and recognize that a comprehensive whole-of-system response, including promoting respect for cultural diversity, contributes to preventing violent extremism, as and when conducive to terrorism, while the significance of culture in the lives of communities makes its continuity essential for recovery and resilience in the wake of disasters. In addition, supporting and building partnerships with and between conflict-affected least developed countries, through sustained and predictable resources, remains critical for achieving peaceful and inclusive societies.

    Targets

    - Build durable peace and ensure stability, security and sustainable, inclusive and resilient development in least developed countries.
    - Foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies that are free from fear and violence.
    - Strengthen multilateral dialogue and cooperation to prevent conflicts and ensure peaceful solutions to existing conflicts.
    - Promote increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and in mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict.

90. We commit to ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation of women at all levels and stages of decision-making, and in all areas related to peace and security, including peace processes and mediation efforts, conflict prevention and resolution, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and relief and recovery, and to recognizing women's leadership therein, noting that women's participation in peace negotiations is likely to increase the durability and quality of peace and that mainstreaming women's meaningful participation and leadership into conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding is essential.

We commit to taking the following actions:

91. We must redouble our efforts to resolve and or prevent conflict and commit to strengthening support for least developed countries affected by fragility and conflict in order to address root causes of conflict, country-specific needs and situations, including broad-based, inclusive and rapid socioeconomic development, with a special focus on rebuilding better national institutions and capacity, rebuilding critical infrastructure and generating productive employment and decent work for all.

92. We commit to building peaceful, just and inclusive societies that provide equal access to justice and that are based on respect for human rights (including the right to development), cultural diversity and pluralism, and public access to information on the effective rule of law and good governance at all levels, and on transparent, effective and accountable institutions. We will ensure that women effectively and meaningfully participate, on equal terms with men, in the design, implementation, follow-up and evaluation of policies and activities related to conflict prevention, peace mediation, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction.

93. We commit to increasing the predictability of aid and making more effective use of global and country-level funds for peacebuilding and State-building to achieve sustainable development. We also encourage bilateral donors and multilateral institutions to scale up access to instruments supporting investment in fragile contexts. We shall work on providing humanitarian aid in coordination with a long-term sustainable framework, contributing to sustainable development and productive investment and therefore contributing to building and consolidating peace.

II. Leveraging the power of science, technology and innovation to fight against multidimensional vulnerabilities and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals

94. We acknowledge the critical importance that science, technology and innovation, including inclusive and enabling innovation ecosystems, environmentally sound technologies and ICT can have in the pursuit of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. They can also play a key role in accelerating the pace of economic diversification and transformation, and in improving productivity and competitiveness, in a way that maximizes benefits for people, planet and prosperity and enables the full participation of least developed countries in the global economy. We underscore the urgent need to accelerate investment in the development and scaling of innovation and technology solutions for the most pressing problems that least developed countries face across economic, social and environmental fields that support their digital transition and strengthen efforts to bridge digital divides, including between rural and urban and between women and men, and build an open, free and secure digital world. We call for strengthened international cooperation to support least developed countries in strengthening science, technology and innovation, including by providing financial contributions for investment in ICT infrastructure. We also urge the strengthening of digital literacy and skills, as part of efforts to bridge digital and knowledge divides, as a prerequisite for inclusive participation in the digital economy. We also acknowledge the potential of the fourth industrial revolution to raise global income levels and improve the quality of life for populations around the world, while at the same time presenting the risk of accelerating inequality within and between societies should gains be inequitably distributed.

95. We express concern that, advances in science, technology and innovation notwithstanding, significant gaps remain in science, technology and innovation deployment between least developed countries and the rest of the world. We are also concerned that there are serious gaps, especially in access to and capacities to adopt technologies by least developed countries. They continue to face substantial structural challenges in building human and institutional capacities in the field of digital innovation.

96. During the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action over the period 2011–2020, least developed countries faced significant and persistent lags in major indicators related to science, technology and innovation. According to the Global Innovation Index rankings of 2020, 9 of the 21 least developed country economies improved their rankings, while 11 of the least developed countries covered in the Index went down the rankings. The ratio of research and development expenditure in least developed countries as a share of GDP was 0.6 per cent or less between 2011 and 2017, compared with some 2 per cent of developed countries' much larger GDP. According to the data compiled by the World Intellectual Property Organization, from 2010 to 2018, the number of patent applications filed by residents of least developed countries doubled, from 835 to 1,634. However, as a share of patents globally, the figure is almost zero. The least developed countries published only 11 journal articles for every 1 million people in 2018.

Key action areas

Access to modern technologies for sustainable development and building human capital, infrastructure and institutions to reap the benefits of the fourth industrial revolution

97. We express concern that least developed countries with limited infrastructure, human and institutional capacities and Internet access are unable to participate in and benefit from modern technologies, including financial technologies, and the ICT revolution. During the period of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action, Internet access in least developed countries increased to 19 per cent in 2019 from approximately 5 per cent in 2011. This progress notwithstanding, there are growing digital divides both within and among countries, including gender digital divides and rural-urban divides. These divides result from low Internet and broadband coverage, especially in rural and remote areas, the costs of using the Internet and the lack of locally relevant content and of relevant digital skills in least developed countries. Approximately 800 million people in least developed countries do not have access to the Internet and have no possibility of participating in economic, political, social or cultural activities online. Without an expansion of national digital infrastructure, the risk of least developed countries being locked into the low-equilibrium trap is likely to be accentuated.

98. Least developed countries often lack sufficient technical resources, organizational infrastructure and expertise to reap the benefits of digital growth or to address related challenges. They lack effective cybersecurity strategies or best practices, incident response functions, cybersecurity education or training for cybersecurity professionals, and related research and development activities.

Targets

- Substantially increase investment from all sources in research and development, as well as human and institutional capacity-building, for least developed countries within an international enabling environment.
- Increase investment for adequate digital infrastructure to support sustainable and inclusive digital development, including for e-learning, e-governance and e-commerce.
- Promote the transfer of technology on mutually agreed terms, including digital and environmentally sound technologies, to least developed countries.
- Promote the development of effective, balanced, inclusive and enabling ecosystems for innovation and creativity in least developed countries.
- Each least developed country will establish and strengthen a national science institute to promote local innovations, research, design and development, including in emerging technologies.
- Move away from low value-added natural resources and low-technology products to higher value-added manufactures and higher-technology products.
- Build human capital through skills development, including digital skills and literacy, and expand professional competencies.
- Mitigate negative impacts of emerging, new and disruptive technologies.

We commit to taking the following actions:

99. We commit to supporting least developed countries in formulating comprehensive national regulatory frameworks, quality, reliable sustainable and resilient physical infrastructure and inclusive digital ecosystems, and formulating effective policies on science, technology and innovation, trade, investment, industry, employment and education that accelerate the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals, reduce all types of inequalities and build resilience against shocks.

100. We commit to providing universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries, addressing the challenges associated with affordability in Internet access to ensure that the benefits of new technologies are available to all, and promoting an enabling environment for digital development, access and productive usage for least developed countries through international support, as well as transparent, predictable, independent and non-discriminatory regulations and the promotion of competitive markets so that operators compete for low-use customers through a variety of Internet plans that cater to different income levels and improve rural coverage through universal service funds.

101. We commit to identifying underserved communities and supporting least developed countries in integrating a strategic approach to inclusive and sustainable models of last-mile connectivity and national broadband plans in order to promote digital access for the poor, excluded and those in vulnerable situations, including women and girls. We commit to helping least developed countries to build their digital innovation capacity in order to navigate future technological changes and to ensure sustainable capacity and leverage the workforce, promote access to technological knowledge, and nurture the power of competitive industries.

102. We commit to supporting least developed countries in building capacity and a framework to scale up the development, deployment and sustainable utilization of emerging technologies for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and incorporate them into agriculture, manufacturing and services sectors.

103. We commit to strengthening the science-policy interface and expanding least developed countries' knowledge and understanding of and access to new technology by building stronger partnerships with academies of science, universities, labs, innovation incubators and private sector entities at the forefront of this technological change, including those located in developed countries. We underline the need to consider the current and potential impacts of new and emerging technologies on the environment, the labour market, livelihoods and society.

104. We commit to enhancing least developed countries' cybersecurity capabilities to mitigate cyberthreats and ensure enhanced protection of their national critical infrastructure, including critical ICT infrastructure, thereby increasing cyberresilience and making the cyber ecosystem more secure, including for women and children, so that it can serve national priorities and maximize socioeconomic benefits. We underline that the human rights that people have offline must also be protected online.

105. We commit to enhancing least developed countries' cybersecurity awareness to better protect all people, including those in vulnerable situations, such as children, young people, older persons, women and persons with disabilities. We also commit to supporting least developed countries in developing their cybersecurity capacity development programmes, including primary, secondary and tertiary education and

professional training on technical and managerial skills in industry, with the inclusion of women and young people in the cybersecurity field.

106. We commit to providing the financial and technical support necessary to least developed countries to establish and strengthen national and regional science institutes in order to increase their capacity for research and development in science, technology and innovations and promote the adaptation and application of modern technologies for domestic uses. We also commit to promoting local innovation capabilities of least developed countries for inclusive and sustainable economic development by providing enhanced technical support and assistance to enable stakeholders in the least developed countries to leverage intellectual property successfully for growth, competitiveness and development, and bringing together local scientific, vocational and engineering knowledge. We commit to addressing gender inequality by enhancing the participation and leadership of women and girls in the design, development and deployment of science, technology and innovation activities.

107. We commit to supporting least developed countries in moving away from low value-added natural resources and low-technology products to higher value-added and higher technology products and more effective integration into global value chains, to build productive capacities, diversify their export matrix and gain a greater share in the emerging digital economy.

108. We call upon Member States and the United Nations development system and encourage other stakeholders to facilitate improved levels of participation of scientists and engineers from least developed countries in international collaborative research, science, technology and innovation projects, to strengthen their support for the various science, technology and innovation partnerships with least developed countries in primary, secondary and higher education, vocational education and continuing education, and to promote business opportunities for the private sector in science, technology and innovation infrastructure.

Science, technology, and innovation for development and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and building resilience against emerging challenges

109. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance of strong data and science systems in addressing major threats. We acknowledge that science, technology and innovation offer an opportunity for least developed countries to recover sustainably and inclusively from the pandemic, reduce risks and strengthen resilience to future systemic shocks and crises and emerging challenges. The pandemic has underscored the pressing need for least developed countries to elevate the application of science, technology, innovation and digital solutions at both policy and operational levels.

Targets

- Support the efforts of least developed countries to significantly improve their science, technology and innovation infrastructure and innovation capacities by 2031.
- Ensure universal and affordable access to and meaningful use of the Internet by all in the least developed countries by 2030.
- Facilitate the expansion of broadband connectivity in least developed countries to bridge the digital divide.
- Encourage investment in micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises that facilitate access to the Internet and digital services.
- Promote productive capacity and competitiveness in the least developed countries through technology-driven entrepreneurship.
- Develop competitive digital innovation ecosystems in least developed countries that are resilient to future pandemics and fit for purpose.

We commit to taking the following actions:

110. We commit to bridging the science, technology and innovation divide and providing financial and technical support and technology transfer on mutually agreed terms to least developed countries, including through South-South and triangular cooperation, to help to ensure that all least developed countries can engage effectively in sustainable and resilient development that will also protect the economies, systems and populations, in particular the poor and those in vulnerable situations.

111. We will strive to increase investment in education, including digital literacy, skills and e-learning, and to improve education and training, including lifelong learning endeavours in least developed countries, especially in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, to close digital divides, including rural-urban, young people-older persons and gender digital divides. We will enhance collaboration in research, data and knowledge-sharing to cope with the immediate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and strengthen resilience. We will provide enhanced support to

the relevant stakeholders in least developed countries in increasing their knowledge and understanding of intellectual property, know-how and technology transfer.

112. We will provide enhanced funding for developing innovative solutions relevant to the local context and in response to specific problems in least developed countries, aimed at benefiting those in vulnerable situations, leaving no one behind, including in the areas of agriculture and food production, renewable energy and development, infrastructure development, disaster risk reduction, environmental protection and climate resilience.

113. We support the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries as a focal point for least developed countries to strengthen their science, technology and innovation capacity towards building sustainable productive capacities and promoting structural economic transformation. We support the Technology Bank in strengthening the science, technology and innovation capacity of least developed countries for structural transformation and productive capacity development. We invite Member States, as well as international organizations, foundations and the private sector, to provide voluntary financial and in-kind resources to the Technology Bank in order to enhance its capacity and effectiveness. We also decide to strengthen collaboration among Governments, the private sector and academia to advance science, technology and innovation research and development, build inclusive digital economies and bridge the digital divide, including by facilitating technology transfer on mutually agreed terms.

114. We express our appreciation to the host country, Turkey, for the full support given to the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries since its establishment in June 2018.

Promoting private sector engagement, digitalization and broadband connectivity

115. We aim to achieve sufficient levels of digital skills and literacy to ensure digital inclusion and enable digital development that supports both basic infrastructure development and human capital accumulation. We take note of the Secretary-General's Road Map for Digital Cooperation and acknowledge its vision of a more inclusive, equitable and safe digital future for all.

Targets

- By 2030, all people in least developed countries should have safe, affordable and meaningful digital connectivity.
- By 2025, broadband Internet user penetration should reach 35 per cent in least developed countries for both men and women.
- By 2031, double broadband Internet user penetration in least developed countries to reach 70 per cent mark for both men and women.
- Increase financing from all sources to least developed countries to support the development of domestic digital, data, and artificial intelligence infrastructure.

We commit to taking the following actions:

116. We commit to enhancing multi-stakeholder support to strengthen digital capacity-building for least developed countries to fully harness open, accessible and secure digital technologies, while encouraging Governments in particular to develop robust and effective regulatory frameworks and policies, including to promote cybersecurity, accessible digital infrastructure, products and services, and digital capacity-building.

117. We commit to promoting partnerships with the private sector to leverage in full their capacity for innovation and encourage greater investment in science, technology and innovation for development, including sustainable network infrastructure and practical digital capacity-building initiatives in least developed countries. We encourage and support the private sector, in particular major technology companies, to work closely with public, educational, research-focused and development agencies to facilitate technology transfer on mutually agreed terms, leverage research and innovation that meets least developed countries' needs and build the necessary capacities and technical competencies of least developed countries.

118. We call upon development partners to enhance their support for least developed countries in building their broadband infrastructure, connectivity, access and use of digital technologies, incentivizing investors to invest in broadband infrastructure in least developed countries to meet their investment gaps, including through leveraging existing investment guarantee arrangements, such as the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, and supporting capacity-building programmes for least developed countries to gain access to existing facilities.

119. We recognize the untapped potential of least developed countries' creative industries to create full and productive employment and decent work,

support entrepreneurship and innovation, encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, promote social inclusion and eradicate poverty. We commit to protecting and promoting the status of the artists and cultural professionals through policies and measures, and encourage artists' inclusion in the digital ecosystem, including through appropriate intellectual property frameworks.

III. Structural transformation as a driver of prosperity

120. The initiation of a sustained process of structural transformation remains a critical challenge for least developed countries. Their economies are largely undiversified, highly dependent on commodities and external assistance and at the bottom of regional and global value chains. High-productivity manufacturing and services make a miniscule contribution to GDP in least developed countries. Country-specific industrial policy is therefore necessary. While the agriculture sector employs more than half the population, it is characterized by subsistence practices, with low levels of value addition per worker, and inadequate access to both national, regional and global markets.

121. The services sector contributes directly to structural transformation. However, it contributes less than half of GDP in many least developed countries, the bulk of tertiary employment is concentrated in less knowledge-intensive services and participation in the global export of commercial services is negligible. We underline the importance of country-specific policies supported by an international enabling environment to promote, establish and enhance a domestic services sector.

122. For least developed countries to fully utilize their potential, we commit to promoting the achievement of inclusive and sustainable structural transformation capable of increasing productivity and growth, reducing their disaster risk, including exposure and vulnerabilities to existing and future external shocks. We will create decent full employment and decent jobs, eradicate poverty and ensure inclusive and sustainable development.

Key action areas

Productive capacity-building

123. Many least developed countries' economies feature limited productive capacities, which constrain their ability to produce efficiently and effectively, to diversify their economies and to create sustainable and productive employment. This challenge translates into binding supply constraints and, ultimately, into weak export and economic potential and limited productive employment generation and social development prospects. To build and enhance productive capacities at the country level, each least developed country, with the support of development partners, is encouraged to undertake national productive capacities gap assessments to analyse the key constraints in building productive capacities and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Targets

- Generate quality employment opportunities for all and increase labour productivity by 50 per cent by 2031, with particular attention given to the integration of women, young people and those in vulnerable situations.
- Substantially increase economic and export diversification with a view to reaching the level of other developing countries in export concentration by 2030.
- Promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and, by 2030, double industry's share of employment and GDP in least developed countries.

We commit to taking the following actions:

124. We commit to promoting and supporting the formulation of national strategies aimed at increasing decent employment, diversification, economic transformation, value addition, efficiency and competitiveness in the manufacturing, agriculture and services sectors, as well as life-cycle approaches, with a cross-cutting focus on sustainability, and call for enhancing financial and technical support and policy space from all sources to facilitate the implementation of these strategies.

125. Least developed countries commit to creating a conducive policy environment for industrial diversification and value addition, including strengthening efforts to accelerate capital accumulation, building institutional and human capacities and knowledge development. We support improved data collection to better understand productivity levels and trends and better inform policies to drive productivity shifts.

126. We encourage innovative solutions, entrepreneurship and the use of modern, sustainable, cost-effective and locally adapted technologies and practices, with an emphasis on the manufacturing, agriculture and services sectors, including tourism, information and communications and finance, and call for the sharing of scientific knowledge and innovative technologies on mutually agreed terms.

127. We note the call for enhancing support towards establishing or upgrading quality assurances and standards of products and services in least developed countries to meet international standards.

128. We call upon Member States to increase financial and technical support to least developed countries in promoting family farming and the development of small, medium and large agribusinesses and industries with sustainable value addition along the agricultural value chain. We commit to implementing science- and evidence-based and data-driven agricultural practices that increase resilience and sustainable productivity, help to maintain ecosystems, strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters, improve food security and reduce malnutrition in all its forms. We decide to improve access to agricultural research and sustainable innovation and practices, including agroecological and other innovative approaches and sustainable technologies, to support adaptation and, where possible, mitigation.

129. We commit to promoting micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, including those run and owned by women entrepreneurs, by supporting full and equal access to financial services and products, strengthening the legal framework, especially for micro-enterprises, supporting them to enter into national, regional and global value chains, supporting them for digitalization and tapping the potential of e-commerce for enhanced competitiveness in the global digital economy. We intend to devise a rural agro-commodity-based value chain upgrade through affordable finance, with the participation of private enterprises, and thereby unleash entrepreneurship at the farm level.

130. We will promote increased market opportunities and full and equal access to financial services and products for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises and entrepreneurs from least developed countries in order to create sustainable growth and decent jobs, in particular for women and young people through their beneficial integration into national, regional and global value chains. Structural transformation of least developed countries requires a conducive business ecosystem with strong and well-equipped business support organizations and business-friendly policies, regulatory frameworks and export strategies to facilitate the access of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises to markets. We will support and empower micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises and entrepreneurs in least developed countries with a view to bringing about inclusive growth and prosperity.

131. We reaffirm the importance of human capacity as a critical factor in the utilization of other productive capacities and call for increasing responsible public and private investment, including through international cooperation, in human capacity development and skills development in order to increase productive capacities and the number of young people and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for full and productive employment and decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

Infrastructure development

132. Least developed countries continue to face huge quality infrastructure gaps, in particular regarding access to energy, transport and ICT, and lack the capacity to maintain existing infrastructure and address the gaps in full. The Group of 20 Principles for Quality Infrastructure Investment promote enhanced efforts and support towards quality infrastructure development consistent with international standards, including through improved coordination between public and private investment, which is fundamental to close the infrastructure gap.

(a) Transport

133. Notwithstanding the efforts made, least developed countries continue to face inefficient and unreliable physical transport infrastructure owing to high costs, a lack of investment, poor maintenance, and a lack of institutional capacity and stable policy and regulatory environments. The establishment of safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems, including rail transport, road transport, seaports, and air transport, and transport facilitation are critical for least developed countries to reduce transport costs, facilitate trade, link to regional and international markets and enhance competitiveness.

Target

- Significantly expand, upgrade and maintain and gain access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport infrastructure and national and cross-boundary connectivity and ensure that all forms of transport infrastructure are maintained through closing the missing links and strengthening institutional capacities to manage transport services.

We commit to taking the following actions:

134. We commit to developing and implementing comprehensive national and local policies for safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport infrastructure development and maintenance, encompassing all modes of transportation. We intend to ensure sustainable, climate-resilient transport infrastructure that can withstand the impacts of disasters, climate change and rising sea levels and intend to increase electrification and access to public transport. In this regard, we will be mobilizing domestic and international resources and share experiences on transport infrastructure development and financing, thereby building institutional capacities and strengthening transport services.

135. We call upon development partners, international organizations, regional development banks and the private sector, through public-private partnerships and direct investment, to provide financial and technical support to the efforts of least developed countries in transport infrastructure development and maintenance. In this regard, we stress the importance of developing the policies and regulatory frameworks necessary and strengthening enabling environments to promote private sector involvement in infrastructure development, including enhancing technical assistance and capacity-building. We also intend to leverage new and innovative financing sources and new funding mechanisms, including blended finance and green bonds.

(b) Energy

136. Notwithstanding the importance of access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy to achieve structural transformation, least developed countries face challenges at three levels, namely, the generation, transmission and utilization of energy. In addition, they lack the capacity to mobilize the large amounts of financing required to invest in major power generation projects. Only some 53 per cent of the population in least developed countries has access to energy, with rates of access in rural areas of approximately only 10 per cent in some countries. We recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the importance of affordable, reliable sustainable and modern energy access, from health services to the use of ICT. Resources deployed for COVID-19 responses and immediate health priorities have further constrained already limited fiscal capacity and increased the risk of energy insecurity in these countries.

137. The least developed countries committed to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 in the context of resources being available to do so. The pathway to net zero emissions requires a substantial increase in the share of renewable energy and in clean energy technologies in all three main end-use categories: electricity, transport and heating/cooling. The immense potential of the renewable energy sector in least developed countries notwithstanding, these countries rarely benefit from larger financing schemes to the same extent as more prosperous developing countries. We are concerned that 15 least developed countries are among the top 20 access-deficit countries in the world and that, in 2019, the least developed countries attracted only 20 per cent of international commitments in support of clean energy to developing countries.

138. We welcome the call of parties[2] to accelerate the development, deployment and dissemination of technologies, as well as the adoption of policies, to make the transition towards low-emission energy systems, including by rapidly scaling up the deployment of clean power generation and energy-efficiency measures, including accelerating efforts towards the phasing down of unabated coal power and phasing out of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies, while providing targeted support to the poorest and most vulnerable in line with national circumstances and recognizing the need for support towards a just transition.

139. Access to clean cooking also remains a major concern in least developed countries, although the number of households have access to clean cooking methods increased to 17 per cent in 2019, up from 11 per cent in 2010. The majority of the people in least developed countries live in rural areas, with access to clean fuel for cooking as low as 7 per cent, and several least developed countries have overall access to clean cooking equal to or less than 5 per cent.

Targets

- By 2030, ensure universal access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy services.
- Double the generation of electricity per capita in least developed countries by 2030.
- Increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the energy mix (target 7.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals).
- Double financing from all sources in support of clean and renewable energy and enhance capacities in energy production, trade and

2 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and/or Paris Agreement.

distribution in least developed countries, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 7.

- By 2030, expand infrastructure and upgrade technology for supplying modern and sustainable energy services for all.
- Enhance technology transfer on mutually agreed terms to least developed countries to accelerate the transition to clean and renewable energy.
- By 2030, enhance international cooperation to facilitate access to and promote investment in clean energy research and technology, as well as infrastructure, in accordance with Sustainable Development Goal 7.
- Fifty per cent of the annual financing flows to clean cooking and electricity access should be directed to the least developed countries.

We commit to taking the following actions:

140. We encourage the doubling of international public finance and the mobilization of resources from all sources to meet the urgent need for investment in power generation and transmission, including grid reinforcement and the upgrading of technology, in order to provide affordable, modern, reliable and sustainable energy to all through improved generation, transmission and distribution facilities and enhanced energy efficiency in least developed countries. We also commit to promoting scaled-up and targeted support to least developed countries in the implementation of the United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All, including the global plan of action for the Decade.

141. We aim to provide financial and technical support to least developed countries on a priority basis to double the per capita generation of electricity in least developed countries by 2030 and increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the energy mix.

142. We commit to strengthening cooperation at the regional level to promote innovation and facilitate financing, support regional cross-border power grid connectivity to advance economic integration and sustainable development, and share best practices, and in this regard we invite Governments to reinforce their energy interconnections, connecting regional energy markets and increasing energy security at the regional and global levels.

143. We commit to promoting women's full, equal and effective participation and leadership in the design and implementation of energy policies and programmes, mainstream a gender perspective into such policies and programmes, and ensure women's full and equal access to and use of sustainable energy to enhance their economic and social empowerment, including employment and other income-generating opportunities.

144. We commit to promoting public and private investment to ensure that households make the transition to cleaner, more efficient and sustainable cooking technologies and fuels, including through publicly supported technology innovation accelerators, with a focus on remote, poor and vulnerable households.

145. We commit to increasing the deployment of least-cost decentralized solutions, policy support, and new business models and the sharing of best practices, including mini- and micro-grids, stand-alone renewable energy systems, rooftop solar photovoltaic panels and storage, digitally enabled and fintech solutions and other technologies that can be directly linked to livelihood improvement and economic activities, especially in remote low-demand areas, and that can help to close the access gap and bridge the last mile.

146. We call upon least developed countries to create enabling environments, including appropriate regulatory frameworks and policy reforms, to facilitate private sector investment and promote attractive project pipelines. We also invite development partners, multilateral development banks and other international and regional organizations, including the International Renewable Energy Agency, the International Solar Alliance and other relevant stakeholders, to substantially increase their investment in least developed countries, through a simplified access process, in developing sustainable, reliable, modern, inclusive and equitable energy systems, including by strengthening energy systems through cross-border grid connections, as appropriate, and giving consideration to incorporating decentralized renewable energy solutions in energy planning, as appropriate, and recognizing that energy transition will take different paths in different parts of the world.

147. We commit to the development, dissemination, diffusion, transfer on mutually agreed terms, and application of environmentally sound technologies to address the energy access challenges of least developed countries by identifying the specific needs of each country through mobilizing technical and financial assistance and tools to deploy affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy solutions. We emphasize in this context the urgent need to enhance international cooperation to facilitate access to clean energy research and technology, including renewable energy, energy efficiency and advanced and cleaner

fossil fuel technologies, as well as improved infrastructure, for supplying affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

148. We commit to supporting the implementation of the Least Developed Countries Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Initiative for Sustainable Development aimed at harnessing the potential of renewable energy across least developed countries and promoting energy efficiency. We call upon development partners to provide resource allocations for aligned efforts and activities regarding the Initiative across all least developed countries.

Connecting least developed countries to global and regional value chains and strengthening their services economy and trade

149. Least developed countries are faced with numerous challenges in their efforts to integrate into regional and global value chains, including limited industrial development, low levels of productivity and diversification, lack of technology and structural transformation, limited access to trade finance, rules of origin and nontariff barriers such as quality standards.

Target

- Significantly increase the value added and manufactured component of the exports of least developed countries, with the objective of integrating least developed countries into the regional and global value chains.

We commit to taking the following actions:

150. We call for greater integration of least developed countries into the regional and global value chains to increase diversification and accelerate their structural economic transformation and sustainable development.

151. We commit to supporting least developed countries in significantly increasing their integration into the regional and global value chains, with a view to enhancing their competitiveness, leapfrogging their development process and driving their productivity growth. In this regard, we will support least developed countries in strengthening their productive capacity, export competitiveness, access to trade finance, skills transfer and connectivity, market access, trade facilitation and technology transfer on mutually agreed terms.

Support for private sector development

152. A dynamic, broad-based, well-functioning and socially responsible private sector is a valuable instrument for achieving sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth, access to goods and services, a source of tax revenue and sustainable structural transformation. Structural constraints, such as infrastructure bottlenecks, limited access to finance, high operating and trading costs, limited human capital, limited ICT capacities and institutional constraints, have limited the growth of the private sector in least developed countries.

Targets

- Create an enabling environment for private sector development, supporting its further alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Ensure full and equal access to financial services and products for micro-, small medium-sized enterprises, including insurance, especially for women, and improve financial and digital literacy.

We commit to taking the following actions:

153. We commit to promoting an enabling business environment conducive to growth and development, the absence of corruption, and a transparent and rules-based regulatory framework, simplifying business regulations and processes, reducing and streamlining administrative formalities, creating efficient national support mechanisms for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, improving supply chains, facilitating access to markets, reinforcing cooperation, building capacities to implement effective competition policies, and adopting open, transparent and clear regulatory frameworks for business and investment, with protection for property rights and land rights, as appropriate, and in accordance with national circumstances and consistent with international legal frameworks. Where appropriate, we aim to strengthen regulatory frameworks to better align private sector incentives with public goals, foster long-term quality investment and ensure that the private sector adopts sustainable practices.

154. We commit to fostering economic activity and the ease of doing business for private companies by promoting domestic market and capital formation, economic clusters or hubs/industry parks/export processing zones that remove obstacles to investment and infrastructure usage, enable the simplified facilitation of business operations and

trade and support least developed countries in the implementation of such measures. We will also support micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises in entering into national, regional and global value chains by taking steps to close digital divides through financial support and access to appropriate digital tools and platforms connecting markets.

155. We commit to strengthening cooperation for the exchange of experiences and the dissemination of best practices that foster entrepreneurship, promote dialogue and contacts, and stimulate the transfer of skills and technology, on mutually agreed terms.

156. We support the provision of finance, including grants, technical assistance, seed funding and concessional financing, from donor countries, United Nations entities, the World Bank Group and IMF and the private sector, in order to leverage additional sources of finance for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises to facilitate their growth and development. In this regard, we commit to promoting regular public-private sector dialogue.

IV. Enhancing international trade of least developed countries and regional integration

157. We recognize that least developed countries can derive significant benefit from a universal, rules-based, open, transparent, predictable, inclusive, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under WTO. Notwithstanding the massive expansion of trade and investment in the past decades, least developed countries face considerable challenges in effective integration into global trading systems and in benefiting from the opportunities afforded by international trade and global value chains.

158. We are concerned that the least developed countries' share of global merchandise exports stagnated over the past decade, remaining at 1 per cent. The Sustainable Development Goal target of doubling the least developed countries' share of global exports by 2020 from 2011 (2 per cent target) has not been met.

159. We are concerned that, owing to COVID-19, merchandise exports of least developed countries fell by a further 9.1 per cent compared with the global average decline of 7.7 per cent in 2020.[3] In 2020, the value of the global services trade was down 35 per cent year on year. Micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises have been adversely affected by the pandemic. Limited export diversification has heightened the vulnerability of least developed countries to the impact of the pandemic on global trade. The crisis has also highlighted the fundamental importance of trade in making essential goods and services available to countries and people in need.

160. We acknowledge that the share of total global exports of cultural goods from least developed countries accounted for only a 0.5 per cent share of total global exports, both in 2005 and 2014. The potential of the cultural and creative sector to enhance least developed countries' participation in and benefit from new opportunities for dynamic growth in world trade remains largely untapped.

161. We are concerned that rising protectionist tendencies are threatening to further weaken efforts regarding the expansion of international trade and emphasize that bilateral and regional trade agreements should complement but not substitute the role of WTO as the central governing body for global trade. Otherwise, the international trade landscape could become increasingly polarized and fragmented in the coming decades, which would be harmful for the least developed countries.

162. We call upon WTO members to fully and expeditiously implement all the decisions of its Ministerial Conferences taken in favour of least developed countries.

Key action areas

Duty-free and quota-free market access

163. We note that there have been progressive improvements since the adoption of the Istanbul Programme of Action on providing duty-free and quota-free market access to least developed countries. WTO members adopted a duty-free and quota-free market access decision at the Ninth Ministerial Conference, held in Bali, Indonesia, in 2013. Most of the developed country members grant either full or nearly full duty-free and quota-free market access, with gaps remaining in a limited number of markets and a few sectors. A number of developing country members have granted a significant degree of duty-free and quota-free market access to products from least developed countries and a number of them have reached nearly full duty-free and quota-free coverage. Least developed countries need to be provided with increasingly greater market access in preference-granting countries.

3 World Trade Organization, "Market access for products and services of export interest to least developed countries" (WT/COMTD/LDC/W/69, para. 3.9).

Targets

- Facilitate market access for products of least developed countries, including by developing simple and transparent rules of origin applicable to imports from least developed countries, in accordance with the guidelines adopted by WTO members at the Ministerial Conference held in Bali in 2013.
- Significantly increase the exports of least developed countries, in particular with a view to doubling[4] their share of global exports by 2031.

We commit to taking the following actions:

164. We call upon all developed country WTO members and developing country WTO members declaring themselves in a position to do so to timely implement duty-free and quota-free market access on a lasting basis for all products originating from all least developed countries, consistent with WTO decisions, which would facilitate the integration of least developed country producers into regional and global value chains.

165. We reiterate our conviction that no country graduating from the least developed country category should have its development progress disrupted or reversed. We welcome that the United Nations graduation process helps to ensure that no graduating country has its special and differential treatment measures and exemptions abruptly reduced. We invite development and trading partners to consider extending to the graduated country trade preferences previously made available as a result of least developed country status or reducing them in a phased manner in order to avoid their abrupt reduction. We note that the Group of Least Developed Countries put forward various proposals at WTO, pertaining to, among other things, trade-related challenges and those related to the smooth transition of the countries graduating from the least developed country category, and seek to further examine these issues.

166. We commit to fully meeting our transparency obligations on trade measures and meaningfully improving equitable access for all countries, especially least developed countries, to safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines, including through facilitating technology transfer within the framework of multilateral rules and applicable international obligations, so as to encourage research and innovation while at the same time supporting licensing agreements and any other arrangements on mutually agreed terms in the short and medium term, as well as any other long-term arrangements that help to scale up the manufacturing of vaccines and in a sustainable manner.

4 In accordance with the review undertaken by the Committee for Development Policy in 2021 (E/2021/33), 16 least developed countries are in different stages of graduation. Therefore, a considerable number of them are likely to graduate by 2031, which may lower the overall export figure of least developed countries. This should be taken into account in assessments against the target.

Preferential rules of origin

167. We note that considerable progress has been made towards ensuring that preferential rules of origin are simple and transparent and contribute to facilitating market access of imports from least developed countries. WTO members adopted two decisions on preferential rules of origin for least developed countries, at the Ministerial Conferences held in Bali in 2013 and in Nairobi in 2015. Almost all preference-granting members have submitted notifications of their preferential rules of origin requirements.

Target

- Ensure that preferential rules of origin applicable to imports from least developed countries are transparent and simple and contribute to facilitating market access.

We commit to taking the following actions:

168. We call upon all developed country WTO members and developing country WTO members declaring themselves in a position to do so to facilitate market access for products of least developed countries, including by applying simple and transparent preferential rules of origin applicable to imports from least developed countries, in accordance with the guidelines adopted by WTO members at the Ministerial Conference held in Bali in 2013 and the decisions taken at the Ministerial Conference held in Nairobi in 2015. We call upon preference-granting members that have not yet done so, to notify their least developed country-specific preferential rules of origin to enhance transparency.

169. We invite development partners to provide technical and financial assistance to least developed countries to further scale up their legal and technical capacity to comply with sanitary and phytosanitary measures and technical barriers to trade provisions.

Least developed countries services waiver

170. We recognize that the agreements on trade in services enable the liberalization of services across all modes of supply and help to boost trade in services and attract investment, as well as enable safe, regular and orderly mobility, including by removing barriers to the temporary movement of natural persons to supply services abroad, or "mode 4" of trade in services. We note that efforts are being made to improve the participation of least developed countries in services trade. We note that 51 members (including individual European Union member States) have notified their preferences under the least developed countries services waiver. We note that multilateral commitments in this regard have been limited and conditioned by measures such as economic needs tests, quotas or pre-employment requirements.

Target

- Increase least developed countries' exports of services by fully implementing the WTO ministerial decision on the operationalization of the waiver concerning preferential treatment to services and service suppliers of least developed countries and encourage members that have not yet notified their preferences under the least developed countries services waiver, to also do the same.

We commit to taking the following actions:

171. We call upon the WTO members to take concrete measures, including meaningful preferences for least developed countries services and service suppliers, in accordance with the WTO ministerial decisions in 2011, 2013 and 2015 on the operationalization of the least developed countries services waiver and in response to the collective request of those countries. We also call for strengthening domestic service capacity in least developed countries through enhanced technical assistance and capacity-building.

Technical assistance and capacity-building, including through Aid for Trade

172. We note that, between 2011 and 2019, more than $100 billion was disbursed in Aid for Trade to support least developed countries in strengthening infrastructure, building productive capacity and enhancing trade policy and regulations. After reaching a peak of $20 billion in 2018, Aid for Trade commitments to least developed countries fell by 19 per cent, to $16.6 billion in 2019. Although Aid for Trade funding to least developed countries has grown 13 per cent annually since 2006, reaching $13.5 billion in 2018, the COVID-19 pandemic threatens to slow or reverse this trend.

Target

- Significantly increase Aid for Trade support for least developed countries, which is expected to double by 2031 from 2018 levels.[5]

We commit to taking the following actions:

173. We aim to increase the proportion of total Aid for Trade going to least developed countries, provided according to development cooperation effectiveness principles, which is expected to double by 2031 from 2018 levels. We also call for increased support from multilateral development banks and the private sector to meet trade financing needs. 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.

174. We, in acknowledging and building on achievements made to date, including by the Enhanced Integrated Framework and others providing support to least developed countries, commit to providing trade-related assistance and financial and technical support to enhance the institutional and productive capacity of the least developed countries, in line with the objective of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind.

175. We note that 35 of 46 least developed countries, or more than three quarter, are WTO members. Since 2011, six least developed countries have successfully completed the accession process and joined WTO. Currently, eight least developed countries are at different stages of the accession process.

Target

- Ensure accession to WTO of all least developed countries committed to do so by the end of the current decade.

5 Aid for Trade funding to least developed countries has grown 13 per cent annually since 2006, reaching $13.5 billion in 2018. See Helen Castell, "6 takeaways from WTO's Aid-for-Trade stock-taking even for least developed countries", Trade for Development News (20 April 2021).

We commit to taking the following actions:

176. We call upon WTO members to fully implement the 2002 accession guidelines for least developed countries and the 2012 General Council decision[6] as the accession instruments for least developed countries and refrain from seeking concessions and commitments beyond the benchmarks aimed at ensuring the accession of all least developed countries in WTO by the next decade. We commit to supporting acceding least developed countries in meeting existing requirements and those least developed countries committed to acceding and pushing through the domestic reforms necessary in that respect to strengthen their human, institutional and regulatory capacities in trade policy and trade negotiations, to ensure their accession.

177. We commit to providing appropriate support, such as financial and technical support, to least developed countries in order to support the negotiations for the accession of least developed countries to WTO.

Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights

178. We welcome the entry into force on 23 January 2017 of the TRIPS amendment aimed at facilitating access to medicines for countries with insufficient or no manufacturing capacities. We welcome that, pursuant to the decision on the implementation of article 66.2 of the TRIPS Agreement, developed country members have provided annual reports on incentives and planned action under article 66.2. We also welcome that, in 2021, the duration of the general transition period under article 66.1 has been further extended until 1 July 2034. Similarly, in 2015, the specific transition to implement or apply sections 5 (patents) and 7 (protection of undisclosed information) of part II of the TRIPS Agreement with respect to pharmaceutical products was extended until 1 January 2033 for least developed countries.

    Target

    - Support least developed countries by providing incentives to enterprises and institutions in developed country member territories for the purpose of promoting and encouraging technology transfer to least developed countries, in order to enable them to create a sound and viable technological base.

6 General Council, World Trade Organization, "Accession of least developed countries", addendum, 25 July 2012 (WT/L/508/Add.1).

We commit to taking the following actions:

179. We reiterate the importance of article 66.2 of the TRIPS Agreement to provide incentives by developed country members to the enterprises and institutions in their territories for promoting technology transfer to enable least developed countries to create a sound and viable technological base and note the recent discussions on this article, in particular on the meaning of "incentives to enterprises and institutions".

180. We acknowledge the importance of the TRIPS flexibilities available to least developed countries, including the extensions of the general transition period under article 66.1 of the TRIPS Agreement and of the transition period under article 66.1, which provides that least developed country members will not be obliged, with respect to pharmaceutical products, to implement or apply sections 5 (patents) and 7 (protection of undisclosed information) of part II of the TRIPS Agreement or to enforce rights provided for under these sections until 1 January 2033, or until such a date on which they cease to be a least developed country member, whichever date is earlier.

Agriculture and cotton

181. We note the progress made in reforming agricultural trade. We attach great importance to the ongoing discussions with a view to reducing trade-distorting support in agriculture, including cotton, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 2 commitments. We recognize the importance of food security and nutrition. We will engage constructively to continue negotiations, including on a permanent solution to the issue of public stockholding for food security purposes. We will work to advance the discussions on export restrictions, including on foodstuff purchased by the World Food Programme.

    Target

    - Correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural and cotton markets, including through the elimination of all forms of agricultural export subsidies and disciplines on all export measures with equivalent effect, consistent with the decision taken at the WTO Ministerial Conference held in Nairobi in 2015, with a view to achieving the long-term objective of substantial progressive reductions in support and protection of agricultural products.

We commit to taking the following actions:

182. We call for correcting and preventing trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural and cotton markets, including through the elimination of all forms of agricultural export subsidies and disciplines on all export measures with equivalent effect. We also call for better markets for small cotton farmers in developing and least developed countries and reaffirm the various commitments made on cotton, the last of which was at the Tenth Ministerial Conference of WTO, held in Nairobi in 2015.

World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade Facilitation

183. We note that, while the current implementation rate of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation stands at 70.2 per cent for all WTO members, the implementation rate of least developed countries was only 36.8 per cent as at 10 June 2021. We also note that 80 per cent of least developed countries have already identified their technical assistance needs. We further note that there are several challenges for least developed countries in implementing the Agreement, owing primarily to financial, technical and regulatory capacity constraints.

    Target

    - Fully implement the Agreement on Trade Facilitation and provide assistance in and support for capacity-building of least developed countries in this regard, in accordance with development cooperation effectiveness principles.

We commit to taking the following actions:

184. We will implement the Agreement on Trade Facilitation to speed up customs procedures, make trade easier, faster and cheaper, provide clarity, efficiency and transparency, reduce bureaucratic hurdles, and use technological advances.

185. We commit to supporting least developed countries in the implementation of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation, including assistance in and support for capacity-building to least developed countries to enable implementation of the Agreement, consistent with the Agreement, especially implementation of category C provisions based on the technical assistance requirement as notified by least developed country members. We also commit to working together within WTO, including through the ongoing quadrennial reviews of the Agreement, to support implementation through coordination, the sharing of experiences and transparency.

E-commerce

186. We note that the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of digital technologies as tools for continuing economic activity during the crisis. E-commerce can take the form of business-to-business or business-to-consumer transactions, combined with secure online mobile platforms and fintech solutions fundamentally, and can profoundly reduce the matching costs by which buyers and suppliers can meet, connect and create profits within the country and across borders and facilitate access to last-mile producers and markets. This can speed up economic adjustments to shocks such as COVID-19 and many other profound economic, environmental and geopolitical shocks that a country may face in the coming years. The huge potential notwithstanding, least developed countries have been unable to sufficiently benefit from the opportunities offered by e-commerce owing to a lack of necessary digital infrastructure, logistical facilities, digital literacy and skills, and fintech solutions, as well as regulatory and policy frameworks.

    Target

    - Increase the participation of least developed countries in e-commerce by strengthening ICT infrastructure and building their human and institutional capacities to better support the development of and integration into digital value chains.

We commit to taking the following actions:

187. We will contribute to strengthening e-commerce in least developed countries by building digital ecosystems and providing capacity-building support. We urge development partners to provide additional and substantial support to least developed countries in building and gaining access to required infrastructure in energy, electricity and digital infrastructure; promoting personal data protection; upgrading workforce skills; ensuring affordable and reliable access to broadband and mobile networks and Wi-Fi connectivity, including in the last mile; facilitating

mobile banking with low- or no-fee digital payments; and strengthening productive capacity and structural transformation, along with transparent and fair regulations, for promoting e-commerce and the integration of least developed countries into the global economy. We note the efforts of participants in the ongoing WTO Joint Statement Initiative on Electronic Commerce towards ensuring a high standard and commercially meaningful outcome that works for all to promote data flow with trust.

188. We note the discussions held under the 1998 work programme on e-commerce and encourage all WTO members to reinvigorate the work programme in line with the spirit of its mandate and with a view to bridging the digital gaps among and within countries. We urge all development partners to enrich their support to address capacity constraints in e-commerce in the least developed countries, to enable them to participate in and benefit from the global trading system through e-commerce and the digital economy, which is much needed in the light of the current COVID-19 pandemic situation.

Special and differential treatment

189. We call for the full implementation of the provisions of special and differential treatment for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, in accordance with WTO agreements. We welcome the establishment of the monitoring mechanism to analyse and review all aspects of the implementation of special and differential treatment provisions, as agreed at the Ministerial Conference held in Bali in 2013, with a view to strengthening them and making them more precise, effective and operational, as well as facilitating integration of developing and least developed WTO members into the multilateral trading system.

Regional integration

190. We underline that regional cooperation, including trade integration and transit cooperation, can facilitate the integration of least developed countries into the global trading system. We note that, as at 1 February 2021, 339 regional trade agreements were in force, of which 42 are in Africa. Among others, the African Continental Free Trade Area and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership present a major opportunity for participating least developed countries to boost trade, output in services, and the manufacturing and natural resources sectors. Positive experiences notwithstanding, regional and international cooperation still needs to rise to the challenges ahead.

We commit to taking the following actions:

191. We commit to promoting regional economic integration and enhancing regional connectivity to increase regional trade, including integration of least developed countries into regional value chains and services trade. We urge the international community, including international financial institutions and multilateral and regional development banks, to increase their support for capacity-building projects and programmes that foster regional and subregional integration, with special attention given to least developed countries, and that enhance the participation and integration of small-scale industrial and other enterprises into regional and global value chains and markets.

192. We commit to supporting least developed countries in the implementation of multi-country customs transit guarantee regimes through the implementation of either international transit agreements or functional regional agreements.

193. We commit to supporting least developed countries' efforts in promoting subregional and regional cooperation, including export promotion, and improving regional connectivity through trade-facilitating measures, such as joint projects on customs and border procedures and, insofar as possible, telecommunications facilities and energy.

194. We will provide assistance to landlocked and small island least developed countries aimed at addressing the challenges in their remoteness from international markets and lack of infrastructure.

V. Addressing climate change, environmental degradation, recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and building resilience against future shocks for riskinformed sustainable development

195. The least developed countries are especially vulnerable to and disproportionately affected by the adverse effects of climate change, environmental degradation and other disasters. Some countries have adopted good practices in addressing these effects, which include the installation and use of early warning systems; adaptation solutions in key sectors and systems such as agriculture and food security, water, health, infrastructure and ecosystems; forecast-based financing; integrating climate change, environmental and disaster risk considerations in development planning; development of risk indices to support various

stakeholders; comprehensive risk management approaches; and sustainable management of natural resources.

196. We recognize that the outcomes from the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,[7] held in Glasgow, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, from 31 October to 13 November 2021, related to loss and damage, including resolving to strengthen partnerships between developing and developed countries, funds, technical agencies, civil society and communities to enhance understanding of how approaches to averting, minimizing and addressing loss and damage can be improved, and urge developed country parties to the Framework Conventions, the operating entities of the Financial Mechanism of the Convention, United Nations entities and intergovernmental organizations and other bilateral and multilateral institutions, including non-governmental organizations and private sector entities, to provide enhanced and additional support for activities that address loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change.

197. The COVID-19 pandemic and its health, economic and social consequences, including increasing gender and other inequalities, have further underlined the need for multilateral cooperation, unity and solidarity to protect public health and to prepare for and respond to health emergencies, across all sectors, using holistic, all-hazard and One Health approaches, recognizing the interconnectedness among the health of humans, animals, plants and their shared environment, including through collaboration among the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Organization for Animal Health and the United Nations Environment Programme.

198. Among more than 120 countries reporting across all Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction targets for disaster losses in 2019, least developed countries accounted for 48 per cent of livelihood disruptions, 40 per cent of deaths, 17 per cent of economic losses and 14 per cent of infrastructure damage, although their combined GDP amounted to only 1 per cent of the total and their combined populations were only 18 per cent of the global population.

199. The COVID-19 pandemic has not only exposed, but also amplified least developed countries' high degree of vulnerability and the risks of cascading crises. We are concerned that a prolonged economic downturn following the pandemic risks adversely affecting the implementation of the Paris Agreement, the 2030 Agenda and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, as well as the ability of countries, especially least developed countries, to adequately respond to the adverse impacts of climate change and environmental degradation.

200. We are deeply concerned that the limited fiscal space and resilience capacity in least developed countries pose serious constraints on their ability to address the COVID-19 pandemic and foster sustainable recovery. The investment in climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction in least developed countries has fallen considerably short of meeting needs. We are also concerned that climate change impacts are becoming more acute. Food insecurity and malnutrition, water stress, quality and scarcity, land degradation, biodiversity loss, melting of glaciers, ocean acidification, coastal erosion, sea level rise, damage to infrastructure and assets, pressures on pastures, displacement of populations, threats to cultural heritage, disruption of indigenous and traditional lifestyles, and threats to livelihoods are severely disrupting economic and social development. Changes in the access to and availability of water resources are disrupting hydroelectric generation and putting industrial production and basic services at increased risk, while sanitation and wastewater management remain a source of concern. We urge least developed countries, and will support them through strengthening partnerships, global coordination and cooperation, to adopt an all-hazard, multisectoral and coordinated approach in preparedness for health emergencies, recognizing the links between human, plant and animal health and their shared environment and the need for a One Health approach.

201. We are committed to reducing the vulnerability of the least developed countries to economic, environmental shocks and natural hazards, especially those related to climate change, and to enhancing their ability to meet these and other challenges through enhanced adaptive capacity and resilience. Building adaptive capacity and resilience, including at the individual and community level, lies at the core of the Doha Programme of Action, in line with the provisions contained in international agreements on climate change, disaster risk reduction and the environment.

7 Including also the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol and the third session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement.

Key action areas

Building sustainable and inclusive recovery from COVID-19 and resilience against future shocks

202. On average, it is projected that that the least developed countries are expected to take three to five years or more to recover to their pre-COVID-19 crisis level of per capita GDP. The persistent challenges posed by climate change and environmental degradation threaten to further impede recovery efforts.

Targets

- Support timely access to safe, effective and affordable COVID-19 vaccines.
- Provide necessary support to the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility and other relevant initiatives to vaccinate all eligible individuals against COVID-19 as early as possible and 70 per cent of the population in least developed countries by mid-2022, as recommended by the World Health Organization.[8]
- Ensure equitable and affordable access for all to safe, quality, efficacious, effective, accessible and affordable COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics.
- Promote and encourage technology transfer on mutually agreed terms to increase production capacities of the entire supply chain of vaccines and any other health products in the regions of least developed countries.
- Support the supply and conservation environment, and the distribution and administration and surveillance of vaccines.
- Ensure adequate domestic and international support to strengthen inclusive social protection systems in the least developed countries, to address current poverty and vulnerability and future shocks.
- Support awareness-raising campaigns about the benefits of COVID-19 vaccination.
- Ensure widespread testing and tracing, maintenance and access to adequate stocks of therapeutics and personal protective equipment and ventilation equipment.

8 See World Health Organization, "Strategy to achieve global COVID-19 vaccination by mid2022", 6 October 2021.

- Promote the building of strong health systems and regulatory authorities that ensure universal access to health care in the least developed countries to address current and future shocks.

We commit to taking the following actions:

203. We take note of the "Statement dated 28 April 2020 of the Group of Least Developed Countries on the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) burgeoning challenges and a global stimulus package for the least developed countries"[9] and commit to supporting its implementation, as appropriate.

204. We recognize the role of extensive immunization against COVID-19 as a global public good for health in preventing, containing and stopping transmission in order to bring the pandemic to an end, through safe, quality, efficacious, effective, accessible and affordable vaccines that are available, leaving no one behind. We support adequate and timely access to quality, safe and effective vaccines in order to vaccinate all eligible populations in least developed countries at an affordable price, on an equitable basis and as quickly as possible, including through the COVAX Facility.

205. We stress that vaccinations need to be supported with essential complementary measures to minimize the loss of lives and morbidity from the COVID-19 pandemic and urge development partners to provide to least developed countries, in a timely manner, access to quality, safe, efficacious and affordable diagnoses, therapeutics, medicines, medical science-based treatment protocols, vaccines, and essential health technologies and their components, as well as equipment, for the COVID-19 response, including through the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator. We reaffirm the TRIPS Agreement, as amended, and the 2001 Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health, which recognizes that intellectual property rights should be interpreted and implemented in a manner supportive of the right of member States to protect public health and, in particular, to promote access to medicines for all, and note the need for appropriate incentives in the development of new health products.

206. We support adequate and timely access to quality, safe and effective vaccines in order to vaccinate all eligible populations in least developed countries at an affordable price, on an equitable basis, and as quickly as possible, including through the COVAX Facility, adequate support to address liquidity and fiscal space constraints and debt relief, when

9 See A/74/843.

appropriate, and international trade measures being put in place to support their recovery in a sustainable manner and that builds resilience against future shocks.

207. We commit to providing adequate domestic and international support to ensure equitable and affordable access for all to COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics, and strengthening inclusive social protection systems in the least developed countries, to address current poverty and vulnerability and future shocks. In a spirit of global solidarity and international cooperation among Governments, as well as partnerships with international organizations, international financial institutions, civil society and the private sector, we call upon development partners to provide financial and in-kind support to least developed countries such as direct budgetary support or project-type interventions and to increase the resources of relevant regional and multilateral emergency financing facilities and ease the conditions of access to these facilities.

208. We commit to establishing and strengthening inclusive social protection mechanisms to protect the poorest and most vulnerable, including the provision of direct support in the form of cash or food or other essentials, as appropriate, to at least 350 million people living in extreme poverty in least developed countries. In this regard, we encourage Governments and development partners to provide funds for social protection, including to those living in extreme poverty in least developed countries.

209. We commit to ensuring that stimulus measures are aligned with the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and contribute to fast recovery and "building back better"[10] from the COVID-19 pandemic, and building resilience in least developed countries, including by conserving, sustainably using and restoring natural ecosystems and biodiversity, including through nature-based solutions, sustainable agriculture; sustainable, accessible, reliable and resilient infrastructure, and the built environment; catalytic concessional financing for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises; sustainable finance instruments such as green bonds and Sustainable Development Goal bonds; and incentives for private investment in sustainable opportunities such as affordable renewable energies, sustainable waste management, shock-responsive supply chains, life-cycle approaches, and safe, smart and sustainable mobility.

210. We commit to enhancing cooperation at the national, regional and global levels to address antimicrobial resistance, using an integrated and systems-based One Health approach, including through health system strengthening, capacity-building, including for research and regulatory capacity, and technical support, and to ensure equitable access to affordable, safe, effective and quality existing and new antimicrobial medicines, vaccines and diagnostics, as well as effective stewardship.

10 In the context of Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, which is aimed at enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to "build back better" in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

Climate adaptation and building resilience, including sustainable management of natural resources

211. While least developed countries have made some progress in the process to formulate and implement national adaptation plans and in implementing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, they often lack the resources and capacity to address critical needs. Adaptation and resilience in food systems, including in the sectors of agriculture, manufacturing, social protection services and livestock, are of prime importance for least developed countries and have major implications for food security, nutrition, livelihoods, especially of the most vulnerable in society, and employment. Water resources already face multiple pressures and are highly sensitive to climate change impacts such as the drying-up of sources, disruption in rainfall patterns and increased frequency of both extreme and slow-onset events, which reinforce already existing trends in land degradation and desertification. The rapid projected growth of urban populations presents challenges in the provision of services such as water and sanitation, which must develop and grow at a faster rate in order to keep pace. Localization of climate action, including support for local governments and building resilient communities, is extremely important because they understand local needs and are on the front line of climate change adaptation action, and disaster risk reduction, response and recovery. Critical infrastructure services, such as transport, water and electricity, remain highly unreliable and vulnerable to extreme climatic events. Measures to restore and improve the sustainable management of key natural resources such as water and land, as well as biodiversity, are urgently needed.

212. We note the high importance of building resilience in least developed countries through stepped-up capacity-building and finance for adaptation to climate change, including through comprehensive multi-stakeholder resilience-building measures for least developed countries, leveraging the Green Climate Fund and existing measures and initiatives such as the National Adaptation Plan Global Network and the United Nations Capital Development Fund's Local Climate Adaptive Living Facility.

Targets

- Support the full formulation and implementation of national adaptation plans, including integrated and strategic adaptation action at the national and local levels by all least developed countries, making use of the Green Climate Fund and existing initiatives such as the National Adaptation Plan Global Network and the Local Climate Adaptive Living Facility.
- Develop and strengthen national and regional platforms and strategies for disaster risk reduction to take action to achieve the targets of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.
- Support and reinforce, as appropriate, the existing comprehensive multi-hazard early warning system and comprehensive multi-hazard crisis mitigation and resilience-building measures for least developed countries.
- Continue to support the development and implementation of adaptation communications, strategies and plans, including those that may be included as components of nationally determined contributions and long-term strategies under the Paris Agreement.

We commit to taking the following actions:

213. We commit to continuing and striving for increased support, such as for capacity-building for adaptation planning and implementation in least developed countries, including through the least developed country work programme under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and additional and complementary means, in order to address medium- and long-term adaptation needs through the formulation of national adaptation plans and subsequent implementation of the policies, programmes and projects identified by them.

214. We commit to strengthening Action for Climate Empowerment in least developed countries through the development and implementation of training programmes focused on climate change education at all levels.

215. We commit to providing the technical assistance to least developed countries necessary to develop operational national risk information systems that support policymaking and decision-making by all stakeholders, including national and local governments, private sector business operations, cultural heritage managers and bearers, the real estate sector and land planning agencies, the insurance industry and local communities.

216. We decide to enhance support to least developed countries in strengthening their national statistical and planning offices and other relevant authorities for the systematic collection, analysis and validation of data on disaster loss and other relevant disaster risk reduction targets, and in strengthening interinstitutional and inclusive coordination on disaster risk data, risk assessments and integrated analysis.

217. We underline the need for reinforcing the existing comprehensive multi-hazard early warning system and comprehensive multi-hazard crises mitigation and resilience-building measures for least developed countries aligned with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction as a key instrument to build resilience against and mitigate the impacts of various shocks, and are committed to making the best use of existing initiatives. We invite the Secretary-General to undertake, with least developed countries, a comprehensive study involving all relevant United Nations Development Systems and other relevant stakeholders on the existing arrangements, lessons learned and identified gaps and submit it to the General Assembly for further consideration.

218. We call for public and private, domestic and international investment, as well as bilateral and multilateral support, to be climate-resilient, risk-informed and aligned with national and local adaptation, climate resilience and disaster risk reduction strategies and efforts related to averting, minimizing and addressing loss and damage associated with the adverse impacts of climate change.

219. We commit to enhancing international cooperation and technical assistance and support to least developed countries so that they can take urgent and significant action to reduce the degradation of natural habitats and land degradation and loss of territory, halt biodiversity loss and prevent the extinction of threatened species.

Access to finance and technology to address climate change

220. We note with concern that the current provision of climate finance for adaptation remains insufficient to respond to worsening climate change impacts in developing country parties and recognize the importance of the adequacy and predictability of adaptation finance. We welcome that the parties[11] urged developed country parties to urgently and significantly scale up their provision of climate finance, technology transfer and capacity-building for adaptation so as to respond to the needs of developing country parties as part of a global effort, including

11 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and/or Paris Agreement.

for the formulation and implementation of national adaptation plans and adaptation communications. Many least developed countries face challenges in gaining direct access to international public finance owing to a lack of technical capacity. We support the provision of assistance to least developed countries in preparing bankable projects and creating enabling environments, and we encourage further efforts to enhance access to finance.

Targets

- Recognizing the outcomes of the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change regarding delivering on the goal of jointly mobilizing $100 billion in climate finance per year, scale up support for developing countries, including least developed countries.
- The provision of scaled-up financial resources should be intended to achieve a balance between adaptation and mitigation, taking into account country-driven strategies.
- Increase climate finance provided for adaptation and resilience, in particular for vulnerable countries, including least developed countries.
- Continue to support the implementation of national adaptation plans and national adaptation programmes of action of least developed countries under the Green Climate Fund and other climate-relevant funds under the Global Environment Facility, including the Least Developed Countries Fund, the Special Climate Change Fund and the Adaptation Fund.
- Increase financing for nature-based solutions or ecosystem-based approaches for climate mitigation and adaptation.

We commit to taking the following actions:

221. We recognize that limiting global warming to 1.5°Celsius requires rapid, deep and sustained reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions, including a reduction in global carbon dioxide emissions by 45 per cent by 2030 relative to the 2010 level and to net zero around mid-century, as well as deep reductions in other greenhouse gases. We urge the parties to the Paris Agreement that have not yet communicated new or updated nationally determined contributions to do so as soon as possible in advance of the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement. Recalling article 3 and paragraphs 3, 4, 5 and 11 of article 4 of the Paris Agreement, we welcome the request of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties of the Paris Agreement for parties to revisit and strengthen the 2030 targets in their nationally determined contributions, as necessary, to align with the Agreement's temperature goal by the end of 2022, taking into account different national circumstances. We further welcome the establishment of a work programme to urgently scale up mitigation ambition and implementation in this critical decade, as well as the convening of an annual high-level ministerial round table on pre-2030 ambitions, beginning at the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement.

222. We welcome that the parties[12] urged developed country parties to deliver in full on the $100 billion goal urgently and through to 2025 and emphasize the importance of transparency in the implementation of their pledges. We also welcome that they urged the operating entities of the Financial Mechanism of the Convention, multilateral development banks and other financial institutions to further scale up investment in climate action, and call for a continued increase in the scale and effectiveness of climate finance from all sources globally, including grants and other highly concessional forms of finance.

223. We recall, as provided for in article 9.4 of the Paris Agreement, that the provision of scaled-up financial resources should be intended to achieve a balance between adaptation and mitigation, taking into account country-driven strategies, and the priorities and needs of developing country parties, especially those that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change and have significant capacity constraints, such as the least developed countries and small island developing States, considering the need for public and grant-based resources for adaptation.

224. We welcome that the parties[13] urged developed country parties to at least double their collective provision of climate finance for adaptation to developing country parties from 2019 levels by 2025, in the context of achieving a balance between mitigation and adaptation in the provision of scaled-up financial resources, recalling article 9, paragraph 4, of the Paris Agreement.

225. 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 to continue to provide at least 50 per cent and (in line with the Green Climate Fund's initial resource mobilization

12 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and/or Paris Agreement.

13 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and/or Paris Agreement.

allocation floor) to aim to allocate 69 per cent[14] of the adaptation allocation for particularly vulnerable countries, including least developed countries.

226. We commit to increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of funding to climate-related multilateral funds such as the Green Climate Fund, the Global Environment Facility, including the Least Developed Countries Fund and the Special Climate Change Fund, and other climate-relevant funds and to continue to improve access to all these funds by least developed countries. We also call upon relevant parties to simplify, as appropriate, the access procedures for climate finance for least developed countries and to support the least developed countries, including through the new task force on access to climate finance. We also call for greater efforts to improve access to climate finance for least developed countries and support least developed countries in developing technical capacity to ensure efficient access to financial resources.

227. We will continue to support the development of approaches in least developed countries for dealing with adaptation, including nature-based solutions, ecosystem-based approaches and adaptation in cities, which will include the most disproportionally affected people such as young people, children, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and local communities, and women and girls; and the approaches will focus on the development of essential climate resilience programmes regarding food systems, water resources, health services, living spaces and settlements and critical infrastructure.

228. We will continue to enhance regional cooperation and support for least developed countries in addressing the impacts of regional transboundary climate risks associated with supply and value chains.

229. We request relevant entities of the United Nations system, international financial institutions and development banks, as well as the private sector and foundations, to continue to support least developed countries in formulating and implementing national adaptation plans and strategies, nationally determined contributions and national disaster risk reduction strategies to advance mitigation and adaptation. We also call upon these entities to apply the Principles for Responsible Investment and to commit to comprehensive and robust physical climate-related risk assessments and disclosures related to their activities in least developed countries.

230. We will continue to invest in gender-responsive prevention and risk reduction, including risk-informed and resilient infrastructure and public services and in the adoption of legislation, policies and standards that regulate and incentivize investors and companies to adopt a risk-informed approach and that enable monetary and regulatory authorities to incorporate the impact of disaster and climate risks into regulatory and policy frameworks, as recommended in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

231. We commit to providing significant support to existing climate and disaster risk finance and insurance and catastrophe-triggered financial instruments such as the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility, the African Risk Capacity Agency and the Pacific Catastrophe Risk Insurance Company, as well as developing and enhancing the capacity of existing instruments and derivatives that provide risk insurance and guarantees for where they are most needed, such as micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises and low-income households with a gender-responsive approach. We note the risk pools by development partners within the framework of the InsuResilience Global Partnership.

232. We commit to providing financial and technical assistance and facilitating technology transfer on mutually agreed terms to least developed countries to develop and implement national strategies for the sustainable use, preservation, protection and restoration of the natural resources and the sustainable management of marine and terrestrial biodiversity and ecosystems based on the best scientific evidence available, in line with the 2030 Agenda.

233. We call for action by the private sector, including banks and institutional investors, to support environmental, social and corporate governance issues and to take climate change and biodiversity into consideration in their investment decisions in least developed countries.

VI. Mobilizing international solidarity, reinvigorated global partnerships and innovative tools: a march towards sustainable graduation

234. We acknowledge that least developed countries are dependent in large part on public resources to finance sustainable development needs and ensure a smooth transition from the least developed country category. Available resources – domestic, external, public and private – have not been sufficient to meet growing investment and spending needs. The high reliance of least developed countries on external resources, including ODA, FDI, concessional lending and private flows, such as remittances

14 Green Climate Fund, "Decisions of the Board – twenty-seventh meeting of the Board, 9–13 November 2020", decision B.27/06, paras. 33 (b) and (h) (ii). Available at www.greenclimate.fund/sites/default/files/document/gcf-b27-22.pdf.

and portfolio investment, persisted over the past decade. During the Istanbul Programme of Action implementation period, external debt has been rising and is, in some cases, exacerbated by large costs caused by disasters and structural vulnerabilities. The COVID-19 pandemic and its economic fallout have exacerbated financial vulnerabilities and debt risks in least developed countries, which have been building up over the past decade.

235. We welcome progress made over the past decade with respect to graduation and stress that continued support and incentives will be important to accelerate the number of least developed countries reaching the graduation thresholds and for ensuring sustainable and irreversible graduation with momentum.

236. We aim to support least developed countries and graduating countries in achieving at least 7 per cent GDP growth per annum and growth in the disposable income of households in the bottom half of the income distribution.

Key action areas

Support for domestic resource mobilization and fight against illicit financial flows

237. We acknowledge that the low tax-to-GDP ratios of least developed countries can be explained in part by their economic structures, high poverty rates, weak tax administration and the nature of their tax systems. The median tax-to-GDP ratio in least developed countries increased very slowly, from 13.3 in 2011 to 16.2 per cent in 2018, with rates lower than 10 per cent in several of them. Efforts to increase government revenue have been under way in many least developed countries, including through the broadening of the tax base and enhancing compliance and transparency, including through the digitalization of tax systems. Other challenges for least developed countries include illicit financial flows and resource-intensive tax administration, as well as inappropriate transfer pricing.

238. We recognize that continued development of the institutional capacity of least developed countries for efficient, effective and transparent public procurement practices is an important opportunity for expanding the resources that least developed countries can channel towards implementing the 2030 Agenda, including achieving its Sustainable Development Goals, combating climate change and biodiversity loss and recovering from COVID-19.

Target

- Increase tax revenue as a proportion of GDP to at least 15 per cent in all least developed countries to enable them to become self-sustainable.
- Enhance international cooperation for the recovery of stolen assets and their return to their countries of origin, in accordance with the United Nations Convention against Corruption.
- Enhance intergovernmental coordination to prevent illicit financial flows.

We commit to taking the following actions:

239. We call upon least developed countries to make substantial efforts to effectively mobilize domestic resources, build up financial infrastructure and capacities, and put in place appropriate regulatory measures and institutions; to continue to take measures to create conditions for attracting and sustaining investment and mobilizing domestic savings, both public and private; and to continue to undertake the fiscal reforms necessary, as appropriate, to build effective, transparent, fair and accountable national tax and financial management systems, in line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. We call upon development partners and relevant institutions to enhance support for development and strengthen revenue digitization and call for enhanced financial and technical support to build the revenue collection capacity of least developed countries.

240. Recognizing the efforts of least developed countries to enhance domestic resource generation, we commit to supporting efforts by least developed countries towards progressive taxation, building capacity and strengthening tax administration, combating tax evasion, savings mobilization, digitalization of tax administration and financial inclusion, all of which should enable the delivery of sustainable, effective, transparent and efficient public service, including for the poorest and most vulnerable, with savings channelled to productive investment and to reducing inequalities. We stress the importance of conducive international regulatory frameworks and transparency and of support by national and regional financial institutions, including development banks, in this respect.

241. We commit to enhanced international tax cooperation and efforts to close international tax loopholes, all of which are aimed at avoiding base erosion and profit shifting, and welcome support through initiatives such as Tax Inspectors Without Borders and the Addis Tax Initiative. We

commit to supporting least developed countries in taking advantage of increases in tax transparency and the exchange of information, such as by implementing the new international standard of automatic exchange of information.

242. We recommit to strengthening the capacities of revenue administration and the broadening of the taxpayer base, and supporting voluntary compliance, accountability and transparency, efficient revenue management and efficient risk management, including through digitalization and transformation of tax administration, in line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. We acknowledge that any consideration of tax measures in response to the digital economy should include a careful analysis of the implications for least developed countries, taking into account their input and their unique needs and capacities.

243. We encourage the use of and improved access to innovative tools, such as mobile banking, payment platforms and digitalized payments, as appropriate, including by women and micro-businesses, and we recognize the role that these can play in promoting financial inclusion, as well as reducing costs, increasing transparency, improving the speed and security of payments and opening up new markets.

244. We call for support by development partners and international and regional financial institutions to support the strengthening of the capacity of domestic financial institutions and the banking system to promote appropriate, affordable and stable financing for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises through the creation of credit lines that encourage venture capital funds, facilitate access to public capital markets, targeting those enterprises, and to create, strengthen and widen lending markets that cater to the diversified needs of private enterprises, micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises and consumers, including women.

245. We commit to substantially reducing illicit financial flows in order to help least developed countries to mobilize resources, including through increased international cooperation, to stem corruption and money-laundering and identify, freeze and recover stolen assets and their return to countries of origin, in accordance with the United Nations Convention against Corruption, and to developing their capacities to track financial transactions, administer taxation, facilitate customs services and investigate and prosecute offences to contribute to the success of efforts to reduce illicit financial flows derived from crimes.

246. We call upon all countries and relevant institutions to implement measures to enhance disclosure practices and promote transparency in financial information and enhance disclosure practices and transparency in both source and destination countries, and to cooperate in efforts to reduce illicit financial flows and corruption.

International public and external finance to contribute to sustainable development in least developed countries

247. We note with appreciation that ODA to least developed countries by Development Assistance Committee countries increased in real terms from 2011 to 2019 by some 4.6 per cent, but note with concern that the average share of gross national income provided as ODA to least developed countries from Development Assistance Committee countries declined from 0.10 to 0.08 per cent during that time period.[15] At the same time, we note that ODA remains crucial for financing investment for sustainable development in least developed countries, while innovative sources of finance, such as blended finance, remained limited in these countries. There is a clear need for more determined efforts by developed countries to fulfil and, where possible, enhance their relevant ODA commitments to least developed countries.

248. We underline that North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation is vital to least developed countries, noting that South-South cooperation and commitments are not a substitute but a complement to North-South cooperation, in particular with regard to technical assistance, and the 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.

249. We recognize the rising significance of impact investing as a new public-private financing mechanism for the 2030 Agenda and underline the urgent need to develop mechanisms to channel public and private investment towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in least developed countries. We also encourage greater efforts in establishing impact investing funds, targeting agricommodities and associated smallholders and micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises in the least developed countries.

Target

- Ensure the fulfilment of respective ODA commitments to least developed countries.

15 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD.Stat, with figures for official development assistance to least developed countries derived from table DAC2a and the underlying gross national income figures derived from table DAC1.

We commit to taking the following actions:

250. We commit to ensuring the fulfilment of all ODA commitments to least developed countries, ensuring the alignment of aid with least developed countries' national priorities and increasing the alignment of aid with least developed countries' national systems and procedures. We welcome the decision by the European Union by which it reaffirms its collective commitment to achieving the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income for ODA within the time frame of the 2030 Agenda and undertakes to reach 0.20 per cent of gross national income for ODA to the least developed countries within the time frame of the 2030 Agenda. We encourage ODA providers to consider setting a target to provide at least 0.20 per cent of gross national income for ODA to the least developed countries. We are encouraged by those that are allocating at least 50 per cent of their ODA to the least developed countries.

251. We invite development partners to ensure that the allocation of global ODA resources takes into account the structural handicaps and constraints that are unique to least developed countries. We call upon development partners to ensure the right balance in the allocation of ODA fostering sustainable development in its three dimensions, namely, economic, social and environmental, and in various sectors, as well as for building resilience against various shocks and for the empowerment of women.

252. We call upon the countries of the global South to further strengthen their support to least developed countries in all these areas in a predictable manner along the lines of the Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation.

253. We urge development partners to ensure that multilateral, regional and national development banks facing capital constraints have a solid financial position to provide necessary and timely support, including concessional finance of multilateral development banks to least developed countries, through a simplified access process. We welcome the advancement of the International Development Association's twentieth replenishment and call for further initiatives by the international community.

254. We welcome continued efforts to improve the quality, impact and effectiveness of development cooperation and other international efforts in public finance, including adherence to agreed development cooperation effectiveness principles. We will align activities with the national priorities of least developed countries, including by reducing fragmentation and accelerating the untying of aid. All parties to the Doha Programme of Action will promote country ownership and results orientation and strengthen country systems, use programme-based approaches, where appropriate, strengthen partnerships for development, reduce transaction costs and increase transparency and mutual accountability. We will make development more effective and predictable by providing least developed countries with regular and timely indicative information on planned support in the medium term. Least developed countries will provide whole-of-society national sustainable development strategies and costed medium-term financing frameworks. Least developed countries will also improve transparency and accountability on external finance to all domestic constituencies.

255. We will hold open, inclusive and transparent discussions on the modernization of the ODA measurement and on the proposed measure of "total official support for sustainable development" and affirm that any such measure will not dilute commitments already made.

256. We encourage innovative finance, including blended finance in order to leverage additional, substantial and predictable finance disbursed in a manner that respects the priorities and special needs of least developed countries and does not unduly burden them. This could include expanding ODA allocations and other international public finance uses to include flexible financing that can be used as first-loss, concessional or de-risking capital to attract additional resources from the private sector to Sustainable Development Goal-aligned investment across the investment continuum that can scale to address the needs of least developed countries. We commit to significantly scaling up support in the form of concessional financing and equity for existing financing mechanisms that deliver catalytic investment capital, for example, for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises and small investment projects in least developed countries and graduated countries, to mobilize sustainable private investment that advances the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and acts as a crisis facility.

257. We welcome the IMF special drawing rights allocation of the equivalent of $650 billion of 23 August 2021 to meet the long-term global need to supplement reserve assets, and encourage countries with strong external positions to seek options for the voluntary channelling of special drawing rights, in accordance with national laws and regulations. and to this end appreciate the efforts of IMF to seek further viable options for the voluntary channelling of special drawing rights to countries most in need, including least developed countries, such as the Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust and the new Resilience and Sustainability Trust, with a view to providing affordable long-term financing to developing countries in a manner that preserves their external debt sustainability, and encourage

the consideration of viable options to voluntarily channel through multilateral development banks.

258. We call upon official creditors to make long-term sustainable financing available to least developed countries through grants and concessional funding and to offer more fixed-interest lending at low interest rates, emphasizing that this is part of a mix of financing approaches that also include grants.

Foreign direct investment

259. We note with concern that FDI flows to least developed countries had already been on a decline since 2015, reaching $21 billion, or 1.4 per cent, of world FDI in 2019. COVID-19 accelerated the decline of FDI to least developed countries, which remains heavily concentrated in the extractive industries. Several least developed countries have undertaken steps to facilitate investment, such as the acceleration of approval procedures, the increased use of digital tools, a reduction in fees and automatic renewal of permits.

260. We note the establishment of the Investment Support Programme for Least Developed Countries, implemented by the International Development Law Organization, which is aimed at providing legal and technical support to least developed countries on investment-related matters. We commit to further strengthening the Programme, invite donors to continue to support it and encourage least developed countries to make wide use of the Programme's facilities.

Target

- Adopt and implement investment promotion regimes for least developed countries.

We commit to taking the following actions:

261. We commit to implementing the decision contained in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda to adopt and implement investment promotion regimes for the least developed countries. We reiterate the decision[16] to provide financial and technical support for project preparation and contract negotiation, advisory support for investment-related dispute resolution, access to information on investment facilities, improving enabling environments, and risk insurance and guarantees such as through the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency. In this regard, we request the Secretary-General to explore the feasibility of establishing an international investment support centre for least developed countries in the form of a one-stop shop to mobilize support for implementation of the investment promotion regime for least developed countries and graduated countries, and to submit the study and recommendations to the General Assembly for its consideration at its seventy-eighth session.

262. We will incentivize additional financing and investment, including grants, guarantees and blended finance, in quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, and facilitate efforts to channel long-term sustainable investment to least developed countries. We commit to helping least developed countries to benefit from sustainable financing sources and strengthen their regulatory and policy environments, and to supporting existing initiatives to develop pipelines of investable projects and use risk-sharing mechanisms to incentivize private investment and mobilize international capital, where applicable.

Debt sustainability and debt cancellation initiative through improved and transparent debt architecture

263. We note with concern that the stock of debt and debt service payment obligations of least developed countries increased significantly over the past decade. Total debt service increased from an average of 5 per cent of exports of goods and services in 2011 to 13 per cent in 2019. As of February 2021, 4 least developed countries were classified as in debt distress, while the number of least developed countries at high risk of debt distress increased to 16. Over the past decade, the composition of debt of least developed countries changed considerably towards less concessional finance. We welcome the measures adopted in 2020 by the Group of 20 and the Paris Club, namely, the Debt Service Suspension Initiative, to facilitate higher COVID-19 pandemic-related spending and the Common Framework for Debt Treatments beyond the Debt Service Suspension Initiative to facilitate timely and orderly debt treatment on a case-by-case basis with broad participation of all creditors, on comparable terms, including the private sector, in line with the comparability of treatment principle.

Target

- Address the debt distress of least developed countries by 2025 and provide coordinated and appropriate debt solutions in a timely manner

16 General Assembly resolution 69/313, annex, para. 46.

to all least developed countries that face debt vulnerabilities or are in debt distress, in order to work towards sustainable debt levels in all least developed countries.

We commit to taking the following actions:

264. We commit to assisting least developed countries in attaining long-term debt sustainability and coordinated policies aimed at fostering adequate debt financing, debt relief, when appropriate, debt restructuring and sound debt management, as appropriate, and ensuring that debt relief does not detract from ODA resources intended to be available for least developed countries.

265. We encourage IMF to conduct in-depth reviews of least developed countries' external debt, effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on least developed countries' debt servicing capacity and possible policy options at the national and international levels to effectively address the external debt problem of least developed countries.

266. We commit to continuing to enhance efforts to increase support, including financial and technical assistance, for institutional capacity-building in least developed countries to enhance sustainable upstream and downstream debt management as an integral part of national development strategies, including by promoting transparent and accountable debt management systems and negotiation and renegotiation capacities and by supporting legal advice in relation to addressing external debt litigation and debt data reconciliation between creditors and debtors, notably through the Common Framework for Debt Treatments beyond the Debt Service Suspension Initiative, so that debt sustainability may be achieved and maintained.

267. We invite official creditors, including international financial institutions, to consider exploring the inclusion of State-contingent clauses in public debt contracts to enable standstills in times of crisis and to provide an example for private markets, including through granting a suspension of debt service.

268. We invite creditors and debtors to further explore, where appropriate and on a mutually agreed, transparent and case-by-case basis, the use of debt instruments, such as debt swap initiatives, for sustainable development and climate action.

Remittances

269. We note that remittances to least developed countries increased significantly over the past decade but declined in 2020 owing to COVID-19. At the same time, costs of remittances to least developed countries have remained disproportionally high.

Targets

- By 2030, reduce to less than 3 per cent the transaction costs of migrants' remittances.
- Eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5 per cent.

We commit to taking the following actions:

270. We commit to working to improve access to and the use and quality of financial services to lower the cost of remittances to least developed countries and welcome international action, such as the Global Forum on Remittances and Development led by the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion, with the objective of improving the flow and reducing the cost of remittances.

271. We commit to providing accessible information on remittance transfer costs, including foreign exchange margins, by provider and channel, such as through comparison websites, in order to increase transparency and competition in the remittance transfer market and promote the financial literacy and inclusion of migrants and their families through education and training.

272. We decide to support incentive programmes to ensure that remittances are used for long-term investment in productive capacity-building in least developed countries, such as micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, and ensure that women and men are engaged as equal partners and beneficiaries. We will also support efforts to more easily link remittances to other financial services such as savings, credit, insurance and pensions, all of which can expand financial health and strengthen resilience to shocks and setbacks for migrants and their families.

Extension of international support measures to graduating and graduated least developed countries to make graduation sustainable and irreversible

273. We note with appreciation that 4 countries have graduated since 2011, another 4 have been designated to graduate by 2024 and 12 others have met the graduation criteria at least once. However, most graduating least developed countries face a multitude of challenges, including poverty and inequalities, in particular gender inequality, inadequate structural transformation and productive capacity, and vulnerability to economic and climatic shocks. Furthermore, we are concerned by the simultaneous loss of least developed country-specific support measures compounded by the negative social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis.

274. We further note that the Committee for Development Policy has found that a five-year preparatory period is necessary for all countries recommended for graduation at the 2021 triennial review to effectively prepare for a smooth transition, given that these countries will need to prepare for graduation while planning for a post-COVID-19 recovery and implementing policies and strategies to reverse the economic and social damages incurred as a result of the COVID-19 shock.

275. We encourage the Committee for Development Policy to continue to engage with graduating countries and countries recently graduated from the least developed country category so that the full extent of the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 are understood, in line with the work of the Committee on sustainable development and resilient recovery from the pandemic.

276. We aim to ensure an incentive-based international support structure to graduating and graduated least developed countries, including support for their smooth transition from development and trading partners, as well as the United Nations system, to make graduation sustainable and ensure post-graduation development momentum and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Targets

- Enable 15 additional least developed countries to meet the criteria for graduation by 2031.
- Improve the scope, where necessary, and use of smooth transition measures and incentives for all graduating least developed countries.
- Provide specific support measures to recently graduated countries for making the graduation sustainable and irreversible.

We commit to taking the following actions:

277. We emphasize that a successful transition out of the least developed country category needs to be based on a national smooth transition strategy, formulated 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 ODA, special and differential treatments, Aid for Trade or other technical and financial assistance. This includes the need for improved planning and coordination of transition finance by ODA providers during both the preparatory period and the post-graduation phase.

278. We reiterate our conviction that no country graduating from the least developed country category should have its development progress disrupted or reversed. We welcome that the United Nations graduation process helps to ensure that no graduating country has its special and differential treatment measures and exemptions reduced abruptly. We invite development and trading partners to consider extending to the graduated country trade preferences previously made available as a result of least developed country status or reducing them in a phased manner in order to avoid their abrupt reduction. We note that the Group of Least Developed Countries put forward various proposals at WTO, pertaining to, among other things, trade-related challenges and those related to the smooth transition of the countries graduating from the least developed country category, and seek to further examine these issues. We call upon the development partners to continue to provide, as appropriate, special climate change-related finance and technological support to graduated countries to support action towards the achievement of the goals of the Paris Agreement and for a period consistent with their vulnerabilities, sustainable development needs and other national circumstances and emerging challenges.

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

280. We recognize that graduating countries face major challenges in addressing the social and economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and of disasters and encourage the integration of disaster risk reduction into the smooth transition strategies of graduating countries in order to promote the sustainability of development progress, including

the impact assessment of the likely consequences of graduation and the vulnerability profiles.

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

    (a) Technical assistance in preparing and implementing a smooth transition strategy, including capacity development and technical assistance in the analysis and identification of support needs;

    (b) Legal assistance to negotiate market access after trade preferences that are granted on the basis of least developed countries status end;

    (c) Availability of credit ratings and risk management measures, including through the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency;

    (d) Technical assistance to negotiate market access after trade preferences that are granted based on least developed countries status end;

    (e) Technical assistance to build and strengthen intellectual property rights systems of least developed countries to enable them to comply with obligations related to intellectual property after graduation;

    (f) Consider extending access to dedicated funds for addressing adverse impacts of climate change and vertical funds such as the Gavi Alliance, Aid for Trade and Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries for graduated countries for a fixed period and in a predictable manner.

282. We welcome the work of the inter-agency task force on least developed country graduation, led by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, to provide strengthened and coordinated United Nations system-wide support to the countries graduating from the least developed country category and invite the Office to advocate for appropriate predictable and additional incentives and support measures for graduating and recently graduated countries and to mobilize additional international support for the implementation of the smooth transition strategies. We invite all relevant United Nations entities to collaborate under the inter-agency task force and develop operational guidelines for their support to least developed countries, including assistance to graduating countries.

283. We welcome the establishment of a Sustainable Graduation Support Facility by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, as Chair of the interagency task force on least developed country graduation, and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, as the secretariat for the Committee for Development Policy, as a concrete, country-led solution of dedicated capacity development support. We call upon Member States to support this initiative in order to further strengthen coordinated and coherent United Nations 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 clearinghouse of initiatives and projects pursued in support of these countries.

284. 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 the following:

    (a) Establishing a crisis response process within the monitoring mechanism to react to crises and emergencies occurring during the annual monitoring cycle;

    (b) Mobilizing the existing crisis management expertise of the United Nations system and other international entities, utilizing the convening power of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, both in case of crisis and regular monitoring;

    (c) Expanding coverage of annual monitoring reports and the preparation process.

285. We call upon the Committee for Development Policy to continue due consultations with least developed countries and countries recently graduated from the least developed country category while conducting the triennial reviews of the list of least developed countries and monitoring the countries that are graduating and have graduated from the list of least developed countries, and request the Committee to include in these consultations those least developed countries whose graduation may have been deferred.

Availability and use of data

286. We note with concern that many least developed countries lack quality data to measure and track progress in the goals and targets of the

Istanbul Programme of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals. The average statistical capacity indicator score increased from 56.4 in 2011 to 58.0 in 2019 but remains below the world average of 64. The COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated vividly how crucial reliable data are for policymaking. Inclusive data are required to understand the differential impacts of the pandemic and address its economic and social effects, especially for people in vulnerable situations.

Target

- Significantly increase the availability of high-quality, timely, reliable and disaggregated data.

We commit to taking the following actions:

287. We commit to further strengthening traditional data sources, such as surveys and administrative records, complemented by new sources, and continuing to strengthen our efforts to collect, analyse and disseminate high-quality, accessible, timely and reliable data for improved monitoring and policymaking to implement the 2030 Agenda and the Doha Programme of Action.

288. We commit to providing financial support, equipment and infrastructure and technical assistance to strengthen the capacities and capabilities of national statistical offices, monitor policies of least developed countries and fill data gaps with responsible, open and inclusive data that take into account diversity in programming. In this regard, we recognize that modernizing population data systems, through improving civil registration and vital statistics systems and geospatial information sources, must be a priority to prepare for future disasters and make progress on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Implementation, follow-up and monitoring

289. Efficient follow-up and monitoring mechanisms adapted at the national, subregional, regional and global levels are crucial for the successful implementation of the Doha Programme of Action and are fully aligned with existing frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals. National, regional and global mechanisms should be mutually complementary and reinforcing. Necessary steps will be taken to ensure the mutual accountability of least developed countries and their development partners for delivering on their commitments undertaken under the Doha Programme of Action.

290. National-level arrangements are particularly important, given that the Doha Programme of Action is owned and led by the least developed countries themselves. At the national level, each least developed country Government should develop an ambitious national implementation strategy regarding the Doha Programme of Action and integrate the provisions of the Programme of Action into its national policies and development and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and conduct regular country-led and country-driven reviews, with the full involvement of all key stakeholders. Existing country-level review mechanisms and report dissemination, including those for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the implementation of poverty reduction strategy papers, nationally determined contributions, United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and the existing consultative mechanisms, should be broadened to cover the review of the Doha Programme of Action and extended to all least developed countries. National parliaments and other institutions can also support these processes.

291. We call upon the entities of the United Nations development system to actively support the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action at the national, subregional, regional and global levels, in close cooperation and partnership with the World Bank Group and the international financial and development institutions, and to integrate the Programme of Action into their strategic plans and annual work programmes and reporting at all levels. We also call upon the entities of the United Nations development system to support the resident coordinators in the least developed countries and to assist them in the mainstreaming of the Doha Programme of Action into development planning at the country level in a coordinated and cohesive manner.

292. We invite resident coordinators and United Nations country teams, as well as country-level representatives of the World Bank Group, IMF and other multilateral institutions, to continue to collaborate with and provide support to national follow-up and monitoring.

293. In line with the principles of development cooperation effectiveness, development partners should support agreed objectives and policies designed by least developed countries on the basis of the Doha Programme of Action that are integrated into existing national development and cooperation frameworks. They should monitor the delivery of their commitments and consider appropriate measures to overcome shortfalls or shortcomings, if any.

294. At the regional level, the relevant United Nations regional commissions and agencies should undertake biennial reviews of the implementation

of the Doha Programme of Action in close coordination and cooperation with subregional and regional development banks and intergovernmental organizations. Inclusive regional processes will draw on national reviews and contribute to follow up and review at the global level. The relevant United Nations regional commissions and agencies should continue to ensure that the needs and challenges of least developed countries are addressed as part of their ongoing work.

295. At the global level, the implementation and monitoring mechanisms established after the Istanbul Programme of Action should be strengthened and improved with a view to ensuring timely and effective follow-up of the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action, including through better stocktaking of policies and measures at the national, regional and sectoral levels; improved substantive support for the implementation of the Programme of Action at the global level; systematic monitoring of relevant developments in other intergovernmental processes and action by the United Nations system organizations and inter-agency processes; and structured support for follow-up from the least developed countries themselves. The General Assembly should continue to monitor the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action on an annual basis under the specific item on its agenda. Effective linkages will be made with the follow-up and review arrangements of all relevant United Nations conferences, processes and frameworks, including the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

296. We invite the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, as well as the high-level political forum on sustainable development, to devote adequate time to discussion of the sustainable development challenges facing the least developed countries in order to enhance engagement and implement commitments.

297. The Economic and Social Council is invited to continue to include periodically an agenda item during its annual substantive session on the review and coordination of the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action. Periodic reviews of progress made and constraints confronted by least developed countries should be conducted by the Council to allow for focused interaction. The Development Cooperation Forum should continue to review trends in international development cooperation, as well as policy coherence for development, including for least developed countries and graduated countries. These will be supported by reviews by the Council's functional commissions and other intergovernmental bodies and forums.

298. The General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council should conduct annual reviews of the progress made in the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action.

299. We invite the governing bodies of the United Nations funds and programmes and other multilateral organizations, including the World Bank Group, IMF and other international financial institutions, as well as WTO, to contribute to the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action and to integrate it into their work programmes, as appropriate and in accordance with their relevant mandates. These organizations are invited to participate fully in reviews of the Doha Programme of Action at the national, subregional, regional and global levels.

300. The Secretary-General is requested to ensure the full mobilization and coordination of all parts of the United Nations system to facilitate coordinated implementation and coherence in the follow-up and monitoring of the Doha Programme of Action at the national, subregional, regional and global levels. The coordination mechanisms available, such as the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) and the United Nations Development Group, should be broadly utilized and the Inter-agency Consultative Group for Least Developed Countries should be kept active in this regard.

301. We welcome the work of the Inter-agency Consultative Group for Least Developed Countries, led by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, invite CEB and the High-level Committee on Programmes to support the coordination and follow-up of the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action on a system-wide basis, and also invite the Secretary-General, in his capacity as CEB Chair, to include the implementation of the Programme of Action in the agenda of the Board. We invite all relevant United Nations entities to collaborate under the Inter-agency Consultative Group to develop operational guidelines for their support to countries in conflict and post-conflict situations.

302. We invite the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States to prepare a comprehensive road map for the accelerated implementation of the Doha Programme of Action, identifying specific roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders, with a view to ensuring that the commitments in favour of least developed countries lead to concrete deliverables that would facilitate implementation of the Programme of Action and help least developed countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

303. The Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States should strengthen its functions to undertake the following:

(a) Assist the Secretary-General in the systematic and effective follow-up and monitoring of the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action and the full mobilization and coordination of all parts of the United Nations system, including through the use of data, with a view to facilitating the coordinated implementation of and coherence in the follow-up and monitoring of the Programme of Action at the country, regional and global levels aligned with the 2030 Agenda;

(b) Assist in mobilizing international support and resources for the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action for least developed countries;

(c) Strengthen its awareness-raising and advocacy work in favour of least developed countries, in partnership with the relevant entities of the United Nations system, as well as with parliaments, civil society, the media, academia and foundations;

(d) Undertake research and analytical works to provide substantive support to least developed countries in group consultations and in their participation in other intergovernmental meetings and conferences, in order to facilitate science- and evidence-based decisions in favour of least developed countries, taking into account new and emerging challenges and opportunities; to support the work of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the high-level political forum on sustainable development and CEB as they relate to least developed countries; and to foster debate and innovative thinking, promote consensus on ways forward and coordinate efforts to achieve the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action.

304. The Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States will continue to be responsible for coordinated substantive support to the global review of the Doha Programme of Action, including through the following:

(a) Following up on action taken at the national level based on input from Governments, United Nations system agencies, civil society organizations and other relevant stakeholders;

(b) Monitoring sectoral policy developments at the intergovernmental processes of relevant international and regional organizations;

(c) Maintaining substantive contact with United Nations system organizations and other relevant international and regional organizations, as well as resident coordinators in least developed countries;

(d) Assisting the Secretary-General in his efforts in support of least developed countries;

(e) Supporting follow-up by least developed countries at the global and sectoral levels.

305. The Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States will continue to monitor international policy developments of relevance to least developed countries, including the outcomes of major global conferences, and carry out relevant advocacy efforts aimed at the effective and timely implementation of the Doha Programme of Action.

306. We note the network of national focal points of least developed countries established by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and the convening of meetings of the national focal points on a regular basis. We also note that the national focal points designated by the least developed countries are heavily involved in the localization of the Istanbul Programme of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as their national implementation, monitoring, review and reporting of the Programme of Action. We invite the Office of the High Representative to further strengthen the network of national focal points of least developed countries and convene annual meetings of the focal points to share experiences and best practices on mainstreaming the Doha Programme of Action and Sustainable Development Goals into national development processes, as well as their implementation and follow-up; network among peers; and better understand existing means of implementation, including viable financing and business models.

307. With a view to ensuring the effective implementation of the functions of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and strengthening its capabilities and effectiveness to support the least developed countries, as well as the effectiveness of the United Nations system support provided to least developed countries, we request the Secretary-General to prepare a report, in consultation with Member States and the relevant specialized agencies, funds, programmes and regional commissions, taking into account the work done by the United Nations system, and to submit it with recommendations to the General Assembly for its consideration at its seventy-seventh session.

308. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development should continue to address the challenges faced by least developed countries through the conduct of intergovernmental consensus-building, especially through the Trade and Development Board, and to contribute to the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action, including through its technical assistance to least developed countries. The institutional capacity of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in the research and analysis of least developed country issues should be maintained to this end.

309. The General Assembly is invited to consider conducting a comprehensive high-level midterm review of the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action in 2026. The Assembly, towards the end of the decade, is also invited to consider holding, in 2031, a sixth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in order to make a comprehensive appraisal of the implementation of Programme of Action and to decide on subsequent action.

"A STRENGTHENED AND INCLUSIVE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP THAT EFFECTIVELY ADDRESSES THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES WILL CONTRIBUTE TO THE CAUSES OF PEOPLE, PLANET, PEACE, PROSPERITY, PARTNERSHIP AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL."

- THE DOHA PROGRAMME OF ACTION

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LDC5
5TH UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

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