



COMPREHENSIVE HIGH-LEVEL MIDTERM REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ISTANBUL PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE LDCs FOR THE DECADE 2011-2020

CONCEPT NOTE¹

I. Introduction

This concept note addresses issues related to the preparatory process for the high-level comprehensive high-level midterm review of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action to be held in June 2016, in Antalya, Turkey. The purpose of the paper is to launch the United Nations system wide preparatory process in order to facilitate the intergovernmental, regional and national preparations while ensuring active involvement of UN system organizations in the preparatory activities at all levels.

II. Background

The Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA)² adopted at the Fourth UN Conference on Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in Istanbul, Turkey in May 2011, constitutes an ambitious policy agenda agreed by the international community to address the challenges faced by the LDCs, based on the fundamental tenets of mutual accountability and enhanced international cooperation.

The overarching goal of the IPoA is to overcome the structural challenges faced by the LDCs in order to eradicate poverty, achieve internationally agreed development goals and enable graduation from the LDC category. It also recognizes that the LDCs represent an enormous potential for world economic growth, stability and prosperity.

As the midpoint of the decade-long programme of action draws near, the UN General Assembly decided to hold the comprehensive high-level midterm review of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action in June 2016, in Antalya, Turkey, for a period of three days (see resolution 69/231 on the "*Follow-up to the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries*"). Participation shall be at the highest possible political level and should be open to all stakeholders of the IPoA.

¹ This unofficial note is for information only.

² Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020:

<http://unohrlls.org/UserFiles/File/IPoA.pdf>

The high-level midterm review shall result in an inter-governmentally negotiated and agreed outcome in the form of a political declaration. The review will undertake an assessment of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action by the LDCs and their development partners. It will share best practices and lessons learned and identify obstacles, constraints and actions and initiatives needed to overcome them, as well as new challenges and emerging issues. The midterm review will also serve to reaffirm the global commitment to address the special needs of the LDCs countries made at the Fourth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries and to further strengthen the global partnership for development for LDCs in all priority areas of the Istanbul Programme of Action in order to ensure its timely and effective implementation during the remainder of the Decade, while taking into account the post-2015 development agenda as it relates to the LDCs.

III. Mandate for the Midterm Review

The scope of the midterm comprehensive global review has been mandated as follows:

(a) To undertake a comprehensive review of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action by least developed countries and their development partners, share best practices and lessons learned, and identify obstacles and constraints encountered and actions and initiatives needed to overcome them, as well as new challenges and emerging issues.

(b) To reaffirm the global commitment to address the special needs of the least developed countries made at the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and to further strengthen the global partnership for development for least developed countries in all priority areas of the Istanbul Programme of Action in order to ensure the timely, effective and full implementation of the Programme of Action during the remainder of the Decade, while taking into account the post-2015 development agenda as it relates to least developed countries.

The Office of the High Representative has been designated as the focal point, with the responsibility to ensure that the preparations are carried out effectively and efficiently and to mobilize and coordinate the active involvement of the organizations of the United Nations system.

The comprehensive high-level midterm review and its preparatory process shall be open to participation by all States Members of the United Nations or States members of specialized agencies and observers in the General Assembly. All stakeholders of the IPoA should be able to participate in the process.

The comprehensive midterm review will be held for three days in June 2016, consisting of opening and closing plenary meetings and four additional plenary meetings, as well as four parallel thematic round-table meetings. It shall be held at the highest possible political level and result in an intergovernmentally negotiated and agreed outcome in the form of a political declaration. In addition to the mandated activities, it is also foreseen to provide the opportunity to organise side events during the midterm review, which would highlight specific aspects of the IPoA.

The Secretary-General has been invited to convene a United Nations system high-level event during the comprehensive high-level midterm review with a view to ensuring the full mobilization of the United Nations system in support of the least developed countries and the coordinated and timely implementation by the United Nations system of the Istanbul Programme of Action and the outcome of the review.

A private sector forum on investment opportunities in least developed countries is also foreseen during the MTR, with support and participation of relevant representatives of Member States and the private sector.

The critical importance of the full and effective participation of the least developed countries in the comprehensive high-level midterm review at the national, regional and global levels has been highlighted. It has also been stressed that adequate resources should be provided, and in this regard requests the Secretary-General to mobilize extrabudgetary resources in order to cover the cost of participation of two government representatives from each least developed country in the review and the preparatory meeting of experts.

IV. Preparatory process

The preparatory process should be organized in a broad-based participatory manner. In order to ensure that governments, organizations and agencies of the UN system have a sense of ownership of the preparatory process and outcome of the conference and consequently commit to implement it, efforts will be made to involve all relevant stakeholders, in their respective areas of competence and comparative advantage in the preparatory process from the very beginning.

As was the case for the Fourth UN Conference the mid-term review is expected to attract priority attention of the international community and broad participation. The preparation for and organization of the MTR is a major intergovernmental undertaking for the UN. Its success will depend on the active and well-coordinated involvement of all parts of the United Nations within their respective mandates and expertise.

The comprehensive midterm review would provide the international community with an opportunity to undertake a comprehensive appraisal of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action during the first five years of its implementation. The comprehensive appraisal is expected to shed light on key accomplishments and critical constraints in delivering the goals of the current programme, and suggest new strategies to address the gaps identified at national, regional and global levels.

Special emphasis should be given to progress towards meeting the graduation criteria and challenges related to graduation and smooth transition. Reaching the ambitious goal of half of the LDCs meeting the graduation criteria by 2020 will entail structural socio-economic transformation in countries that have been lagging behind in the implementation of the MDGs, ensuring sustained and rapid economic growth and overcoming vulnerabilities. Graduation represents the achievement of a major milestone for LDCs' development, as it means not only poverty reduction but also structural transformation, sustainable development and resilience building.

Another focus of the midterm review should be the progress made, lessons learned and challenges encountered with respect to enhancing productive capacity, which is the first priority area of the IPoA.

The preparatory process of the midterm review will also be linked to the ongoing intergovernmental consultations on the Post-2015 development agenda, the Third Financing for Development Conference and the UNFCCC COP 21 in Paris.

It is expected that concrete initiatives targeted at reaching the goals and targets of the IPoA will be launched during the midterm review.

Country level preparations

The country level preparations will build on the existing country review processes to avoid duplication and ensure United Nations system coordination at the country level. As a critical input for the comprehensive high-level midterm review broad-based and inclusive country-level preparations shall be undertaken by all LDCs with a view to assess progress, obstacles, constraints, actions and measures necessary to further the implementation of the Istanbul Programme.

To assist in the preparation of national reports, the General Assembly requested the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, in her capacity as Chair of the United Nations Development Group, to ensure full involvement of the Resident Coordinator system and country teams in LDCs in the preparation for high-level midterm review, including in the preparation of national reports.

Regional preparations

The regional preparations will bring the regional perspectives into the review process. The regional process should build on country experiences with the aim of identifying

regional constraints, challenges and policy priorities, including the role and contribution of regional institutions and actors. The regional reviews will also provide an effective forum to review the contribution of regional trading arrangements and the role of regional economic communities in fostering a better integration of the LDCs in the global economy.

Given their responsibility for regional integration and regional cooperation, as well as for support towards the sustainable development of countries of the region and the unique mandate for analytical, normative and operational activities the Economic Commission for Africa (for the least developed countries in Africa plus Haiti) and the Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific (for the least developed countries in Asia and the Pacific plus Yemen), will play a lead role in the preparation and organization of the regional review meetings with the overall coordination and guidance of the UN-OHRLLS. The Economic Commission for Western Asia and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean are also invited to contribute to the midterm review.

The regional review meetings should be organized in the first half 2015 in the context of the annual session of the commission sessions of UNECA and UNESCAP where Haiti and Yemen will join respectively as was the case for the preparatory process of the Istanbul Conference.

Global preparatory process

The President of the General Assembly has been requested to organize a four-day preparatory meeting of experts, at which consultations about the draft outcome document will be held. Co-facilitators are to be appointed by the President of the General Assembly and will oversee and direct informal intergovernmental consultations on all issues relating to the midterm review. They have been requested to present a draft outcome document in the form of a political declaration, no later than March 2016 and in advance of the preparatory meeting of experts, prepared on the basis of inputs from the national and regional preparatory meetings, the report of the Secretary-General and other inputs, including those from Member States.

The Secretary-General has been requested to submit a comprehensive report, by the first quarter of 2016, on the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action.

The President of the General Assembly has been requested to organize, early in 2016, a one-day special thematic event, with the participation of Member States, non-governmental organizations, civil society, the private sector and academic institutions, to provide input to the comprehensive high-level midterm review.

Furthermore the Economic and Social Council has been invited to consider the issue of the comprehensive high-level midterm review as part of its coordination and management meetings in 2016.

Participation of the UN system in the preparatory process

The success of the preparatory process will depend on the active and well-coordinated involvement of all parts of the United Nations within their respective mandate and expertise as the scope of the substantive agenda and magnitude of the organizational aspects of the midterm review are beyond any given entity of the United Nations.

The organs, organizations, funds and programmes of the United Nations system are requested to undertake sectoral appraisals in their respective fields of competence on the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action, with special emphasis on areas where implementation has remained insufficient, and to make proposals for new measures as necessary, as further inputs to the preparation for the comprehensive high-level midterm review.

Well-focused pre-conference events will be organized by UN system and other international organizations within their respective mandate, for which the aforementioned sectoral appraisals will be critical inputs. These pre-conference events will provide expertise to facilitate intergovernmental preparations and raise the profile of the process and emphasize the challenges confronted by LDCs. The main stakeholders of the IPoA including Member States, parliamentarians, non-governmental organizations, civil society, the private sector and academic institutions should be included in these events as appropriate. The list of pre-conference events and substantive contributions by the UN system and other international organizations will be prepared by OHRLLS in consultation with the relevant organizations and will be considered at the inter-agency consultative group meetings.

The existing Inter-Agency Consultative Group on the IPoA implementation should be used as the main coordination and consultation mechanism for the preparation and organization of the midterm review. Inter-agency consultative group meetings should be convened on a regular basis with a view to consult on, coordinate and review the conceptual, substantive and organizational aspects of the preparatory process and of the Conference as well as the contributions of the UN system and other international organizations.



Comprehensive high-level midterm review and preparatory processes

National reviews - Jan. 15 - Dec. 2015

National reviews on the implementation of IPoA (progress, obstacles, constraints, actions and measures)	LDCs will undertake the review in close collaboration with OHRRLLS, and with the support of the RCs and UN country teams	UN system undertakes sectoral appraisals of the IPoA
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Two regional-level preparatory meetings - 2015

Economic Commission for Africa (+Haiti) Review	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (+Yemen) Review	Outcomes of the regional-level preparatory meetings should be considered in the global review
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One-day special thematic event - February 2016 (TBC)

Member States	NGO	Civil society	Private sector	Academic institutions
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Draft outcome document by the co-facilitators - March 2016

Preparatory meeting of experts - March 2016

New York	4 days each	Will consider the draft outcome document
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Consideration of the issue of the midterm review by ECOSOC - April 2016

Comprehensive high-level midterm review - June 2016

Private Sector Forum on Investment In LDCs	Antalya (Turkey), 3 days, at the highest possible political level Opening and closing and four plenary meetings (total 6) Four parallel thematic round-table meetings	UN system high-level event of the SG
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Pre-conference events organized by the UN-system

Side events organized by the UN system