HUMAN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, AND GOOD GOVERNANCE AT ALL LEVELS

HIGH-LEVEL ROUNDTABLE 3
IPoA Priority Areas E and H
28 May 2016, 15.00—18.00, Room Atlantic

“Least developed countries’ greatest assets are their women, men and children, whose potential as both agents and beneficiaries of development must be fully realized.”

Istanbul Programme of Action

BACKGROUND

As the midpoint of the decade-long Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) for LDCs draws near, a comprehensive high-level midterm review of its implementation will be held in May 2016, in Antalya, Turkey. Participation will be open to all stakeholders of the IPoA, and include four roundtables focusing on identifying concrete suggestions to further strengthen the global partnership for development for LDCs in all priority areas of the IPOA in order to ensure its timely, effective and full implementation during the remainder of the decade, while taking into account synergy and coherence of the Istanbul Program of Action with global processes including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

CONTEXT

The High-Level Roundtable on “Human and Social Development, and Good Governance at All Levels” is a unique opportunity to commit to accelerating action towards implementation of:

- **Priority Area E of the IPoA:** Human and Social Development
- **Priority Area H of the IPoA:** Good Governance at All Levels
LDCs’ greatest assets are their women, men and children, whose potential as both agents and beneficiaries of development must be fully realized. Least developed countries face serious economic, human and social development challenges. The LDCs will continue to face the significant burden of poverty in coming years unless concrete steps are taken to tackle its root causes in a sustainable way, including by building productive and human capacity.

Poverty and hunger are multidimensional problems that pose serious constraints to LDCs’ efforts to make progress in human and social development owing to inability to access essential services such as education, health, water and sanitation and to access productive resources to participate in social, economic and political life and benefit from economic growth.

The IPoA set several targets and goals for human and social development, in the areas of education and training, population and primary health, youth development, shelter, access to water and sanitation, gender equality and empowerment of women, and social protection. LDCs have experienced mixed progress across these areas.

Achieving universal primary education remains a distant goal, with more than 21 million children of primary age not attending school in 2013. The rate of enrollment in secondary education in LDCs remains low (42%) compared to other developing countries (71%).

The demographic path of many LDCs increases pressure on their education systems. The cohort of children aged 5 to 14 has substantially increased in many of the countries, which complicates the provision of adequate education services in a context of limited resources, especially in rural areas, where the cost of providing education services is higher. High pupil-to-teacher ratios, poor infrastructure, inadequate training of teachers and deficiencies in equipment are contributing to underperformance.

Maternal mortality continues to be substantially higher in LDCs than in other developing countries, despite progress in the last five years. It is estimated that the number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births was 382 for these countries in 2015, a decrease of 17 per cent since 2010. Resources for family planning in LDCs are also limited.

Youth gaps in unemployment are persistent in LDCs. Young people and women were the groups most affected by the rise in unemployment in the wake of the global economic and financial crisis. The difficulty of generating sufficient employment opportunities, moreover, is compounded by the demographic trend in the LDCs, with a large number of young people entering the labour force every year.

In 2014, 69 per cent of the population of LDCs lived in rural areas, slightly down from 70 per cent in 2011. Internal migration from rural to urban areas has resulted in exponential growth of their urban populations. Lack of public services and adequate urban infrastructure and the limited capacity of the public sector to respond to an increasing urban population have resulted in a high share of slum dwellers in inadequate shelter, often unsafe and overcrowded, and the lack of adequate basic services and access to water or sanitation increase the vulnerability of already vulnerable populations to the impact of disasters.

Since 2011, 16 million people in LDCs have gained access to an improved source for drinking water, an increase of 2.9 per cent. Nevertheless, 32.8 per cent of the population had no access in 2014. In rural areas, 40 per cent of the population lacked access to an improved source of drinking water versus 16 per cent in urban areas. Access to healthy sanitation facilities is still very limited in LDCs. In 2014, 63.7 per cent of the population did not have access to improved sanitation facilities.
The ratio of girls to boys enrolled at the primary level in LDCs was 0.94 in 2013, almost achieving gender parity in primary education for the LDCs as a whole. Disparities are larger in secondary education, although some countries display significant progress, and the gender gap for tertiary education also remains very wide. The representation of women in parliament has consistently increased over the last 10 years, with 19.23 per cent of seats of parliament in LDCs held by women in 2015, an increase of 1.43 per cent since 2011.

Social protection in LDCs is essential to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality and increase the resilience of vulnerable groups. Although most of these countries have developed some form of social protection programme, coverage tends to be very limited. As a result, the majority of the extreme poor do not have comprehensive social protection. Underemployment and precarious employment constitute a serious challenge for LDCs, with over a third of their total employed population living in extreme poverty. In 2013, the employment-to-population ratio was 65 per cent, although 10 countries had ratios lower than 50 per cent.

Looking forward, more focus on skills development, support for income generating activities especially for the rural population, easier access to finance and enabling environment for entrepreneurship will help LDCs reap the benefits from the population dividend. On the contrary, lack of progress in these areas will fuel alienation, conflict and irregular migration, and continued unemployment and underemployment among youth, women and marginalised populations. A renewed commitment is needed to enhancing support for social inclusion policies and inclusive growth in LDCs.

PRIORITY AREA H: GOOD GOVERNANCE AT ALL LEVELS

Good governance and the rule of law at the local, national and international levels are essential for sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth, sustainable development and the eradication of poverty and hunger. They are also essential for the achievement of the commitments embodied in the IPoA, which included the following goals and targets:

- Strengthen good governance, the rule of law, human rights, gender equality and empowerment of women, and democratic participation, including by enhancing the role of parliaments;
- Strengthen and effectively implement measures to prevent corruption and to increase transparency of budgets and expenditure;
- Enhance the institutional capacity of least developed countries to ensure good governance;
- Ensure that resources to least developed countries are provided and used in a predictable, transparent and timely manner;
- Provide continued support for strengthened and effective voice and participation of least developed countries in relevant international forums;
- Build durable peace and ensure stability, security and sustainable and inclusive development in least developed countries.
The commitment to the fight against corruption increased significantly, with 42 LDCs being parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, as it has been ratified by five additional LDCs and five others acceded between 2011 and 2015. Since 2010, 12 additional LDCs have been considered compliant with the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, increasing the total to 14. In addition, 6 LDCs became candidate countries between 2011 and 2014. Compliant countries make information on revenue data from extractive industries publicly available. Nevertheless, corruption remains a challenge in a number of LDCs.

Greater ownership and leadership of LDCs is indispensable, including the integration of the Programme of Action into national development strategies, plans and programmes, and identification of authorities to oversee implementation, as well as multi-stakeholder engagement by parliamentarians, civil society organizations, the private sector, and executive branches.

E-government can help to address many of the challenges LDCs are facing, including providing greater access to public services, by enhancing disaster risk reduction and enabling greater government efficiency and transparency to ensure more effective use of limited resources. However, the LDCs score lowest on the e-government development index, with an average of 0.21 in 2014 as compared with 0.41 for lower middle-income countries. The low score results in part from the lack of information and communications technology infrastructure. However, while all LDCs have some basic e-governance in place, they are making little or no progress in moving to the more advanced stages of e-government development, including the provision of e-services, e-participation and open government data.
The objective of this High-Level Roundtable is to bring together global leaders to address these challenges, identify concrete suggestions and secure firm commitments to achieve the IPoA and its Priority Areas E and H.

In particular, the roundtable will seek concrete suggestions and commitments from leaders on questions such as:

🌟 How can LDCs fully tap their immense human resource potential, given that a large majority of people are still unskilled, unemployed or underemployed, and a large proportion of women are either outside the workforce or perform work that is not accounted for?

🌟 What can be done to deliver quality education — including vocational education — and learning opportunities to all, as well as providing women and young people with entrepreneurship development skills and access to start-up finance? Which strategies can be employed to increase labour productivity, technology and innovation, infrastructure development, sustainable access to energy, and private sector development with a focus on small and medium-sized enterprises?

🌟 How can LDCs strengthen transparency, accountability and the rule of law at the national level, and what can be done to make the governance of global financial, economic and trade institutions and other global rule-making bodies more inclusive of LDCs and more responsive to their concerns and aspirations?

🌟 How can coherence and synergy between the IPoA and other recently agreed global frameworks, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, be ensured?

In answering these questions, leaders at the roundtable are expected to share best practices and lessons learned and offer ideas and commitments which operationalize the IPoA and ensure investments leading to improved educational and health outcomes, increased opportunities for youth and women, improved access to water and sanitation, and higher quality shelter and social protection in LDCs.

The High-Level Roundtable at the Midterm Review is also an opportunity to gain political momentum and commitment from leaders on promoting human and social empowerment worldwide. This event will provide a platform to make success visible, showcase best practices and identify the key principles and variables for successful acceleration of human and social development.