



World's poorest countries make progress but face new challenges to sustainable development and call for strong global partnerships

Press Release

New York, 13 September 2016 – The world's 48 Least Developed Countries (LDCs) have experienced some positive developments, yet challenges remain with new risks and uncertainties threatening development gains, according to a report launched at the United Nations in New York today.

State of Least Developed Countries 2016, by the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS), highlights how progress towards graduation from the LDC category has accelerated with 10 LDCs currently in the graduation process. Despite this, challenges to the sustainable development of LDCs persist, with new and increasing risks and uncertainties threatening development gains, including volatile commodity prices, major natural disasters, including an earthquake in Nepal, cyclones in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Tuvalu, climate change impacts and health epidemics such as the Ebola outbreak in West Africa with associated ongoing economic consequences.

The report analyses coherence and synergies within the Sustainable Development Goals, stressing commonalities between the Istanbul Programme of Action for Least Developed countries (IPoA) and Agenda 2030 and calling for an integrated approach to collective implementation. *State of the Least Developed Countries 2016* emphasises that the majority of the LDCs have not met most of the targets laid out in the IPoA despite an acceleration of effort over the past five years.

Positive developments are apparent in mobile cellular subscriptions, which have almost doubled and access to clean water which increased from 60 per cent in 2005 to 68 per cent in 2014. LDCs have made substantial progress in child mortality and gender parity in primary education. Despite hard won gains, progress towards meeting the goals and targets of the IPoA continues to see mixed results.

"It is vital that the international community collectively enhances partnerships to accelerate progress towards the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals." Said Gyan Chandra Acharya, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Least Developed countries, Landlocked Developing countries and Small Island Developing States. "Least Developed countries offer a valuable human and natural resource potential to the world, we must collectively step up our support for these countries to meet their full potential and ensure a bright future for generations to come, only then can we ensure that we leave no one behind."

The report highlights that development partners need to urgently fulfil their commitment to provide the equivalent of 0.15 - 0.2 per cent of their GNI as ODA to LDCs and possibly increase Overseas Development Assistance. It calls for the early operationalization of a Technology Bank for LDCs. It is expected that the Technology Bank will help countries to strengthen their national Science, Technology and Innovation and IT capacities and enhance access to technology in order to bring about rapid and transformative change in the lives of the people in LDCs. Similarly the report calls for stronger national leadership and good governance in order to consolidate further progress in these countries.

The *State of the Least Developed Countries 2016* is launched shortly after the Midterm Review of the Istanbul Programme of Action in Antalya, Turkey, which stressed that measures at both the national and international levels need to be enhanced to mitigate and manage risks in the LDCs. The report also recommends the establishment of a dedicated mechanism for crisis mitigation and urges the international community to continue lending full support to overcome the recurrent and devastating vulnerabilities of the LDCs. Furthermore, the report places emphasis on stronger national mechanisms to ensure coherence and synergy between the Sustainable Development Goals and IPoA in the LDCs and international support for coherent implementation monitoring and follow up at all levels.

Least Developed Countries represent the poorest segment of the international community. They comprise more than 880 million people (about 12 per cent of world's population), but account for less than 2 percent of the world's GDP and about 1 percent of global trade in goods. The LDC category was officially established in 1971 by the UN General Assembly with a view to attracting special international support for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of the UN family. Since then only 4 countries have graduated from the category. However, recent progress with respect to economic and social indicators in a number of countries around the world has enabled more LDCs to reach the thresholds for graduation.

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State of the Least Developed Countries 2016 can be found on the UN-OHRLLS website at the following address: unohrlls.org/state-least-developed-countries-report-2016/

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