

Accelerating the Implementation of the IPoA within the Context of the 2030 Agenda: A Focus on Broadband Connectivity

Background

In May 2011, the global community adopted the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA)¹, to be implemented by 2020. The main objective of the IPoA is to ***overcome the structural challenges faced by the least developed countries (LDCs)*** in order to eradicate poverty, achieve internationally agreed development goals and enable graduation from the LDC category.

Half way through the implementation of the IPoA, the majority of LDCs are growing at less than 7 per cent per annum, the target set in the IPoA (and also incorporated in SDG 8). The number of LDCs that grew at 7 per cent or more has been showing a declining trend. In 2014, only eight grew at 7 per cent or more, down from 14 and 16 in 2011 and 2012, respectively. The percentage of LDC exports in total world exports accounted for roughly 1.1 per cent of world's exports in 2014, which is well below the targets of the IPoA and SDGs of 2 per cent.

These results are largely due to weak structural transformation. For example, the share of manufacturing in GDP has been around 11 percent since 2001, compared to over 20 per cent in developing countries. In addition, the level of investment as measured by gross capital formation has improved only slightly, from 23.2 per cent in the decade prior to the IPoA to 25.1 per cent between 2011 and 2014.

While many LDCs made progress in improving access to internet and mobile telephone, the access level is still very low, on average. Broadband penetration in LDCs is much lower, relative to developing countries and abysmally low when compared with developed countries. In 2016, the percentage of fixed and mobile broadband subscriptions in LDCs represented only 0.8 per cent and 19.4 per cent, respectively. On the other hand, in developed countries, fixed and mobile broadband subscriptions were about 30.1 and 90.3 per cent, respectively.

Investing in broadband can lead to among others: employment creation in sectors that are likely to be using ICT in transformative way, such as finance, education and healthcare; increased innovation and productivity; and, better governance. Therefore, investing in broadband would contribute towards meeting some of the IPoA priorities (*e.g. IPoA, paragraph 47.1.c*) and SDG 9.c. that calls for significantly increasing access to information and communications technology and providing universal and affordable access to the Internet in LDCs by 2020.

For targets such as that of halving poverty, which was achieved globally, progress in LDCs was slow. Most LDCs also did not meet the IPoA targets of human and social development, which were closely related to the MDGs, despite acceleration of efforts over the past 5 years.

Ultimately, many of the IPoA targets are not on track after half of its implementation period has passed. There is need to step-up implementation as well as strengthen the monitoring process, if the IPoA objectives are to be achieved by 2020.

¹ The IPoA has eight priorities broken down in a number of goals, targets and actions

Accelerating implementation of the IPoA within the context of the 2030 agenda

The global community adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015. The new global development agenda has a special focus on LDCs and other vulnerable countries. It has incorporated many of the goals and targets of the IPOA. Examples include; ending poverty in all its forms everywhere; ensuring access to energy for all; increasing investment in rural infrastructure, agricultural research and extension services; doubling the LDCs' share of global exports by 2020; ensuring universal access to free education; reducing infant, under-five and maternal mortality; building the resilience of poor and vulnerable people to various shocks; and, a call for developed countries to fully implement their ODA commitments to LDCs (see the State of Least Developed Countries 2016 Report²).

There were also some IPoA areas that were not fully incorporated in the 2030 Agenda. They include: broadening of LDCs' economic base, with the intention of reducing commodity dependence; diversifying export products and markets to non-traditional destinations; building and expanding broadband connectivity, e-networking and e-connectivity in relevant areas.

In general, the mapping exercise conducted in the State of the LDCs 2016 report determined that implementing the IPoA priorities will significantly contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. Therefore, in order to overcome the structural challenges faced in LDCs, building coherence and synergy in the implementation and follow-up of the IPoA in the context of the 2030 Agenda will be crucial. This may entail the following: mapping interrelationship between the IPoA priority areas and the SDGs; ensuring that they are integrated in sectoral and national plans; allocating/ increasing resource allocations to meet the objectives and; ensuring efficient follow-up and monitoring.

Objectives and expected outcomes of the meeting

The rationale of the regional meeting is twofold:

- **First**, share country-experiences on how LDCs are integrating the global development agendas such as SDGs, Climate change agreement and Sendai framework into their national strategic planning processes. Among others, countries will highlight success examples and challenges faced while integrating and implementing the various global agendas. Countries will also discuss on-going strategies for accelerating implementation of the IPoA.

The discussions in this segment will draw upon and contribute to existing knowledge on mainstreaming and integration of global development agendas into national development planning processes.

- **Second**, participants will discuss how LDCs can leverage investment in broadband to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development. The discussion will be

² <http://unohrlls.org/custom-content/uploads/2016/08/State-of-LDCs2016.pdf>

Concept Note

informed by initial findings of case studies on broadband conducted in two African LDCs (Rwanda and Senegal).

The outcome of this segment of the meeting will contribute to the discussion on one of the SDGs to be reviewed by the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2017³. Among others, the 2017 HLPF, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, will conduct an in-depth review of SDG 9 on building resilient infrastructure and promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization. Furthermore, the broadband discussions will contribute to the financing for development follow-up, specifically the annual discussions on infrastructure.

Participation

The meeting will draw participation from the following:

- All African LDCs will be invited, with funding made available for two representatives from the capital (one from an entity spearheading implementation of the global agendas and the second participant from the ministry in charge of telecommunication)
- Development partners
- Representatives of the United Nations and other relevant international organizations
- The private sector

Format of the meeting, venue and dates

The format of the meeting will be interactive in nature. The expectation is that participants will share their experiences, best practices and lessons learned. The meeting will be conducted in English and French.

The regional meeting will be held over two days in Senegal from 28 February to 01 March 2017.

³ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/oceans/index.php?menu=1556>