



## **Regional Consultation of Asian LDC Civil Society Organisations for Synergy and Coherence of the IPoA and SDGs**

**6 and 7 December, 2017**

**Bangkok, Thailand**

### **Background**

Eight<sup>1</sup> out of 47 Least Developed Countries are situated in the Asian region. The LDCs in this region have been making some notable progress towards meeting the criteria for graduation. It is encouraging to note that at its latest triennial review in 2015, the Committee for Development Policy (CDP) found that Nepal and Bhutan met the criteria for graduation for the first time. However LDCs in this region face serious structural challenges related to their low levels of development of productive capacities and vulnerability to external shocks arising from volatile commodity prices, climate change and natural disasters.

The Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 or the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) was adopted to address the special needs of the LDCs. It aims to overcome the structural challenges of LDCs by building human and productive capacities, and enabling graduation from the LDC category. The Mid-Review of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA), which took place in May 2016, reviewed progress made on the path to sustainable development as set out in the IPoA for the LDCs. Challenges and opportunities were discussed and recommendations for the next five years of implementation were made. LDC Watch simultaneously held the Civil Society Forum on the occasion of the Mid-Term Review where the civil society representatives from the LDCs gathered to discuss the developmental issues that plague the LDCs. The Civil Society Forum culminated with the adoption of the Civil Society Declaration.

The eight LDCs in the Asian region can be further divided into two categories: (a) LDCs that are not landlocked developing countries (Bangladesh, Cambodia, Myanmar and Yemen) and (b) LDCs that are Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) (Afghanistan, Bhutan, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Nepal). The LLDC LDCs face special challenges associated with the lack of direct territorial access to the sea, remoteness and isolation from the world market. The Vienna Programme of Action recommends that the unique and particular vulnerabilities of the LLDCs be addressed through unique and inclusive solutions.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development focuses on all dimensions of sustainable development with a special focus on LDCs as the most vulnerable countries. It also focuses on equality under the headline "Leaving no one behind", which implies giving priority to the LDCs. Both the IPoA and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under the 2030 Agenda are complementary and share the common objectives of enabling LDCs to overcome their current high poverty and making their development sustainable. On one hand, the 2030 Agenda takes a more comprehensive approach to the issues including, inter alia, poverty, inequality and climate change, which are also of special importance

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<sup>1</sup> Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Nepal and Yemen



to LDCs. On the other hand, IPoA provides concrete guidance to LDCs on how to achieve the SDGs. Hence, it is of utmost importance for the least developed countries and the development partners to identify the coherence among the priority areas of the IPoA and the SDGs and work together to take advantage of the synergy to march towards sustainable development.

Although the IPoA aims at graduating half of the LDCs by 2020, the graduation of LDCs has been a very slow process. Over the span of 45 years since the introduction of LDC category by the United Nations, only five nations have graduated till date, out of which only one, the Maldives, is from Asia. The high level of economic vulnerability casts doubt on the ability of the LDCs in Asia to sustain their development gains in the long run. By identifying the overlaps between the actions in IPoA and SDGs, the LDCs could make progress towards achieving the latter by pursuing actions in the IPoA.

### **About the Consultation**

Against this background, LDC Watch is organising a Regional Consultation of Civil Society Organizations of Asian LDCs. The consultation aims to assess the implementation of the IPoA in Asian LDCs and discuss its synergy and coherence with the SDGs while working towards achieving poverty reduction and sustainable development. It will focus in the key issues mentioned below. Ultimately it aims to foster a constructive discussion on the best way forward from the CSOs' perspective.

### **Key Issues:**

1. Poverty, Conflict and Development
2. Climate Change Adaptation and International Support
3. Food Security and Food Sovereignty
4. Trade, Technology Transfer and International Cooperation

Based on the above-mentioned key issues, the participants will discuss and some will make country presentations vis-à-vis development plans and processes in Asian LDCs. Participants will make an assessment of the IPoA implementation through thematic sessions and strategize a follow-up mechanism to the overall international development commitments towards promoting poverty reduction and sustainable development in Asian LDCs.

LDC Watch envisages the strengthening of the existing network of LDC civil society which will further engage in regional and international processes to advance the issues and concerns of the LDCs in the global development agenda.

### **Participants**

The consultation will aspire to bring together various progressive experts and CSO representatives with organic links to various grassroots movements striving for change from different parts of LDCs in Asia. The resource persons would be drawn from various sectors of expertise, academics, members of civil society organizations and partner organizations included.



### Brief Programme Schedule

<b>Day 1</b>	
Welcome by LDC Watch	
Keynote Speech by United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)	
Theme 1:	Poverty, Conflicts and Development
Theme 2:	Trade and International Cooperation
<b>Day 2</b>	
Theme 3:	Climate Change Adaptation and International Support
Theme 4:	Food Security and Food Sovereignty
Adoption of CSOs' Declaration	