CONCEPT NOTE
AFRICA REGIONAL REVIEW
MEETING IN PREPARATION FOR THE FIFTH UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES (UNLDC-V)

11 - 13 MARCH 2020
BINGU INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE
MALAWI

WITH THE GENEROUS FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY AND THE STATE OF QATAR
**Background**

The Istanbul Programme of Action for LDCs for the decade 2011-2020 (IPoA) is coming to an end. The General Assembly, in its resolutions 73/242 and 74/232, decided to convene the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (UNLDC-V), at the highest possible level, including Heads of State and Government, in Doha, Qatar, from 21 to 25 March 2021.

At the UNLDC-V Conference, the international community is expected to:

- Undertake a comprehensive appraisal of IPoA implementation
- Identify effective international and domestic policies, new emerging challenges and opportunities, best practices, and means to address them
- Reaffirm global commitment to address LDCs' special needs
- Mobilize additional international support measures and action
- Formulate and adopt a renewed partnership between LDCs and their development partners.

The Conference will be preceded by broad-based and inclusive substantive preparations at national, regional and global level. Two regional preparatory meetings are being planned in early 2020 in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The General Assembly designated the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) to lead the preparations for UNLDC-V.

In line with the mandate above, UN-OHRLLS and ECA, jointly with the Government of the Republic of Malawi, will organize the Africa Regional Review meeting in preparation for UNLDC-V, also including Haiti, in Lilongwe, Malawi, from 11 to 13 March 2020.

The Africa Regional Review meeting is important as a venue for reviewing the implementation of the IPoA in the region, as 33 out of 47 LDCs are located in Africa. They face multiple challenges in achieving the goals and targets of the IPoA, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as Agenda 2063. Their structural constraints are compounded by new and emerging challenges, including those posed by ongoing conflict, climate change and their devastating impacts.
The African Experience of Progress Against the Goals of the Istanbul Programme of Action

African LDCs have been making progress in implementing the IPOA priority areas, albeit from very low baselines and with large variations across the 33 countries. Productive capacity remains very low among them. Manufacturing and agricultural value added has not significantly increased during the current Programme of Action, and although progress is being made on human development indicators, it is slow. Despite the importance of trade in promoting growth, the share of exports from the African LDCs (and Haiti) in world trade remains at about 0.6 per cent (2018). On the positive side, diversification has been improving with the export concentration index among those countries reached 0.36 in 2017, declining from higher levels of concentration from 0.65 in 2008.

Both man-made and natural crises remain prevalent among African LDCs and Haiti and risk derailing progress. High poverty rates, inequality, civil strife and political instability are widespread. A high rate of urbanization among African LDCs makes cities and urban centres increasingly vulnerable to the impact of disasters. In response, many African countries are adopting and implementing national disaster strategies. Without strong and purposeful governance that aspires towards sustainable development, economic and social outcomes in the African LDCs (and Haiti) will remain weak. Equatorial Guinea graduated out of the LDC category in 2017, while Angola and Sao Tome e Principe will graduate in 2021 and 2024 respectively. In 2018, eleven African LDCs met the graduation threshold for one LDC criterion; however, it is unclear whether these or other African LDCs will be able to qualify for graduation over the next decade. Efforts to embark on sustainable economic growth, building human assets, diversifying their economies and resilience building must continue.

[See forthcoming report on the Progress in the implementation of the priority areas of the Istanbul Programme of Action, prepared by the ECA secretariat (2020). National review reports on the IPOA implementation are available at http://unohrrls.org/ipoa-country-reports/]
Objective of the African Regional Review

The main objective of the Africa Regional Review meeting is to assess the structural challenges and emerging issues faced by African LDCs and Haiti in pursuing sustainable development. The meeting will provide a platform for peer exchange and learning, and for all stakeholders to gain insight and agree on concrete, targeted and effective cooperative actions and recommendations that will assist these countries to overcome structural challenges, effectively compete in global and regional markets and accelerate sustainable development progress over the next decade. The meeting will also provide space for discussion of the current support provided to the LDCs by the international community and generate ideas for its improvement.

The outcome of the Africa Regional Review meeting will be a ministerial declaration negotiated by the African LDCs and Haiti. The outcome is expected to outline the need for, and the expected components of, a renewed partnership for development between the LDCs and their development partners. The Africa Regional Review Outcome Document will be endorsed at the ECA Conference of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, which is scheduled for 18 to 24 March 2020 in Addis Ababa. This outcome document will also serve as an important background document for the Inter-Governmental Preparatory Committee Meetings for the UNLDC-V to be held in New York from 27-30 July 2020 and 11-15 January 2021.

Format and Participation

The three-day meeting will consist of interactive panel discussions featuring the participation of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development from LDCs, representatives from partner countries, as well as development practitioners from international and regional organisations, the private sector, academia and civil society.

The programme and other information about the Africa Regional Review will be posted on the UN-OHRLLS website at http://unohrlls.org/unldc-v/