



# Concept Note

## 9th Ministerial Conference of the Least Developed Countries

Vienna International Centre, Vienna, Austria / 25-26 November

**The Next Decade of Action: Accelerating ISID in LDCs**

## Background and Context

The Least Developed Countries' (LDCs) category was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1971 and refers today to 46 countries that are diverse in their economic, social and political structures but facing structural challenges and constraints. These halt their productive capacities and make them particularly vulnerable to external shocks. Macroeconomic instabilities, the volatility of the private sector, the narrow production and export bases hinder trade integration, technological advances and job creation, and inhibit economic self-resilience. These challenges and constraints, together with weak institutional and infrastructural capacities, widespread poverty, rising capital outflows and low investments into research and development (R&D), slow the progress of the LDCs on their path to graduation.

The LDCs' vulnerability is exacerbated by global challenges such as the climate crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, putting the last decade of development progress at risk of sliding back. The continuing non-negligible negative impacts of COVID-19 on the global economy are highlighting the urgency to support the industrial development of the most vulnerable, promote sustainable livelihoods and job creation and expand fiscal space and social protection.

The Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) for LDCs for the decade 2011-2020 defined eight priority areas of action that have guided UNIDO's operational strategy in supporting the graduation of the LDCs for the last ten years. The UN resolution 73/242, follow-up to the 4<sup>th</sup> UN Conference on the LDCs which took place in May 2011, calls upon the UN system and the Bretton Woods institutions to contribute actively to the preparatory process of the 5<sup>th</sup> United Nations Conference on the LDCs (UN LDC5), to be held in Doha, Qatar, from 23 to 27 January 2022, and provide support for its successful organization. In response to this call, the preparatory process towards the Conference has defined the priority elements of the Doha Programme of Action 2022-2031 (DPoA) to be adopted during UN LDC5.

Under this landscape, UNIDO has contributed through several initiatives to the formulation of the next Programme of Action (PoA) on LDCs 2022-2031 and its further implementation, through its mandate to promote inclusive and sustainable industrial development (ISID). This year's Conference is building from exchanges on

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the best practices and lessons learned held at the 8<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference of the LDCs in 2019 in Abu Dhabi, as the first global pre-event to the UN LDC5. The GC.18/Res.8 contained in the Abu Dhabi Ministerial Conference for the LDCs invites all development partners to ensure joint action through reinforced partnership frameworks such as the Programme for Country Partnership (PCP) to address the needs of the LDCs and identify lessons learned and good practices in the context of the evaluation of the IPoA and with a view to the adoption of the DPoA.

The 9<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference is drawing from the LDCs country reports build through the national level processes and the two regional review meetings, i.e. African and Haiti Regional Review and Asia and Pacific Regional Review. At the global level, the two Intergovernmental Preparatory Committees (Prepcom 1 and 2) brought together all major stakeholders to agree on elements and priorities of the Doha Programme. The 9<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference representing the last global pre-event towards the UN LDC5 concludes the preparatory process at the global level with a Ministerial Declaration for the LDCs, as an outcome document serving the successful implementation of the Doha Conference.

The Ministerial Conference will be held immediately prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> session of the UNIDO General Conference, taking place from 29 November to 3 December 2021 under the theme “Building a Better Future”. The Ministerial Declaration, to be adopted at the Conference, will pre-validate the policy orientations contained in UNIDO’s position paper serving the development of the next UNIDO Operational Strategy and Implementation Plan for the LDCs 2022-2031. The Declaration will serve to mainstream the six priority areas of the DPoA, to be adopted at the UN LDC5, namely: I. Investing in people in LDCs: Eradicating poverty and building capacity to leave no one behind, II. Leveraging the power of science, technology, and innovation to fight against multidimensional vulnerabilities and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, III. Structural transformation as a driver of prosperity, IV. Enhancing international trade of least developed countries and regional integration, V. Addressing climate change, recovering from COVID-19 pandemic, and building resilience against future shocks, and VI. Mobilizing international solidarity, reinvigorated global partnerships and innovative tools for risk-informed sustainable development.

## Organizing Institutions

The UNIDO Ministerial Conferences of the LDCs have been held bi-annually in cooperation with the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) since 2007, paving the way for the UNIDO General Conference, and have now reached the 9<sup>th</sup> edition. The leading role of UN-OHRLLS in serving the vulnerable Member States of the United Nations and in supporting the graduation of the LDCs will promote strong political outcomes stemming from the Ministerial Conference, to address and serve the needs and priorities of LDCs in the next decade and beyond.

The event is also co-organized for the first time together with the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), considering the eve of the entry into force of the ambitious Post-Cotonou Partnership Agreement that marks a step towards a new era of relations between States in the European Union, Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP). The Agreement aims to strengthen the capacity of the EU and ACP countries to jointly address global challenges related to human development, inclusive sustainable economic development and growth, climate change, gender equality and more. The contribution of OACPS will strengthen existing and open new important areas of technical cooperation in such a pivotal moment.

## Conference Working Theme

This year's event focuses on the next decade of action in the LDCs, under the overarching theme: "The Next Decade of Action: Accelerating ISID in LDCs". In line with the six priority areas defined by the Doha Programme, the Conference will serve as a global platform to foster high-level discussions to address the challenges faced by the LDCs in the next decade. The Conference's theme is particularly relevant in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crisis, for its core focus on enablers for resilience, corridors and facilitators for the graduation of the LDCs, to build back better. Gender equality, the empowerment of women and youth, climate change and COVID-19 will be cross-cutting themes addressed throughout the Conference. The relevance of UNIDO's mandate of promoting inclusive and sustainable industrial development (ISID) will be highlighted as an effective means to address the structural challenges and constraints faced by LDCs.

## Objectives

- Review the progress made by the LDCs in the implementation of the IPoA, exchange experiences on the challenges faced and ways to overcome them through innovative approaches;
- Discuss policy orientations guiding UNIDO interventions in the next decade of action, as formulated in UNIDO's position paper, to mainstream DPoA into UNIDO's work programme and align with the cooperation strategies of donor countries and emerging economies;
- Promote resource mobilization to implement and support the UNIDO Operational Strategy and Implementation Plan for the LDCs 2022-2031;
- Enable partnership building and resource mobilization to achieve UNIDO's ISID mandate in the LDCs and leave no one behind;
- Discuss the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on LDCs and identify recommendations to develop mitigation measures;
- Encourage discussions on ways to promote gender mainstreaming and the role of women in industrialization within the next PoA, in line with SDG5;
- Improve awareness and knowledge to address specific needs and priorities of LDCs.

## Expected Outcomes

- Adopt a Ministerial Declaration, in line with the six priority areas of the Doha Programme stemming from UN LDC5;
- Pre-validate UNIDO's policy orientations adopted via the Ministerial Declaration for the LDCs, containing a position paper serving the development of the next UNIDO Operational Strategy and Implementation Plan for the LDCs 2022-2031;
- Reinforce the political commitments at a ministerial level with ISID as a driver of prosperity to support the sustainable graduation of the LDCs;
- Build result-oriented and innovative global and regional partnerships via the organization of global fora and meetings with the DG and co-organizers to accelerate the implementation of SDG9 and the graduation process of the LDCs;
- Promote high-level exchanges on policy best practices to overcome challenges associated with the graduation process and achieve sustainable goals in priority areas.

## Format

Given the restrictions and challenges posed by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the event will be held in a hybrid format, with in-person participation of LDCs Ministers, chair and vice-chair, speakers, panellists, and will be moderated at the Vienna international Center (VIC), with virtual participation to the entire event and all side events. The Conference will be held over two days, containing also two high-level Ministerial interactive sessions focused on unpacking DPoA priorities to address the needs of LDCs, and accelerating ISID in LDCs in the next decade of action. The Conference will also include informal debates with the LDCs on the draft Ministerial Declaration and will also feature side events organized by UNIDO Departments and relevant stakeholders and partners in line with the priorities of the Doha Programme of Action.

The working languages of the meeting will be English and French and interpretation will be provided.

## Expected Participants

The Conference will bring together representatives from the LDCs at the ministerial level, high-level government representatives from UNIDO Member States and donors, the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), public and private sector representatives, UN entities, high-level speakers and panellists, NGOs.