



LDC5
5TH UNITED NATIONS
CONFERENCE ON THE
LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

Asia-Pacific Regional Review Meeting on the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action in Preparation for the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (UNLDC-5)

Special session on harnessing science, technology and innovation to support structural transformation and LDC graduation

Geneva, Switzerland

1 September 2021 – 13:30 – 14:30 CET (TBC)

Background

The Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) had set a target of at least half of the Least Developed Countries should qualify for graduation. Since LDC-IV, only three LDCs have graduated, (Equatorial Guinea, Samoa and Vanuatu), while seven other LDCs (Angola, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nepal, Sao Tome and Principe, Solomon Islands) have met the criteria to graduate until 2026. LDCs face a significant number of challenges that concern their economic structure. Consequently, LDCs need to structurally transform their economies, which involves accelerating capital accumulation, knowledge development, technology acquisition, and employment creation. The job market issue, which includes low-skilled labor, is critical while addressing gender balance, particularly expanding higher-value-addition and competitiveness in high-productivity services, like ICTs, and financial services. In addition, LDCs must maintain and develop their productive capacities, which are critical enablers for development and graduation, and reduce the dependence on exports of a few and primarily raw commodities. Structural transformation is a central part of the economic development and enhancement of LDCs' productive capacity and Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) policies play a crucial role in promoting inclusive development and the achievement of the SDGs.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the progress of the LDCs towards inclusive and sustainable development has partly reversed the development gains in poverty eradication and education, shedding light on growing inequalities within and amongst developed, developing and least developed countries. The disruption of the traditional model of economic activities and a shift towards digitalized activities and online platforms such as eLearning and eCommerce emphasized the critical role of technology in facilitating progress and development. COVID-19 pandemic amplified the need to deploy technology in markets and the importance of addressing and closing the digital and technological divide especially in LDCs. Targeted interventions required by LDCs must include but not be limited to supporting the transfer of technology and building domestic technological capabilities to enable LDCs to reap the benefits of technologies for achieving SDGs, including through identifying, accessing, and adapting modern technologies, sharing technological know-how, and developing requisite technological infrastructure and logistics.



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Special event: *Harnessing science, technology and innovation to support structural transformation and LDC graduation*

Objective: Science, technology and innovation (STI) play a crucial role in promoting inclusive development and the achievement of the SDGs. Advances in STI policies offer exponential opportunities in accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Building back better to respond to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and future pandemics will require LDCs to structurally transform their economies, build productive capacities, and develop STI policies that promote investment in STI and bridge the digital divide among countries.

The side-event will address critical issues for LDCs to structurally transform and pursue graduation through science, technology and innovation. The ministerial round table will focus on STI policy formulation, the discussants will address specific implementation approaches to be followed by an interactive discussion.

Structure

This special session be organized as a High-level Roundtable where senior officials will present efforts to harness science, technology and innovation to build productive capacities and support inclusive and sustainable development.

Outcomes

The High-Level Roundtable will provide an opportunity to gain political momentum from leaders on science, technology and innovation towards sustainable development and graduation of LDCs. This event will provide a platform to showcase best practices and identify the key priorities, principles and approaches for LDCs to structurally transform their economies, build productive capacities, and develop STI policies that promote investment in STI towards graduation. It will highlight the role that the private sector and the UN can have in building productive capacities and harnessing science, technology and innovation.

Where: CR Tempus 1 – UNOG and Online (link to be provided)

When: 1 September 2021 – 13:30 – 14:30 CET (TBC)

Programme

Moderator: Moshe KAO (TBC)

High-Level Roundtable

The objective of this High-Level Roundtable is to bring together global leaders from Bangladesh and Cambodia and the UN to highlight challenges, and identify concrete suggestions on how governments, the private sector and multilateral organisations can enable the LDCs to harness science, technology and innovation to achieve structural transformation and graduate.

Speakers:

- **Mr. Joshua Setipa**, Managing Director, UN Technology Bank for Least Developed Countries (UNTBLD)
 - o *How can the various stakeholders accelerate digital connectivity of the LDCs?*
 - o *What can be done to promote technology transfer and sustainable structural transformation through science, technology and innovation?*
- **Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana**, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) (tbc)
 - o *How can the UN and governments promote STI policies to build technological capabilities in LDCs and support inclusive development?*
- **Ms. Isabelle Durant** Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (tbc)
 - o *What can development partners do to enhance investment in science, technology and innovation to enhance productive capacities for all LDCs?*
- **H.E. Kitti Settha Pandita Cham Prasih**, Senior Minister of Industry, Science, Technology and Innovation, Cambodia (tbc)
 - o *How can least developed countries like Cambodia harness STI to support national development goals and their graduation?*
 - o *How can investments in STI help address the major challenges facing the LDCs and sustain inclusive and sustainable development?*
- **Ms. Tina JABEEN** - Managing Director and CEO Of Startup Bangladesh Limited (tbc)
 - o *What are the opportunities for digital transformation to enable private sector development and accelerating entrepreneurship especially among women and youth?*
 - o *What role can venture capital and impact investment play in accelerating the digital transformation of tech start-up and entrepreneurs in LDCs?*

Interactive discussion