



Statement of the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the UN in Geneva
at **UNCTAD – 73rd Trade and Development Board**
**Item 8 – UNCTAD contribution to the implementation of the Doha Programme of
Action**
for the Least Developed Countries
Geneva, 14 September 2026

Ms. President,

The Delegation of the Holy See would like to thank UNCTAD for providing an update on its contribution to the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action (DPoA) for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

As Pope Leo XIV affirms that “Looking beyond the data — which is sometimes ‘interpreted’ to convince us that the situation of the poor is not so serious — the overall reality is quite evident: ‘Some economic rules have proved effective for growth, but not for integral human development. Wealth has increased, but together with inequality, with the result that ‘new forms of poverty are emerging.’ The claim that the modern world has reduced poverty is made by measuring poverty with criteria from the past that do not correspond to present-day realities.”¹

Currently, LDCs account for half of the global population living in multidimensional poverty, despite representing less than one-fifth of the total population.² The situation is further compounded by the burden of debt, with the nominal value reaching \$774 billion in 2024.³ Behind these figures lie the lives of over 550 million people, whose inherent, God-given dignity is too often called into question and disregarded.

Furthermore, it is concerning that LDCs have suffered almost 70 percent of all global food emergencies in the past 15 years.⁴ This reality cannot be considered in isolation from a world in which an increasing amount of resources are devoted to military expenditure. Indeed, conflicts are a major driver of food insecurity.⁵ Meanwhile, as military expenditure continues to grow, Official Development Assistance (ODA) has fallen by over 25 percent to \$23.5 billion in 2025.⁶ In other words, conflicts are more

¹ Pope Leo XIV, Apostolic Exhortation “Dilexi Te”, 13.

² Cfr. United Nations Committee for Development Policy, Issue Brief No. 6, “Multidimensional poverty in LDCs: levels, patterns and progress”, April 2026.

³ Cfr. TD/B/73/4, par. 3.

⁴ Cfr. A/79/540, Report of the UN Secretary General, “Food insecurity in the least developed countries.”

⁵ Cfr. Ibidem.

⁶ Cfr. TD/B/73/4, par. 33.

readily “fed” than people are nourished.⁷ This reveals a fundamental imbalance in political and moral priorities. In this context, this Delegation encourages UNCTAD to continue strengthening its contribution to addressing the structural causes of food insecurity in LDCs, including through trade and development policies that put people at their core.

Ms. President,

Even when development efforts are successful, challenges remain. As such, LDCs require enhanced and targeted support towards and beyond graduation, so that the transition to a new status becomes a strength also in tackling new challenges. In this regard, this Delegation underscores the importance of a dedicated UNCTAD graduation support programme for LDCs, to ensure they receive timely support throughout the graduation process and beyond.⁸

Thank you, Ms. President.

⁷ Cfr. Pope Leo XIV, Address to the Executive Board of the UN World Food Programme, 22 June 2026.

⁸ Cfr. UNCTAD XVI Ministerial Conference, “The Geneva Consensus Shaping the future: Driving economic transformation for equitable, inclusive and sustainable development”, 80.71.