



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

26 January, 2016

Excellency,

I have the honour to refer to my letter dated 15 December 2015 inviting you and your delegation to participate in the special thematic event on "Building Synergy and Coherence in the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) in the context of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda", on 11 February, 2016, in the Trusteeship Council Chamber at the UN Headquarters in New York.

The one-day event will provide an opportunity for Member States and stakeholders to reflect and to exchange views on the implementation of the IPoA by LDCs and their development partners; share best practices and lessons learned; identify obstacles and constraints encountered and actions and initiatives needed to overcome them, as well as discuss new challenges and emerging issues in addressing the special needs of the LDCs in eradicating poverty and implementing sustainable development. This will, in turn, serve as input to the Comprehensive High-level Mid-term Review of the IPoA that is scheduled to take place in Antalya, Turkey in May of this year.

Representatives from Member and Observer States, the United Nations System, civil society, the private sector, and academia are invited to participate in the special thematic event.

Attached for, your information, is a copy of the Concept Note and a copy of the tentative Programme.

I look forward to an interactive and dynamic discussion at the special thematic event.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mogens Lykketoft', written in a cursive style.

Mogens Lykketoft

All Permanent Representatives
and Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

CONCEPT NOTE
Special Thematic Event
“Building Synergy and Coherence in the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”
New York, 11 February 2016

I. Introduction and Background

The Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) for the Decade 2011-2020 provides a comprehensive framework for the sustainable development of LDCs. Effective and timely realization of the eight priority areas of the Programme of Action would generate a far-reaching transformation of the socio-economic fabric of LDCs and have a game-changing impact on the lives of millions in these countries. It should ideally help half of the LDCs reach the graduation benchmark in a sustainable manner, which is the primary objective of the IPoA.

Despite considerable efforts, the recent development trajectory of LDCs indicates a relatively slow pace of economic diversification, compounded by marked volatility and fragility of their growth performance. The deceleration of economic growth or prolonged slow growth in many least developed countries was the offshoot of a confluence of national, regional and global factors. The economic rebound, underway in many least developed countries since the financial crisis, is slowing down.

Narrow production and export bases, growing environmental and climate change-related challenges, multiple health emergencies, devastating natural disasters, widespread poverty, hunger, institutional and capacity constraints are some of the structural impediments for LDCs. These are compounded by insufficient external support and greater exposure to external shocks, which has serious implications for their ability to fight against poverty and hunger.

The year 2015 was seminal in the chronicles of the United Nations. Member States have constructed a new global development compact that captures all dimensions of sustainable development with a special focus on the most vulnerable countries. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in September 2015, provides a broad and integrated development framework for the next 15 years. The new development agenda recognizes LDCs as the most vulnerable countries of the world. The challenges and priorities of LDCs are firmly embodied in the basic architecture of the 2030 Agenda.

Other important Agreements of 2015, namely the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA), the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, recognize LDCs as the most vulnerable group of countries and contain specific measures to fortify their capacity in achieving the sustainable development goals. Taken together, these new global Agreements provide the structure within which international support for LDCs could be strengthened and scaled up, in order to ensure that this group of countries, not only achieves the objectives and goals of the IPoA in a timely manner, but also that they are not left behind in the realization of the 2030 Agenda.

Member States have decided to hold a comprehensive high-level mid-term review of the implementation of the IPoA in Antalya, Turkey in 27-29 May 2016. The mid-term review will undertake an assessment of the status of implementation of the IPoA by LDCs and their development partners; share best practices and lessons learned; identify obstacles and constraints encountered, and actions and initiatives needed to overcome them, as well as new challenges and emerging issues. The review will also reaffirm the global commitment to address the special needs of LDCs made at the Fourth United Nations Conference on LDCs. It will, additionally, further strengthen the global partnership for the development of LDCs in all priority areas of the IPoA, in order to ensure the timely, effective and full implementation of the Programme of Action during the remainder of the decade, while building synergies with the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.

The UN General Assembly resolution 69/231 articulated the organizational structure of the mid-term review. As per the resolution, a number of preparatory processes will culminate in an inter-governmentally negotiated and agreed outcome in the form of a political declaration. As part of the preparatory process, the General Assembly has requested the President of the General Assembly to organize, early in 2016, a one-day special thematic event, with the participation of Member States, non-governmental organizations, civil society, the private sector and academic institutions, in order to provide input to the midterm review.

II. Objective

The primary objective of the special thematic event is to build common ground on how the implementation of the IPoA can be enhanced during the remainder of the decade by building synergies and coherence in the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda. The event also aims to discuss how to strengthen global partnerships for sustainable development with a view to ensuring full implementation of the IPoA during the remainder of the decade. This shall hopefully realize the ambitious objective of enabling half of the LDCs to attain the graduation threshold. Participants will be invited to make specific expressions of support to LDCs.

III. Format

The one-day special thematic event will consist of an opening plenary session, two interactive panel discussions and a closing plenary session. The panel discussions will be composed of presentations by renowned experts, government representatives from LDCs, partner countries and the development practitioners to be followed by an interactive dialogue among all meeting participants, including representatives of the Member States, institutional stakeholders, civil society and the private sector.

The Opening Session (10:00am-10:30 am)

The opening session of the High-level thematic debate will include statements by the President of the General Assembly and the UN Secretary-General, as well as two high-level, keynote speakers – one from LDCs and the other one from development partners.

Panel 1 (10:30 am -1:00 pm)

The theme of the first interactive session will be **“Building synergy and coherence in national and international policies for implementation and follow-up of the Istanbul Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”**

The Ministerial Declaration of the LDCs¹ underlined that since the second half of the Istanbul Programme of Action implementation period coincides with the first five years of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; there should be strong synergy and coherence between the implementation of the two processes. The goal is to speedily realize the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will require an integrated and coordinated approach and collective actions at all levels, with the overarching imperative of leaving no one behind. National governments, institutions and organizations will need to mainstream all development agendas in their strategic approach, development policies, strategies and programmes, as appropriate, taking into account national priorities. Thus, the review of the implementation of the IPoA can provide input to the review of the 2030 Agenda by the High-level Political Forum.

Some guiding questions for the panel discussion are as follows:

1. How to build synergy and coherence in effectively mainstreaming the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda into development strategies of LDCs and the development cooperation policies and actions of their development partners, including international organizations?
2. What kind of policy measures and institutional arrangements should LDCs consider in order to ensure accelerated progress towards the achievement of the SDGs?
3. What are the measures that development partners and international organizations should adopt to scale up support and facilitate the realization of the IPoA and the 2030 Agenda by LDCs?
4. How should the UN system, especially the UN country teams, extend necessary support to the LDCs in building synergy and coherence at the country level?

¹ A/C.2/70/2

Panel 2 (3:00 - 5:30 pm)

The theme of the second interactive session will be “**Forging Strengthened Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships for timely implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.**”

In both the IPoA and the 2030 Agenda, as well as in AAAA, Member States have acknowledged the imperative for a revitalized global partnership in support of implementation of all the goals and targets, bringing together governments, civil society, the private sector, the United Nations system and other actors, and mobilizing all available resources while working in a spirit of solidarity.

This revitalized global partnership is essential to deliver the means of implementation through: strengthening of domestic public resources, domestic and international private business and finance; international development cooperation; international trade as an engine for development; debt relief and debt sustainability; science, technology, innovation; and capacity building, including for data collection. It also needs to address systemic issues, and monitoring and follow-up.

The Ministerial Declaration of the LDCs² urged that the midterm review should launch concrete and specific global initiatives and provide strong impetus to the realization of the existing initiatives, building on the decisions contained in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

Some guiding questions for the panel discussion are as follows:

1. How can we ensure mobilization of adequate resources and that the public and private sources of finance, at the national level, reinforce and complement each other to foster the effective implementation of the IPoA and the 2030 Agenda?
2. How can the proposed measures and initiatives for LDCs, such as scaled-up ODA, technology bank, investment promotion regimes, crisis mitigation and resilience building and global infrastructure forum contribute to the realization of the IPoA and SDGs?
3. What concerted actions are needed, at the global level, to ensure continued and adequate external financial flows, including export earnings, development assistance, investment flows and remittances to LDCs in times of external economic crisis?
4. How to harness the growing potential of South-South cooperation for LDCs development and how to make best use of other sources of finance, including innovative financing for LDCs?

The Closing Session (5:30-6:00pm)

The closing session of the special thematic event will include presentation of the summary of the discussions by the USG and High Representative of the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDs and closing remarks by the President of the 70th Session of the General Assembly.

² A/C.2/70/2

IV. Participation

Member States will be invited to participate in the thematic meeting. Representatives of UN agencies and entities, international financial institutions, regional development banks, the private sector, civil society and other stakeholders will also be invited to attend at the highest level possible.

V. Outcome

The outcome will be a President's summary, which will be circulated to all Member States and stakeholders.

Tentative Program
Special Thematic Event
**"Building Synergy and Coherence in the implementation of the Istanbul Plan of Action in
the context of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda"**
New York, 11 February 2015

Opening session (10.00 – 10.30 am)

Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, President of the 70th Session of the General Assembly
Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya, Under Secretary-General and High Representative, OHRLLS

Keynote Address:

H.E. Mr. Md. Shahriar Alam, MP, State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh
Mr. Erik Solheim, Chair of Development Assistance Committee/OECD

**Panel I: "Building synergy and coherence in national and international policies for
implementation and follow-up of the Istanbul Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda
for Sustainable Development" (10.30 am – 1.00 pm)**

Moderator: H.E. Mr. Jean-Francois Zinsou, Permanent Representative of Benin to the United Nations/co-facilitator of the MTR

Speakers:

- Mr. David Nabarro, Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- H.E. Mr. Macharia Kamau, Permanent Representative of Kenya to the UN/co-chair of the OWG-SDGs and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda
- Ms. Helen Clark, Administrator of the UNDP (*tbc*)
- Mr. Finn Tarp, Director, UNU-WIDER, Helsinki
- Mr. Gauri Pradhan, International Coordinator, LDCs Watch

**Panel-II: "Forging strengthened multi-stakeholder partnerships for timely
implementation of the IPoA and the 2030 Agenda" (3.00 pm - 5.30 pm)**

Moderator: H.E. Ms. Bénédicte Frankinet, Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations/co-facilitator of the MTR

Speakers:

- Mr. Mahmoud Mohieldin, Corporate Secretary and President's Special Envoy, World Bank (*tbc*)
- Ms. Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, Professor of International Affairs, The New School, New York
- Mr. Chandra Prashad Dhakal, Chairman of the Global IME Bank Ltd., Nepal
- Ms. Judith Karl, Executive Secretary, UN Capital Development Fund
- Mr. Leonard Wantchekon, Professor, Department of Politics, Princeton University
- Mr. Patrick Guillaumont, FERDI

Closing session (5.30 pm – 6.00 pm)

Under Secretary-General and High Representative, OHRLLS
President of the General Assembly