

Preface from the Chair

The publication, titled *Achieving the Istanbul Programme of Action by 2020: Tracking Progress, Accelerating Transformations*, is the second instalment of the *LDC IV Monitor* for tracking progress on implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA). It is a set of scholarly papers that addresses the multidimensional outlook for LDCs and analyses their progress on different development criteria before the midterm review of the IPoA in May 2016.

The context

The *LDC IV Monitor* independently evaluates the IPoA, which was the outcome document of the Fourth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (UN LDC IV), held in May 2011. This partnership of seven think tanks and academic institutions is aimed at expediting the delivery of the IPoA for the LDCs and bringing issues of critical concern and interest to LDCs to the forefront.

The IPoA, adopted at UN LDC IV in 2011, was endorsed by the UN General Assembly. Through Resolution 69/231 of 19 December 2014, the General Assembly announced, *inter alia*, its decision to organise a comprehensive and three-day high-level midterm review of implementation of the IPoA in mid-2016, and accepted the offer of the government of Turkey to host the event.

In the run-up to the midterm review, the *LDC IV Monitor* has not only prepared this volume, but also organised meetings on critical issues that have provided valuable inputs into it. Together, the meetings and the volume have been an integral part of the initiative's efforts to support the preparation process of the midterm review, through generating credible inputs into it. The Commonwealth Secretariat and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Centre, two partners of the initiative, have organised two expert group meetings, in Johannesburg (25 June 2015) and Paris (29 February 2016), respectively. More recently, the UN Foundation hosted a roundtable in New York (7 April 2016), which disseminated key findings of the *LDC IV Monitor*.

Against this backdrop, this present publication aims to feed into discussions at the midterm review. Earlier contributions by the *LDC IV Monitor* have included a set of unique documents: a volume on Analytical Perspectives and a Synthesis Report. Prepared with critical and in-depth analyses on the status of IPoA implementation and the feasibility of the LDCs meeting these targets, the documents aimed to enhance transparency and accountability as well as to shine a light on efficiency in the implementation of the IPoA.

The volume on Analytical Perspectives addressed a range of issues, including articulation of a composite IPoA index, building productive capacity, enhancing

trade in goods and services, delivery of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), flows of different forms of development finance and consequences of climate change. The Synthesis Report captured the broad messages and key recommendations of the Analytical Perspectives. Now the second instalment of the *LDC IV Monitor* aims to give insight on the progress of IPoA implementation up to the midterm review and the associated opportunities and challenges for the LDCs for the next five years before the IPoA deadline in 2020.

The content

The LDC category, established by the UN in 1971, comprises states recognised as the most vulnerable and disadvantaged around the world. The LDCs are characterised as being susceptible to great risks and challenges and a failure to overcome poverty. The group consists of 48 countries—the number of LDCs having doubled from its original 24. Only Botswana (1994), Cape Verde (2007), Maldives (2011) and Samoa (2014) have managed to graduate from LDC status.

The IPoA is the successor of the Brussels Programme of Action (BPoA), which was unfortunately characterised by weak monitoring of implementation and strategy. The IPoA, in contrast, urges an effective monitoring process and wider scope for involvement for stakeholders in the process.

Apart from the IPoA, LDCs are suitably prioritised in the recently adopted Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, which has many synergies with the IPoA. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Agenda 2030 could help realign the significance of mitigating risks and obstacles facing the LDCs, at the level of national development and that of development partners.

The upcoming high-level midterm review of the IPoA, which is to be held in Antalya, Turkey, will take stock of the actions taken by the LDCs and their development partners. It will provide opportunities to share best practices and lessons learnt, and help identify, *inter alia*, challenges, constraints and mitigation actions, as well as emerging issues and challenges ahead for the LDCs.

The volume highlights recent critical achievements and missed opportunities for the LDCs in the backdrop of the adverse global economic environment and inadequate delivery of global commitments. More specifically, it sheds light on the following issues: structural transformation and export diversification in the LDCs; prospects of graduation of countries from the LDC group; implications of the 2030 Agenda in view of LDC concerns; and new challenges facing LDCs in pursuit of achievement of the SDGs.

This publication of the *LDC IV Monitor* aims to enhance the transparency and accountability of IPoA implementation at national and international levels. Such enhancement will hopefully entail integration of national and international efforts and ownership of the IPoA. It is expected that the key messages derived from this study will aid in constructing strategic and effective measures to progress on IPoA implementation in the next five years. With these aspirations, the seven partner organisations of the *LDC IV Monitor* expect that all engaged stakeholders in LDCs and their development partners will recognise the intentions, ambitions and value of the partnership.

Acknowledgments

As mentioned earlier, the second volume of *LDC IV Monitor* is an outcome of collective endeavour of a large number of individuals and institutions. Sincere thanks go to the seven partner organisations of the *LDC IV Monitor*: Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM), Istanbul; Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Dhaka; Commonwealth Secretariat, London; Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF), Dar es Salaam; Fondation pour les Études et Recherches sur le Développement International (FERDI), Clermont-Ferrand; International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD), Geneva; and OECD Development Centre, Paris for their support and participation.

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In connection with preparation of the volume, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the OECD Development Centre are particularly recognised for organising two expert group meetings; the UN Foundation is also appreciated for hosting a roundtable, where some of the findings of the *LDC IV Monitor* were discussed.

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