

## Foreword by Kamalesh Sharma, Commonwealth Secretary-General

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It is most fitting that the Commonwealth Secretariat should undertake the publication of this report monitoring progress on the 2011–2020 Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) for the least developed countries (LDCs). Development, together with democracy and respect for diversity, is one of the three pillars on which Commonwealth member countries collectively work to build economic and social resilience, to overcome vulnerability, and to advance more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable growth and prosperity.

Since 1971 the United Nations has recognised as LDCs those states deemed most highly disadvantaged in the development process, and as facing the greatest risk of failing to overcome poverty. Special UN conferences have been convened every ten years since 1981, the fourth of which, LDC IV, took place in Istanbul in 2011.

The Commonwealth Secretariat and seven other organisations came together as the *LDC IV Monitor* to undertake objective assessments of the implementation of the IPoA. This initiative benefits immensely from the collaboration that is possible when vision for the global good is shared, and diverse expertise is pooled.

The composition of the *LDC IV Monitor* makes it a truly global endeavour, able to make a significant contribution towards enhancing transparency and accountability in relation to the implementation of the IPoA. This strengthens ownership of the process, both by individual LDCs, and by development partners.

A major objective of the LDC IV IPoA is that by 2020 the number of countries categorised as LDCs should be halved from 48 to 24. This first report of the *LDC IV Monitor* provides comprehensive assessments of the progress being made. It sets benchmarks, and tracks progress against specific quantitative and qualitative indicators. This enables a constructive evaluation of IPoA implementation to be made.

The current discourse towards finalising the post-2015 global development framework makes this a most opportune moment for this report to be issued. Our hope is that by presenting an evidence-based and policy-oriented assessment of delivery on IPoA objectives it can be of real value to all stakeholders, and contribute to greater synergy between implementation of the IPoA and the post-MDG international development partnership.