



Inter-Parliamentary Union  
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# 143rd IPU Assembly

Madrid, Spain  
26-30 November 2021

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IPU  
Assembly  
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Executive Committee  
Item 15

EX/286-2/15-P.1  
12 November 2021

## Other business

### Parliamentary Message

to the 5th United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC5)

*As part of its mission to provide a parliamentary perspective to major United Nations negotiations and decision-making processes, the IPU has managed the official “parliamentary track” to the 5th United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC5) that will be held in Doha, Qatar from 23 to 27 January 2022.*

*The “track” includes engaging parliamentarians in the regional and global level consultations leading up to the UN conference, organizing a Parliamentary Forum at the conference proper, and providing a Parliamentary Message on key priorities for the LDCs. The Parliamentary Message draws from agreed positions of the IPU over the years adjusted to the particular circumstances of the least developed countries. It was reviewed by a core group of MPs with a strong record of engagement in development issues.*

*At its session at the 143rd IPU Assembly, the Governing Council will be invited to endorse the following Parliamentary Message to the LDC5 Conference. A draft of the message has been shared with the IPU Executive Committee for observations and endorsement.*

We, the parliamentarians participating in the 143rd IPU Assembly, welcome the convening of the 5th United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in Doha, Qatar, on 23-27 January 2022. We regard this high-level gathering as an opportunity to highlight the special situation of the LDCs and their population of over 900 million people.

In the ten years since the Istanbul Declaration and Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) the expectation that half of these countries would “graduate” outside the category has not been realized. Despite some progress in the group as a whole, only three countries have graduated, and four more are scheduled to graduate in the next two years. Progress has been uneven because of deep-rooted problems such as low human development, weak governance institutions, limited financial resources, unsustainable debt, limited access to technology, a large informal sector, over-reliance on the commodities sector, as well as conflict and political instability.

Today, half of all LDCs are classified as fragile and conflict-affected; and 50 per cent of the world's poorest people are located in this group. The LDCs are among the most behind in the global effort to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While there is a lot that LDCs can do on their own to move up the development ladder, they remain greatly limited by a global economic system that remains fundamentally stacked against them. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and attendant global economic crisis has led to further regression among LDCs with severe impacts on income and employment, food security, access to health, education and social safety nets. Inequitable access to vaccines worldwide is exacerbating the situation by slowing down global economic recovery, while exacting a heavy toll on health and socioeconomic development in LDCs.

Going forward, stronger coordinated action and political will are needed at both national and global levels to ensure that the LDCs regain the lost ground on their development trajectory. The LDCs need urgent support to recover from the pandemic and in the process prepare to respond effectively to future crises. The new 10-year Programme of Action that is to emerge from the Doha Conference in January 2022 must build upon the lessons learnt from the last decade to present an ambitious and coherent set of commitments to finally unlock the tremendous development potential of this group of countries and their people.

The LDCs need to become more self-sufficient and resilient to shocks. Key to this are efforts to diversify the economy so that it is no longer dependent on any one sector. To start with, this will require stronger international cooperation to provide the LDCs with enhanced policy space to put in place and implement pro-active industrial policies. Among other things, these policies should aim to nurture nascent enterprises in manufacturing, agriculture and service sectors in a variety of ways, including through more effective regulation of trade, foreign investments and capital movements. While developed countries need to lift many barriers that still reduce market access to LDCs products, the LDCs should seek to develop greater economic synergies by pursuing more trade and investment opportunities among themselves.

As aid remains a key source of development finance in most LDCs, both the quality and quantity of aid to the LDCs needs to improve dramatically in accordance with international commitments. In the long term, the LDCs need to end their over-reliance on aid by raising more of their own resources through taxation and by leveraging other forms of development finance. Unsustainable levels of debt, made worse by the current pandemic, need to be reduced through a combination of debt restructuring and debt cancellations involving both public and private creditors.

Other keyways of accelerating development in the LDCs are to improve access to digitalization and other modern technologies through technology transfers, as well as by strengthening domestic capacities for science, research and innovation. The LDCs need to invest more in their human capital by expanding access to education and health care, as well as in universal social protection programmes. The active promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, girls and youth in LDCs through greater access to decision making in all sectors will improve the quality of services, ensure equitable access and enhance the ability of these groups to contribute to social and economic development.

Climate change constitutes a major threat to the LDCs despite their minimal contribution to global emissions. Protecting the LDCs against the negative impacts of climate change will depend critically on the development and implementation of effective adaptation measures duly supported by the international community. It also requires a stronger move toward green economy practices that prioritize, among other things, renewable energy, ecosystem services, resource efficiency, the reduction of pollution and the preservation of biodiversity. All of this will require additional technical and financial assistance, as well as international support for capacity building. Developed countries' pledges to provide developing countries, including the LDCs, with adequate levels of climate finance need to be fulfilled as a matter of urgency.

In support of these efforts for sustainable development, the international community and the LDCs themselves need to strengthen the institutions of governance at all levels to ensure that they are responsive, effective, inclusive, transparent, and accountable. This will facilitate effective decision-making, resource mobilization and service delivery, as well as the implementation of more equitable policies. In the LDCs, as in most other countries, there is a need to rebuild people's trust in government as the guarantor of a social contract that works for all. This in turn will provide the conditions for greater political stability to sustain future progress. While governance is being strengthened at the national level, it also needs to be reformed at the global level by allowing greater representation and more voice for the LDCs in the international financial institutions and other relevant bodies.

Parliaments, through their representative, legislative, oversight and budgetary functions, can play a crucial role in strengthening governance all around and in improving coherence across economic, environmental and social policies. Key to making LDC parliaments more effective is the greater representation of women, who occupy only a quarter of all seats, as well as greater parliamentary engagement with civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders. Lacking sufficient capacities and political autonomy to fulfil their role, LDC parliaments need considerably more technical and financial assistance. The IPU must continue to contribute to this through the provision of institutional advice and guidance, as well as support in mobilizing resources for capacity building.

Going forward, all parliaments – in LDCs as in other countries – must play a stronger role in holding their governments accountable for the commitments they make in the emerging Doha Programme of Action. Addressing the special needs and vulnerabilities of the LDCs is not just a matter of basic justice and international solidarity; it is a necessary condition to global sustainable development and a better life for all people.