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FAO's Contribution to the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020

Executive Summary

The Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) (Istanbul, Turkey, May 2011) was convened with the purpose of reviewing the results of the Brussels Programme of Action (BPoA) for 2001-2010, and to develop and adopt new measures and strategies for the sustainable development of LDCs for the decade 2011-2020. This document presents an overview of the key sections of the new Programme of Action that are relevant to FAO's mandate and programme of work.

Suggested action by the Council

- Express support for the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) adopted at the Fourth UN Conference on LDCs in Istanbul in May 2011;
- Call on FAO to integrate and mainstream the relevant parts of the IPoA into the programme of work of the Organization, and continue to support LDCs in the implementation of the relevant sections of the Programme of Action.

I. Background

1. The Fourth UN Conference on LDCs was held in Istanbul (Turkey) from 9-13 May 2011. The purpose of the Conference was to:

- a) assess the results of the 10-year action plan of the LDCs adopted at the Third UN Conference on LDCs in Brussels (Belgium) in 2001; and
- b) adopt new measures and strategies for the sustainable development of the LDCs into the next decade (2011-2020).

2. In its assessment of the BPoA over the last decade (2001-2010), the Conference noted that while the BPoA had a positive role to play in the development process of the LDCs, its specific goals and action had not been fully achieved. The improved economic performance in some LDCs had had a

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limited impact on employment creation and poverty reduction. In many LDCs structural transformation was very limited, and vulnerability to external shocks had not been reduced.

3. FAO's programme of work and activities are based on the Strategic Framework 2010-2019, and the results of international conferences, particularly the 1996 World Food Summit and the 2002 World Food Summit: *five years later*. In view of this, the work programme for the Organization is already in harmony with the new LDC Programme of Action for the decade 2011-2020. The Organization supported the 2001-2010 BPoA for LDCs. The FAO Council, at its 123rd Session (28 October - 2 November 2002), expressed its strong support to the BPoA and called on FAO to "continue to participate – within the framework of its work programme – in the implementation of relevant sections of the Programme of Action."¹

4. The overarching goal of the new Programme of Action for the decade 2011-2020 is to overcome the structural challenges faced by LDCs to eradicate poverty, achieve internationally agreed development goals and enable them to graduate from this country category.

5. Guided by the overarching goal, national policies of LDCs and international support measures during the decade will focus on the following specific objectives with the aim of enabling half the number of LDCs to meet the criteria for graduation by 2020:

- achieve sustained, equitable and inclusive economic growth in LDCs of at least 7 percent per annum, by strengthening their productive capacity in all sectors through structural transformation and overcoming their marginalization through effective integration into the global economy, including through regional integration;
- build human capacities by fostering sustained, equitable and inclusive human and social development, gender equality and the empowerment of women;
- reduce the vulnerability of LDCs to economic, natural and environmental shocks and disasters, as well as climate change, and enhance their ability to meet these and other challenges through strengthening their resilience;
- ensure enhanced financial resources and their effective use for the development of LDCs, including through domestic resource mobilization, official development assistance (ODA), external debt relief, foreign direct investment and remittances;
- enhance good governance at all levels by: strengthening processes, institutions and the rule of law; increasing efficiency, coherence, transparency and participation; protecting and promoting human rights; reducing corruption; and strengthening the capacity of governments of LDCs to play an effective role in their economic and social development.

II. FAO's Contribution to the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020

6. The IPoA for the decade 2011-2020 represents enhanced commitments for the LDCs, which have the ownership of and primary responsibility for their own development, and their development partners, to a renewed and strengthened global partnership. This partnership also includes the UN system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, other multilateral institutions and regional development banks, within their respective mandates.

7. The IPoA invites the governing bodies of the UN funds and programmes, and other multilateral organizations to contribute to the implementation of the LDC Programme of Action and to integrate it into their work programmes, as appropriate and in accordance with their respective mandates. Both the UN General Assembly Resolution (A/RES/65/280) of 17 June 2011² and UN Economic and Social Council Resolution (E/2011/L.31) of 22 July 2011³ have endorsed the Programme of Action and have called upon all relevant stakeholders to commit to its implementation.

¹ CL 123/REP: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/005/Y8271e/Y8271e00.htm> (paragraph 11)

² http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/cdp/cdp_res_dec/ares65_280.pdf

³ <http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/docs/2011/res%202011.9.pdf>

8. As part of the preparatory process for the Fourth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries, FAO and the UN Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS), together with IFAD and WFP, convened a pre-Conference Event on the theme “*Enhancing Food Security through Agricultural Development and Access to Food and Nutrition*”, in December 2010 at UN Headquarters in New York. Subsequently, during the Conference in Istanbul in May 2011 FAO organized a Special Event on the theme “*Responsible Agricultural Investments in Least Developed Countries*”. In addition, FAO is participating in the Working Group on Agriculture, Food Security, Nutrition and Rural Development under the second priority area of the IPoA.

9. The IPoA is organized into eight priority areas, most of which are relevant to, and have implications for, FAO’s work programme, namely:

1) Productive capacity

- Strengthen programmes for promoting agro-processing industries with value addition as a means to increase agricultural productivity, raise rural incomes and foster stronger linkages between agriculture and industries.

2) Agriculture, food and nutritional security and rural development

- Promote strategic and regulatory frameworks for foreign direct investment and other resource flows in this sector, which include vital policy areas, such as infrastructure development, trade and trade facilitation, research and development, and transfer of technology;
- promote responsible international investment in agriculture and call for all investors to conduct agricultural practices in accordance with national legislation, taking into account national sovereignty over natural resources, environmental sustainability and the importance of promoting the well-being and improving the livelihood of the local communities and indigenous people, as appropriate;
- assist LDCs to further explore the feasibility, effectiveness and administrative modalities of a system of stockholding in dealing with humanitarian food emergencies, or as a means to limit price volatility;
- support policy options to reduce price volatility, including improved information systems for stocks and production, greater transparency in commodity markets, and free movement of food supplies;
- support the fulfilment in the Doha Development Agenda, of the 2005 pledge of members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) to ensure the parallel elimination in agriculture of all forms of export subsidies and disciplines on all export measures with equivalent effect to be completed by the end of 2013;
- strengthen institutions, including cooperatives, to boost small-holder farmer food production, agricultural productivity and sustainable agricultural practices;
- provide safety nets to poor small-holder farmers, supply critical inputs such as locally adapted high-yielding varieties of seeds, fertilizers and other services, rehabilitate both rural and agricultural infrastructure, reducing postharvest crop losses and improving village-level storage;
- make rural markets work better for the poor by linking small-scale farmers to markets throughout the food chains, including the provision of price and other relevant information, and improving sanitary and phytosanitary services;
- promote the empowerment of rural women as critical agents for enhancing agricultural and rural development, and food and nutritional security, and ensuring their equal access to productive resources, land, financing, technologies, training and markets;
- strive for a comprehensive twin-track approach to food security that consists of: (i) direct action to tackle immediately hunger in LDCs; and (ii) medium- and long-term sustainable agriculture, food security, nutrition and rural development policies and programmes to eliminate the root causes of hunger and poverty.

3) Trade

- Support the efforts of LDCs to strengthen their human, institutional and regulatory capacities in trade policy and trade negotiations;
- support the LDCs to address supply-side constraints by enhancing productive capacities and reducing constraints to the private sector, as well as building and diversifying their export base;
- support the efforts of LDCs in promoting subregional and regional cooperation, including export promotion, and improving regional connectivity through trade-facilitating measures such as joint projects on customs and border procedures;
- provide sound policy support to LDCs so they can resist protectionist tendencies and rectify trade-distorting measures, including in agriculture, that are inconsistent with multilateral obligations;
- assist LDCs to address non-tariff measures and reduce or eliminate arbitrary or unjustified non-tariff barriers, i.e. those not in conformity with WTO rules;
- support the development of standards and technical regulations in a transparent manner, and ensure that they are applied in a non-discriminatory manner, are technically justified and do not constitute a disguised restriction on international trade;
- support the timely implementation of duty-free quota-free market access, on a lasting basis, for all LDCs consistent with the Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration adopted by WTO in 2005;
- reaffirm the provision of special and differential treatment for LDCs in WTO agreements, and continue to provide technical and capacity building support for trade negotiations and trade policy development.

4) Commodities

- Support LDCs to establish and strengthen, as appropriate, national commodity management strategies to maximize the benefits derived from their resource base;
- support LDCs to adopt and strengthen, as appropriate, sector and commodity-specific policies, measures and strategies to enhance productivity and vertical diversification, ensure value addition and increase value retention;
- assist LDCs to better mitigate and manage the risks associated with the volatility of commodity prices without distorting market behaviour;
- support LDCs in strengthening effective marketing systems and support frameworks for commodity producers.

5) Human and social development

- Strengthen the role of relevant national mechanisms and scale up resources for gender equality and empowerment of women;
- support the improvement of the institutional, regulatory and policy environment in LDCs to promote private investment in the water and sanitation sector, including in small-scale projects in rural and remote communities;
- support LDCs to build the educational and skills capacity of youth, and achieve full and productive employment, and decent work especially in rural areas.

6) Multiple crises and other emerging challenges

- Support LDCs to develop and strengthen national risk mitigation strategies to reduce their vulnerabilities to economic shocks;
- support LDCs to set up national crisis resilience and mitigation facilities to reduce their vulnerabilities to economic shocks;
- mainstream policies dealing with climate change, biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of the ecosystem, including protection and sustainable management of forests through afforestation and prevention of deforestation and illegal logging, into

- national development policies and strategies, particularly those dealing with poverty eradication and economic sectors;
- develop and strengthen, as appropriate, risk mitigation strategies, and strengthen social protection policies and programmes that take account of natural disasters.

7) Mobilizing financial resources for development and capacity-building

- Identify priority areas for investment and assess domestic capacity, resources and the extent of international investment and support needed;
- continue taking measures to create conditions to attract and sustain investments, and mobilize domestic savings, both public and private;
- enhance the quality of aid by strengthening national ownership, alignment, harmonization, predictability, mutual accountability and transparency, and results-orientation, in line with the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action⁴.

8) Good governance at all levels

- Promote coherence across economic, social and environmental policies, and also promote the coherent use of resources to ensure an environment conducive to sustainable development;
- provide continued support for a strengthened and effective voice, and participation of LDCs in international dialogue and action on development, as well as in decision- and rule-making, and standard- and norm-setting in all areas affecting their development, including in relevant international fora;
- strengthen support for LDCs affected by conflict to address country-specific needs and situations, including broad-based, inclusive and rapid socio-economic development with a special focus on rebuilding national institutions and capacity, rebuilding critical infrastructure, and generating productive employment and decent work for all.

III. Conclusion und suggested action by the Council

10. The IPoA for the decade 2011-2020 is based on commitments, accountability and partnership between LDCs and their development partners to undertake concrete actions in a number of interlinked areas. This requires supportive and integrated policies across a wide range of economic, social and environmental issues consistent with the objectives of this Programme of Action.

11. With the support of development partners, under the IPoA, each LDC will translate policies and decisions in the Programme of Action into concrete measures by integrating this Programme of Action into the national and sectoral development strategies and plans.

12. The Council may wish to:

- Express its support to the IPoA adopted at the Fourth United Nations Conference on LDCs in Istanbul in May 2011;
- Call on FAO to integrate and mainstream the relevant parts of the IPoA into the programme of work of the Organization, and continue to support LDCs in the implementation of the relevant sections of the Programme of Action.

⁴ <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/41/34428351.pdf>