



Governing Body

312th Session, Geneva, November 2011

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Institutional Section

INS

SIXTEENTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Outcome of the Fourth United Nations Conference for the Least Developed Countries (Istanbul, May 2011): Request for the integration of the Istanbul Programme of Action into the work programme of the ILO

1. The Fourth United Nations Conference for the Least Developed Countries (LDC–IV) was held in Istanbul from 9 to 13 May 2011, with the aim of assessing the results of the ten-year action plan for the least developed countries (LDCs) adopted at the Third United Nations Conference on LDCs in Brussels in 2001,¹ and to adopt new measures and strategies for the sustainable development of the LDCs into the next decade.² The ILO was represented at the Conference by the Director-General and a team of experts.
2. The ILO made a distinctive contribution to the Conference in three main areas: a multi-agency technical cooperation project to promote trade in selected LDCs; a South–South cooperation programme in cooperation with the UNDP–SUSSC to assist a range of LDCs in strengthening their social protection systems; and technical inputs to the work of a new Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tourism for LDCs.
3. The Istanbul Political Declaration on a “Renewed and Strengthened Global Partnership for the Development of LDCs” and the 50-page Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–20³ were among the main outcomes of the Conference. The Declaration sets as its overarching goal to enable half of the LDCs to meet the criteria for graduation within the next decade. The main new feature of the outcome documents is the emphasis on the need to rebalance development priorities, giving greater weight to

¹ GB.283/7.

² For a fuller account of the Conference, see: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/pardev/relationsevents/ldc4.htm>. The Conference website is at: <http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/ldc/op/edit/home>.

³ See the appendix of the present document.

investment in productive sectors, especially agriculture and infrastructure, building LDCs' productive capacities, and investing in economic diversification and human and social capital formation. This includes support to LDCs to build their supply-side capacity to take advantage of the opportunities offered by international and regional trade. The policy implications of this new approach are spelt out in the Programme of Action, which provides recommendations for action in a wide range of areas, including infrastructure, energy, technology, rural development, trade, tourism, education, youth, gender, etc. A roadmap for the implementation of the Programme of Action from 2011 to the mid-term review has subsequently been developed.

4. In a letter dated 17 October 2011, HE Dinesh Bhattacharai, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Nepal to the United Nations, World Trade Organization and other international organizations in Geneva and Chair of the Global Coordination Bureau of the Least Developed Countries, who presided over LDC-IV, requested the ILO (and all other agencies) to integrate the Istanbul Programme of Action into its work programme. This is in accordance with the request made in the Programme of Action itself (paragraph 153) to the governing bodies of the United Nations funds and programmes and other multilateral organizations, including the Bretton Woods institutions and international financial institutions, "to contribute to the implementation of the Programme of Action and to integrate it into their work programmes, as appropriate and in accordance with their respective mandates. These organizations are invited to participate fully in reviews of the Programme of Action at the national, subregional, regional and global levels." The main recommendations made in the Programme of Action are summarized in the appendix.
5. The ILO is already contributing to varying extents to the goals in the Programme of Action through its regular budget and technical cooperation activities. It remains, however, for the Governing Body to consider how to integrate it into the ILO's work programmes, "as appropriate and in accordance with the ILO's mandate".
6. The next opportunity for the Governing Body to discuss the content of the ILO programme and budget will be in November 2012, when it will consider a preview of the Programme and Budget proposals for 2014-15.
7. ***The Officers recommend that the Governing Body request the Director-General to:***
 - (a) ***take account of the recommendations in the Istanbul Programme of Action in the preview of the Programme and Budget proposals for 2014-15 to be submitted to the Governing Body in November 2012; and***
 - (b) ***in the meantime, to reply to the Ambassador reassuring him of the full support of the ILO for the outcome of LDC-IV and of initiatives and reviews resulting from it, informing him of current ILO activities of relevance to the Programme and of the Office's intention to address its recommendations more fully in the ILO's areas of competence in the above preview.***

Geneva, 9 November 2011

Point for decision: Paragraph 7

Appendix

Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–20: Main recommendations

- Equity at all levels is indispensable for the pursuit of long-term prosperity and the realization of all the internationally recognized human rights, including the right to development for all. Development strategies and programmes of least developed countries and their partners should strive to enhance the participation and empowerment of the poor and marginalized in their own development, and benefit the most vulnerable, ensuring social justice, democracy, gender equality, and sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth and sustainable development. [Paragraph 13(f)]
- [The importance of] a balanced role of the State and market considerations, where the Government in least developed countries commits to design policies and institutions with a view to achieving sustainable and inclusive economic growth that translates into full employment, decent work opportunities and sustainable development. The State also plays a significant role in stimulating the private sector towards the achievement of national development objectives and creates an appropriate enabling stable, transparent and rules-based economic environment for the effective functioning of markets. [Paragraph 13(h)]
- Partnerships with the private sector play an important role for promoting entrepreneurship, generating employment and investment, increasing the revenue potential, developing new technologies and enabling high, sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth in least developed countries. [Paragraph 37]
- [...] Building a critical mass of viable and competitive productive capacity in agriculture, manufacturing and services is essential if least developed countries are to benefit from greater integration into the global economy, increase resilience to shocks, sustain inclusive and equitable growth as well as poverty eradication, achieve structural transformation, and generate full and productive employment and decent work for all. [Paragraph 43]
- Strengthen the capacity of domestic financial institutions to reach out to those who have no access to banking, insurance and other financial services, including through leveraging the contribution of, among others, microfinance, microinsurance, and mutual funds, in creating and expanding financial services targeted to poor and low-income populations, as well as small and medium-sized enterprises. [Paragraph 46.2(c)]
- Support the least developed countries' efforts to develop a sustainable tourism sector, in particular through infrastructure and human capital development, increased access to finance and enhanced access to global tourism networks and distribution channels. [Paragraph 46.2(e)]
- Promote women's entrepreneurship to make better use of untapped economic potential in least developed countries. [Paragraph 56.quat.]
- Strengthen institutions, including cooperatives, to boost smallholder farmer food production, agricultural productivity and sustainable agricultural practices. [Paragraph 60.a.0]
- Provide safety nets to poor smallholder farmers. [Paragraph 60.a.1]

- 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. [Paragraph 60.2(e)]
- Implement effective trade-related technical assistance and capacity building to least developed countries on a priority basis, including by enhancing the share of assistance to least developed countries for Aid for Trade and support for the Enhanced Integrated Framework, as appropriate, and strengthening their capacity to access available resources, in support of the needs and demands of least developed countries expressed through their national development strategies. [Paragraph 64(m)]
- Ensure universal access to free primary education in least developed countries by increasing the enrolment and retention rates, and also increase access to secondary, tertiary and vocational education and skill development training. [Paragraph 71(a)]
- Ensure that formal and informal education systems provide the skills training required by the labour market, particularly for the youth to achieve full and productive employment and decent work. [Paragraph 72(d)]
- Strive towards equity by enhancing access to education for the most disadvantaged, and increasing access to education through introducing or strengthening social protection systems, measures and incentives. [Paragraph 72(e)]
- Social protection has both short- and long-term benefits to sustainable economic growth, poverty eradication and social stability. Social protection systems, including cash transfers, public works programmes, and unemployment benefits, protect the poor and support growth, employment and broader economic resilience. These systems act as stabilizers for the economy, bolster the resilience of the poor and help prevent people from falling into poverty. [Paragraph 91]
- Promote effective participation of all stakeholders and government accountability at all levels by strengthening the roles of parliament, civil society, the independent media, political parties and other democratic institutions and processes, as appropriate, including in relation to the preparation, implementation and monitoring of national development policies and plans, while ensuring that all stakeholders abide by the national legislation and adhere to the rule of law. [Paragraph 135(f)]
- Strengthen support for least developed countries 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. [Paragraph 135.2(f)]
- South–South cooperation has an important role for least developed countries’ development, through its contribution to the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action, in areas such as human and productive capacity building, technical assistance and exchange of best practices, particularly in issues relating to health, education, professional training, agriculture, environment, science and technology, trade and investment. Such cooperation, including, inter alia, triangular approaches, should be supported by the international community. [Paragraph IVbis.1]