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Review of progress made on the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020

Summary

Of all the regions of the world, Africa has the greatest number of least developed countries. Organized along eight different priority areas, the Programme of Action sets out targets, aspirations and actions for both the least developed countries and their development partners to advance the sustainable development of those countries that are home to the most vulnerable people of the world.

Across Africa's 33 least developed countries, it is clear that growth to the level aspired to in the Programme of Action will not be achieved. While progress on some indicators, in particular those focused on social and human development, has been positive, it has been slow. Child and maternity mortality rates are falling, and literacy rates are rising, as are rates of access to clean drinking water and basic sanitation services. Nevertheless, African least developed countries are a very long way from universal access, and at the current rate of progress, achievement of this goal seems unacceptably far into the future. In the domain of economics and commerce, the value added in manufacturing and agriculture that least developed countries are attaining is not substantially increasing over time. Connections to telecommunications services and electricity are rising rapidly on a per capita basis, but vast differences between countries remain. The least developed countries remain almost exclusively commodity-dependent, rendering their economies vulnerable to fluctuations in the prices of raw materials.

The Programme of Action commits the least developed countries to "Promote and respect all internationally recognized human rights", and to "Continue efforts to establish or strengthen… [a] legal and regulatory framework in order to strengthen the rule of law", among other governance targets. In this area, it appears that the African least developed countries are stagnating or falling behind, while other African countries are improving their institutions.

By and large, performance by African least developed countries in fulfilment of the Programme of Action is not entirely positive, although some achievements are being made. Without further commitments from both the least developed countries themselves and the support of their development partners, progress comparable to that made over the period to date (2011–2019) will not enable significant numbers of

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African least developed countries to graduate from that category over the coming years.

I. Introduction

1. The least developed countries were established by the United Nations as a category in 1971. They are not merely low-income countries, but those that face severe structural handicaps to economic growth and development. Of the world's 47 least developed countries, 33 are in Africa, 13 are in the Asia-Pacific region, and 1 in the Caribbean. Table 1 presents summary statistics for the African least developed countries and Haiti.[1] Every three years, the United Nations Committee for Development Policy assesses countries for inclusion into or graduation out of the least developed country category. Both inclusion in and graduation from the category are determined by three development indicators: gross national income per capita, the human assets index, and the economic vulnerability index.

2. The Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 (the Programme of Action) is the fourth such 10-year programme in the United Nations system, with the first commencing following the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held in Paris in 1981. The current Programme of Action outlines eight priority areas for the least developed countries and development partners:

(a) Productive capacity;

(b) Agriculture, food security and rural development;

(c) Trade;

(d) Commodities;

(e) Human and social development;

(f) Multiple crises and other emerging challenges;

(g) Mobilizing financial resources for development and capacity-building;

(h) Good governance at all levels.

[1] This report is prepared with a view to informing the African Regional Review of the Programme of Action. Since there is only a single least developed country in the Latin American and the Caribbean region, and there will be no regional review there, Haiti will be included in the African documentation and review.

Table 1
Summary of status of African least developed countries and Haiti

Country	*Year added*	*GNI per capita 2018, Atlas method (United States dollars)* [a]	*Human assets index* [b]	*Economic vulnerability index* [b]	*Population 2018, (millions)* [c]
Angola*	1994	3 370	52.5	36.8	30.8
Benin	1971	870	49.8	34.3	11.5
Burkina Faso	1971	660	42.9	38.2	19.8
Burundi	1971	280	38.5	44.5	11.2
Central African Republic	1975	480	17.4	33.6	4.7
Chad	1971	670	22.1	52.4	15.5
Comoros	1977	1 320	49.4	52.4	0.8
Democratic Republic of the Congo	1991	490	41.9	27.2	84.1
Djibouti	1982	2 180	58.0	36.3	1.0
Eritrea	1994	1 136 [d]	42.9	54.7	5.2
Ethiopia	1971	790	45.3	32.1	109.2
Gambia	1975	700	51.8	72.2	2.3
Guinea	1971	830	39.5	30.2	12.4
Guinea-Bissau	1981	750	41.7	52.4	1.9
Lesotho	1971	1 380	61.6	42.0	2.1
Liberia	1990	600	37.2	53.2	4.8
Madagascar	1991	440	54.5	37.8	26.3
Malawi	1971	360	52.5	47.1	18.1
Mali	1971	830	43.1	36.8	19.1
Mauritania	1986	1 190	46.9	39.9	4.4
Mozambique	1988	440	45.8	36.7	29.5
Niger	1971	380	35.4	35.3	22.4
Rwanda	1971	780	55.0	36.4	12.3
Sao Tome and Principe**	1982	1 890	86.0	41.2	0.2
Senegal	2000	1 410	57.1	33.4	15.9
Sierra Leone	1982	500	27.4	51.6	7.7
Somalia	1971	97 [d]	16.7	34.7	15.0
South Sudan	2012	423 [d]	25.8	55.6	11.0
Sudan	1971	1 560	53.0	49.2	41.8
Togo	1982	650	61.8	28.3	7.9
Uganda	1971	620	50.2	31.7	42.7
United Republic of Tanzania	1971	1 020	56.0	27.9	56.3
Zambia	1991	1 430	58.6	40.5	17.4
Haiti	1971	800	48.0	30.6	11.1
Graduation threshold (2018)		*1 230*	*66.0*	*32.0*	**Total: 676.2**

Sources: [a] World Development Indicators, World Bank (November 2019); [b] Committee for Development Policy, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (March 2018); [c] World Population Prospects: 2019 Revision, United Nations Population Division (November 2019); [d] United Nations Statistics Division (November 2019).
*Expected to graduate in 2021; **Expected to graduate in 2024.

II. Progress made in the priority areas

A. Productive capacity

3. The Programme of Action states that building up the capacity of least developed countries in agriculture, manufacturing and services is necessary for greater inclusion in the world economy, resistance to shocks and sustaining inclusive growth. While the total world average for manufacturing value added as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) has been around 16 per cent for the two decades, the percentage value added for African least developed countries and Haiti dropped from 9.6 per cent in 2001 to 8.8 per cent in 2017. In 2011, the manufacturing value added percentage was 8.3 per cent for this group, so over the course of the Programme of Action, the African least developed countries have not made significant gains in this area. Notably, over the past two decades, the manufacturing

value added as a percentage of GDP has also fallen for other African countries not in this category, from 15.4 per cent in 2001 to 14.0 per cent in 2017.

4. The Programme of Action sets a goal of enabling access to energy for all by 2030. For African least developed countries, access to electricity for all by 2030 will require remarkable improvement in this indicator over the coming decade. While Asia-Pacific least developed countries started from a base of access for 60.9 per cent of the population in 2011, and progressed to access for 85.8 per cent of people in 2017, African least developed countries (plus Haiti) improved from 26.1 per cent access to 36.7 per cent access over the same period. Universal access seems to be in reach for the Asia-Pacific least developed countries, but the rate of improvement in energy access in Africa would have to change dramatically for universal access to be attained. Even in those African countries that are not least developed countries, average access in 2017 was at 77.4 per cent, lower than the average rate of access in the Asia-Pacific least developed countries. The situation regarding electricity access is particularly dire for those in rural areas: in 2017, there were still nine countries in the Africa and Haiti group of least developed countries where less than 5 per cent of the rural population had access to electricity.[2]

5. Universal access to the Internet is also a target of the Programme of Action. The target date, however, was set as 2020 and is far from being achieved. While access has improved quite rapidly since 2011, the average rate of access for African least developed countries (plus Haiti) was still only 16.5 per cent in 2017. This low number, however, somewhat masks the impressive progress being made in many countries. Where Internet access is concerned, the top 10 African least developed countries (plus Haiti) range from Mauritania (20.8 per cent) to Djibouti (55.7 per cent), while the lowest 10 range from 1.3 per cent (Eritrea) to 8.6 per cent (Democratic Republic of the Congo). Considering that, in 2011, most of those top 10 countries had access rates below 10 per cent, this progress is notable.

6. In addition to boosting value added in manufacturing, the Programme of Action also targets increased value added in agriculture. Over the period of the current Programme, gains have been made in 19 of the 30 African least developed countries (plus Haiti) for which data are available. Over this period, the world average increase in agricultural value added per worker was 23.3 per cent, and the average increase in other African countries not in this category was 12.2 per cent. Compared with the average increase in the African least developed countries (plus Haiti) of 8.3 per cent, this shows that the least developed countries must re-evaluate their strategies for increasing agricultural productivity.

7. The percentage share of renewables in the energy mix of the African least developed countries and of the Asia-Pacific least developed countries did not change substantially between 2006 and 2015. Compared with the rest of the world, the share of renewables in African least developed countries is high. This can be attributed to the extensive reliance by a number of African least developed countries on hydroelectric dams for their power, and in cases such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Ethiopia, this reliance is nearly 100 per cent.

8. One of the objectives of the Programme of Action in respect to increasing productive capacity is the establishment of a technology bank. Such a bank was established in 2018 in Gebze, Turkey. The creation of this institution was also part of the Sustainable Development Goals (target 17.8). The Technology Bank has now commenced with its work to build the science, technology and innovation capacities of the least developed countries by reviewing the current situation of each of the least developed countries and supporting academies of science in those countries.

9. The Programme of Action outlines the need for least developed countries to provide an enabling environment for conducting business. The World Bank's "Doing Business" survey scores countries on a range of indicators related to the ease of

2 Angola, Burundi, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritania and Mozambique.

operating a business, such as registering property, starting a business and enforcing contracts. Across all 34 African least developed countries (plus Haiti), only four countries scored lower on the 2018 survey than in 2016 and in one of these countries the difference was marginal.[3] The most significant improvements were made in Djibouti, Malawi and the Niger. In the case of Malawi, its Doing Business score improved by 9.8 points, making it currently one of the highest scoring African least developed countries, along with Rwanda and Zambia.

10. Access to financial services is also important for productive capacity. Across the African least developed countries (plus Haiti), the average rate of access to a financial account with a bank or mobile money service provider has risen from 13.7 per cent in 2011 to 34.0 per cent in 2017. The highest increase has been seen in Uganda, where in 2017 59.2 per cent of people had access, compared to only 20.5 per cent in 2011. Among the countries with 2017 data available, the lowest rates of access were in the Central African Republic (13.7 per cent), Madagascar (17.9 per cent) and the Niger (15.5 per cent).

B. Agriculture, food security and rural development

11. Agricultural value added per worker has been rising in the least developed countries, but has not matched the pace achieved by other country groupings. The Programme of Action required the least developed countries to "supply critical inputs such as locally adapted high-yielding varieties of seeds, fertilizers and other services."[4] While there has been a considerable proportional increase in the fertilizer usage of the African least developed countries (plus Haiti) (from 9.8 kg/ha of arable land in 2011 to 14.1 kg/ha in 2016), this usage rate is dwarfed by those of other country groups. Other African countries, for example, used an average of 106.8 kg of fertilizer per hectare of arable land in 2016. Without considerably increasing access to and use of fertilizers throughout their agricultural industries, the least developed countries are likely to continue to struggle to raise production in line with their ambitions.

C. Trade

12. Least developed country export revenues (both goods and services) increased at an average rate of 2.7 per cent per year from 2010 to 2017, reaching $209 billion at the end of the period. The comparable revenues in Asian and island least developed countries grew at 7 per cent per year, whereas African least developed countries and Haiti have been hit by the heightened volatility of primary commodity prices in the aftermath of the global financial crisis of 2008/09.[5] The share of exports from all least developed countries in Asia and Africa has remained at below 1 per cent in the last four years. While the share of Asian least developed countries increased slightly, from 0.30 per cent in 2011 to 0.41 per cent in 2018, the share of African least developed countries decreased from 0.73 per cent to 0.57 per cent.

13. With average tariffs of 6.1 per cent, businesses currently face higher tariffs when they export within Africa than when they export outside it. The African Continental Free Trade Area will progressively eliminate tariffs on intra-African trade, making it easier for African businesses to trade within the continent and cater to and benefit from the growing African market. Consolidating the continent into a

[3] Mozambique, Somalia, South Sudan and the Sudan, although Mozambique's score dropped by less than 1 per cent.

[4] A/CONF.219/3/Rev.1, p. 17.

[5] UNCTAD (2019). *The Least Developed Countries Report 2019: The present and future of external development finance – old dependence, new challenges* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.20.II.D.2).

single trade area will provide great opportunities for businesses and consumers across Africa.

D. Commodities

14. Based on the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) classification, countries whose commodity exports exceed 60 per cent of their total export trade are "commodity-dependent". Hence, in 2017, all but two African least developed countries (Lesotho and Liberia) are commodity-dependent and, despite the recent proportion of commodity exports from Liberia falling below this threshold, it too had an average rate of 72 per cent from 2012 to 2015. The Comoros, Eritrea, Madagascar and Sao Tome and Principe were not commodity-dependent countries at the start of the Istanbul Programme of Action – with 51, 51, 44 and 49 per cent, respectively – but in 2017 they all passed the 60 per cent threshold and are now commodity-dependent. Only Malawi and Djibouti consistently reduced their commodity share of exports from 2009 to 2017, with reductions of 13.2 per cent and 21.8 per cent respectively.

E. Human and social development

15. The Programme of Action calls upon least developed countries to improve education and training, and specifically to increase literacy and numeracy rates. In all the African least developed countries for which sufficient data were available, adult literacy rates were increasing between 2011 and 2018, but the rate of improvement was slow. While the world average for adult literacy rates was 86.0 per cent for 2015–2018, the average rate in African least developed countries (and Haiti) for which data are available was 56.7 per cent. In 11 of the African least developed countries (plus Haiti) for which data are available, literacy rates are still below 50 per cent.[6]

16. Increased enrolment rates and gender parity in enrolment rates also feature as a target of the Programme of Action. Many African least developed countries are reaching net enrolment rates of greater than 90 per cent, which is to be commended, but there are still some outliers where fewer than two thirds of school-age children are enrolled. Many African least developed countries are also making progress towards achieving gender parity in enrolments, although in a few countries the gap between boys and girls enrolled in schooling remains high, such as in Chad (89 per cent of boys, as against 69 per cent of girls) and Guinea (83 per cent of boys, 69 per cent of girls). In 6 of the 23 countries for which data are available, the enrolment rate for girls was more than one percentage point higher than the rate for boys, such as in Senegal (where 80 per cent of girls are enrolled, and 71 per cent of boys) and the Gambia (where 81 per cent of girls are enrolled, and 73 per cent of boys).

17. For countries where data are available, there are some notable declines in the number of births attended by skilled health-care staff. In Benin, Haiti and, above all, in Mali, fewer births were attended by skilled staff in the 2015–2018 period than in the 2011–2014 period. Where there have been improvements, these have generally been minor, with the exceptions of Guinea and Uganda, which reported increases of 17.4 and 16.8 percentage points, respectively.

18. The Programme of Action calls on the least developed countries to continue working to lower rates of child and maternal mortality. While progress in reducing maternal mortality is consistent, the outcomes for mothers in African least developed countries (and Haiti) are still far off those achieved in African countries not in this category, and maternal mortality is still twice the rate of that in the Asia-Pacific least

[6] Benin, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Sierra Leone and South Sudan.

developed countries. The results in the under-5 mortality rate are similar: consistent progress among nearly all African least developed countries (and Haiti), but results that show health outcomes in Africa are still poor. From 2011 to 2018, the under-5 mortality rate in African least developed countries declined by 23.1 per cent, but, given the high starting point, much work remains to be done.

19. The Programme of Action requires the least developed countries to take steps to increase the strength of their national health systems, and improving funding is one way to achieve this. Nevertheless, average health expenditures per capita in the Asia-Pacific least developed countries are considerably higher than those in African least developed countries (and Haiti). Only Lesotho, Sierra Leone and the Sudan spent higher amounts on health per capita in 2016 than the average outlay by Asia-Pacific least developed countries. Between 2011 and 2016, there were also nine African least developed countries (and Haiti) where health expenditure per capita fell.[7]

20. Access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation for all is included among the Programme's objectives for human and social development. The average rate of access to basic drinking water services for people in African least developed countries (and Haiti) has only increased, from 56.4 per cent in 2011 to 60.8 per cent in 2017. The average rate of access to basic sanitation services shows similarly small improvement, from 25.5 per cent in 2011 to 29.5 per cent in 2017. To illustrate the deficit experienced by the African least developed countries (and Haiti), consider that, in 2017, African countries not in this category had access to basic drinking water rates of 82.2 per cent, and access to sanitation rates of 62.2 per cent. The Asia-Pacific least developed countries, too, had access rates similar to those of the African countries not in the least developed country category.

21. The Programme of Action also focuses on women's empowerment. One of the targets of this part of the Programme is to "promote effective representation and participation of women in all spheres of decision-making, including the political process at all levels". While most least developed countries in Africa do not have levels of women's representation in parliament that approach 50 per cent, the average rates of representation, at 21.4 per cent in 2015–2018, compare favourably with those of other groups of countries. They are marginally higher than those of other African countries, higher than the Asia-Pacific least developed countries, and close to the average rate of representation in member States of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (24.1 per cent). This indicator is highly variable across the African least developed countries (and Haiti), with countries such as Rwanda and Senegal having the highest representation rates for women in national parliaments (at 62.6 per cent and 42.3 per cent, respectively, over 2015–2018). The lowest rates are seen in the Comoros and Haiti, with rates below 5 per cent.

F. Multiple crises and other emerging challenges

22. A number of interlinked factors contribute to the difficulty of maintaining stability and growth in the African least developed countries (and Haiti), including climate change, extreme weather events (to which climate change contributes), conflicts both between and within countries, and migration patterns.

23. In 2015, parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change drew up the Paris Agreement, with the aim of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change by holding the increase in global temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further, to 1.5°C. All the African least developed countries

[7] Burundi, Central African Republic, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Gambia, Haiti, Uganda and United Republic of Tanzania.

have ratified this agreement, with the exception of Angola, Eritrea and South Sudan.[8] The Paris Agreement requires countries to issue nationally determined contributions that present their commitments to reducing emissions. Considering that the least developed countries are poorly equipped to comprehensively manage the changing environment that will result from climate change, it is commendable that they have agreed to contribute to fighting it.

G. Mobilizing financial resources for development and capacity-building

1. Domestic resources

24. Africa has a low tax capacity of about 20 per cent of GDP, and a lower tax revenue to GDP ratio (17 per cent) than other regions, largely because of inefficiencies in tax policy and revenue collection. In Africa in general, tax revenue declined over 2017 and 2018, with the continental weighted tax ratio averaging 17 per cent of GDP, well below the 20 per cent ratio needed to help countries fast-track achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.[9]

25. Domestic private financial flows – comprising credit to the private sector, savings and the development of capital markets – are also important to the sustainable development of the least developed countries. Rising levels of domestic credit are important, as they indicate improvements in levels of financial access for both households and corporations – in particular small and medium-sized enterprises for which access to finance remains a significant constraint on growth.[10] In African least developed countries the level of domestic credit to the private sector is generally shallow when compared with other regions. Its ratio as a percentage of GDP has slightly increased, however, from 15.5 per cent in 2011 to 18.4 per cent in 2018, outperforming the sub-Saharan Africa region in that year.

26. Improvements in mobilizing domestic saving in the least developed countries will provide a stable, low-cost and low-risk source of financing compared with, for example, international private capital flows.[11] Gross domestic savings as a percentage of GDP in least developed countries in Africa and Haiti are highly variable. High domestic savings rates are evident in countries such as Angola, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia, while massively negative rates are seen in Liberia and Somalia. Much higher and consistent rates are registered in the world as a whole, at 25.1 per cent from 2011 to 2017.

2. External resources

27. Historically, large levels of financial resource flows to least developed countries came from official development assistance (ODA), as a means of mitigating the external debt burden. The total net ODA contribution amounted to $1.16 trillion during the 2006–2017 period. The bulk of ODA ($1.04 trillion, or 90 per cent of total bilateral ODA) came from OECD Development Assistance Committee countries. Africa received $329.70 billion in net ODA disbursements from such countries, almost a third (31.7 per cent) of the Committee’s disbursements, while Asia received $289.31 billion, or 27.9 per cent. Of the top 10 African recipients, six were least developed countries – Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United

[8] Available at https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XXVII-7-d&chapter=27&clang=_en. Accessed on 6 January 2020.

[9] ECA (2019). *Economic Report on Africa 2019: Fiscal Policy for Financing Sustainable Development Policy in Africa* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.19.II.K.2).

[10] ECA (2017). *Development Financing in Africa*. Addis Ababa.

[11] African Development Bank (2009), cited in ECA (2017) *Development Financing in Africa*.

Republic of Tanzania, Mozambique, the Sudan and Uganda – in descending order of the amounts disbursed.[12]

28. According to OECD, globally ODA in 2018 fell 2.7 per cent from 2017, with aid to Africa falling by 4 per cent and bilateral ODA to the least developed countries down by 3 per cent in real terms from 2017. Furthermore, most of the OECD Development Assistance Committee members failed to meet their commitment of contributing 0.7 per cent of their national income as ODA, with only 5 of the 30 members meeting their targets in 2018. Hence the ODA provided under the Development Assistance Committee was equivalent to 0.31 per cent of the Committee donors' combined gross national income, well below the target ratio.[13]

29. Foreign direct investment is a major source of finance for the least developed countries. Over the last nine years, the net flow of such investment into least developed countries in Africa and Haiti has fluctuated, with a noticeable increase in 2012 of 34 per cent, followed by a decline in the following year of -27 per cent. Foreign direct investment flows showed sharp increases in 2014 and 2015, then declined again by 38 per cent then 42 per cent in 2016 and 2017, respectively. In 2018, foreign direct investment flows to least developed countries in Africa stood at $11.64 billion, which is a peak since the commencement of the Programme of Action.

30. Similarly, when looking at foreign direct investment inflows to least developed countries in Africa and Haiti as a percentage of their GDP, all countries with the exception of Chad and Somalia have seen their ratios decline between 2011 and 2018, with Angola being the worst hit, with a decline from -2.7 per cent in 2011 to -5.4 per cent in 2018.

H. Good governance at all levels

31. The Mo Ibrahim Foundation scrutinizes governance in Africa and provides insight into how African least developed countries have improved over time. Performance over the period of the Programme of Action, as rated by the Ibrahim Index of African Governance, is mixed. Some countries have improved their scores over time, but others are declining. In absolute terms, Rwanda and Senegal are the highest scorers on the Ibrahim Index, while in absolute terms the largest improvement was made by Somalia, albeit from a very low 2011 score. Sixteen least developed countries, however, received lower overall governance scores in 2017 than in 2011.

32. The World Bank's worldwide governance indicators (table 2) cover six areas: control of corruption, government effectiveness, political stability, absence of violence and terrorism, regulatory quality, and rule of law. The values in the indicators are in a normal distribution, ranging from approximately -2.5 to 2.5. On average, across the African least developed countries (and Haiti), all of these indicators except for voice and accountability have declined over time. The average for African countries not in the least developed category is also presented as a comparison group, and while the scores for these countries are still low, the scores have declined in only two categories, those of political stability and regulatory quality.

33. This evidence suggests that, to make substantial improvements in the lives of their citizens, the Governments of least developed countries will need to make greater efforts to improve their governance in order to provide the kind of environment in which people can flourish.

[12] OECD (2018). OECD. Stat. Available at https://stats.oecd.org/. Accessed on 6 January 2020.

[13] OECD (2019). Development aid drops in 2018, especially to neediest countries. Paris, 10 April. Available at www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-data/ODA-2018-detailed-summary.pdf. Accessed on 6 January 2020.

Table 2
African least developed countries (and Haiti) performance on worldwide governance indicators

		2011	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*	*2017*	*2018*
CONTROL OF CORRUPTION	African LDCs (and Haiti)	-0.760	-0.798	-0.808	-0.817	-0.823	-0.831	-0.817	-0.824
	Non-LDC African countries	-0.443	-0.472	-0.466	-0.463	-0.430	-0.438	-0.461	-0.434
GOVERNMENT EFFECTIVENESS	African LDCs (and Haiti)	-0.990	-1.006	-1.028	-1.093	-1.093	-1.093	-1.098	-1.083
	Non-LDC African countries	-0.466	-0.455	-0.440	-0.446	-0.393	-0.429	-0.436	-0.424
POLITICAL STABILITY AND ABSENCE OF VIOLENCE/TERRORISM	African LDCs (and Haiti)	-0.737	-0.735	-0.768	-0.842	-0.777	-0.809	-0.828	-0.810
	Non-LDC African countries	-0.313	-0.343	-0.353	-0.525	-0.419	-0.442	-0.438	-0.445
REGULATORY QUALITY	African LDCs (and Haiti)	-0.859	-0.832	-0.822	-0.856	-0.867	-0.896	-0.903	-0.908
	Non-LDC African countries	-0.479	-0.489	-0.506	-0.551	-0.551	-0.583	-0.565	-0.573
RULE OF LAW	African LDCs (and Haiti)	-0.897	-0.916	-0.926	-0.873	-0.875	-0.913	-0.899	-0.904
	Non-LDC African countries	-0.481	-0.444	-0.438	-0.390	-0.398	-0.435	-0.434	-0.412
VOICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY	African LDCs (and Haiti)	-0.764	-0.817	-0.818	-0.743	-0.734	-0.733	-0.722	-0.741
	Non-LDC African countries	-0.523	-0.429	-0.438	-0.399	-0.386	-0.386	-0.411	-0.411

Source: World Bank, Worldwide Governance Indicators (November 2019).

III. Africa’s progress towards fulfilling the Istanbul Programme of Action

34. One of the primary goals of the Programme of Action was to enable half of the least developed countries to meet the graduation criteria by 2020. In this regard, those countries and their international partners have not made sufficient progress. Over the entire decade covered by the Programme of Action, three countries have graduated. More countries have met the criteria and will graduate in the first half of the next decade (Angola, Sao Tome and Principe, and Solomon Islands). Still other countries have met the criteria but have not yet been recommended for graduation or their graduation has been deferred: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Kiribati, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Nepal, Timor-Leste and Tuvalu.

35. With 16 countries having met the criteria for graduation, the international community has thus fallen short of the target of enabling 24 least developed countries to meet those criteria. Of particular concern to ECA is the fact that the number of least developed countries in Africa has remained unchanged over the decade: while Equatorial Guinea has graduated, South Sudan has entered the list of least developed countries as a new State. Angola and Sao Tome and Principe are expected to graduate (in 2021 and 2024, respectively), but it is also notable that Zimbabwe continues to meet all the criteria of being a least developed country, yet, in accordance with the wishes of its Government, it is not included in the least developed country category. It is therefore evident that, while the Programme of Action has had successes in Asia and the Pacific, it has not made notable inroads towards addressing Africa’s poverty and development challenges.

36. Human and social development continues to advance in the African least developed countries (and Haiti), but at a pace that is unacceptably slow. The least developed countries remain largely commodity-dependent, and have not been able to diversify their sources of international income to any significant extent. Manufacturing and agricultural value added have not changed substantially for many countries so far this decade, although improvements in telecommunications and electricity connectivity are being made. Perhaps most worryingly, standards of governance are too often static or even in decline. Without addressing the governance issues affecting many African least developed countries (and Haiti), the prospects for further success in other priority areas seem slim.