

**Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific****Seventieth session**

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**Special Body on Least Developed, Landlocked
Developing and Pacific Island Developing Countries:
the perspectives of Asia-Pacific least developed,
landlocked developing and Pacific island developing
countries in the context of the development agenda
beyond 2015****The perspectives of Asia-Pacific least developed,
landlocked developing and Pacific island developing
countries in the context of the development agenda
beyond 2015****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

As the year 2015 approaches, the world community has begun its search for a new development agenda. Although many countries in the Asia-Pacific region have made significant progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, the region's least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries have continued to face formidable challenges in realizing these Goals. Recognizing the need to continue international development efforts and to respond to new global development needs, the United Nations initiated a global consultation process to develop a new global development agenda beyond 2015. At the regional level, several consultative processes have also been pursued, including the one carried out under the regional Millennium Development Goals partnership organized by ESCAP, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The present document contains a brief overview of the progress made by least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries, as well as the challenges encountered by them in seeking to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. It also provides a snapshot of the ongoing global, as well as regional, consultation processes currently under way in order to set the development agenda beyond 2015 and specify what the sustainable development goals should be. The perspectives of the region as a whole, as well as those of least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries, are also summarized in the present document.

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I. Introduction

1. With 2015 approaching rapidly, the need to prepare a development agenda as a successor to the Millennium Development Goals has become urgent. The Millennium Development Goals galvanized the international community — both developing and developed countries — in efforts to achieve a core set of development goals designed to reduce poverty, improve human development and address common environmental concerns. While they have weaknesses, the Millennium Development Goals did produce substantial results in the Asia-Pacific region. The international goal of halving extreme poverty between 1990 and 2015 has already been met in the region. Nearly all children of school age in the region — both girls and boys — will also be attending school. Parity in female and male enrolment rates has already been achieved in primary and secondary school, as well as in higher education. Targets regarding access to clean water were achieved, and major diseases, such as tuberculosis, malaria and HIV/AIDS, have been substantially controlled.

2. However, other major challenges that the Millennium Development Goals had hoped to address are yet to be overcome. While the poverty rate

has been substantially reduced, there remains a large number of poor people in many Asia-Pacific countries and progress on reducing hunger and malnutrition has been slow. Although the enrolment targets have been met, the quality of education remains generally very poor. Progress in the area of health has been particularly disappointing, with unacceptably high rates of childhood mortality. Despite major advances in science and medicine, about 100,000 women in the Asia-Pacific region still die annually during childbirth. Progress in the provision of basic sanitation to households has been unsatisfactory. Provision of basic services in urban areas has not kept pace with rapid urbanization. In addition, forest cover has been declining, while carbon dioxide emissions have been increasing in a number of countries.

3. While progress in implementing the Millennium Development Goals has thus been mixed for the region as a whole, in general, it has been far less satisfactory for the region's least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries. Thus, the successes achieved by the region as regards many of the Millennium Development Goals have not been replicated by these three groups as a whole: in addition to the poor performance of the region as a whole as regards maternal and child health, many least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries are also lagging behind in providing quality primary schooling to all — several of them are unlikely to meet targets on primary enrolment or completion. They are also likely to miss the target on gender parity in higher education. However, the development momentum generated by the Millennium Development Goals has led to significant improvements in these countries. Thus, the Millennium Development Goals are to be seen as particularly beneficial in achieving such improvements. Such momentum will be lost unless a new programme of international action and support is swiftly introduced after 2015, namely the target date of the Millennium Development Goals.

II. Performance of least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries

4. The region's least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries are very diverse in terms of population and size (table 1). With that in mind, the least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries have, in general, made significant strides in achieving the Millennium Development Goals but their performance, as tracked by the ESCAP, Asian Development Bank (ADB) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) regional partnership on the Millennium Development Goals, is still not satisfactory.¹

5. The performance of this group of Asia-Pacific countries as regards Goal 1 indicators on eradicating extreme hunger and poverty has, on the whole, been satisfactory. Indeed, this group of countries is on track to reduce the incidence of poverty by half (see table 2). The Pacific islands do not generally track poverty and so there are no data on this indicator for this subgroup. In the case of Bangladesh — the largest least developed country in the Asia-Pacific region — which reduced its poverty headcount ratio from 70.2 per cent in 1992 to 43.2 per cent in 2010, very substantial progress has

¹ United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Asian Development Bank and United Nations Development Programme, *Asia-Pacific Aspirations: Perspectives for a Post-2015 Development Agenda. Asia-Pacific Regional MDGs Report 2012/13* (Bangkok, 2013). Available from www.undp.org/content/rbap/en/home/library/mdg/asia-pacific-mdg-2012-2013.

been made and if the target of 35 per cent is missed, it will only be by a small margin. As regards the indicator on the prevalence of underweight children, however, most of the least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries with data available are off track, with the exception of Afghanistan and Bangladesh. The latter countries' performance will allow the least developed country group as a whole to meet this target. In the cases of Timor-Leste and Vanuatu, data show that these countries are regressing.

Table 1
Some basic features of least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries

Country	Least developed	Landlocked developing	Pacific island developing	Land area ^a (thousands of square kilometres)	Population ^a (millions)	GDP ^a (2005 United States dollars per capita)	2012 Human Development Index value ^b
Afghanistan	✓	✓		652.23	29.83	401	0.37
Armenia		✓		28.48	2.97	2 237	0.73
Azerbaijan		✓		82.66	9.31	3 051	0.73
Bangladesh	✓			130.17	154.70	648	0.52
Bhutan	✓	✓		38.39	0.74	1 972	0.54
Cambodia	✓			176.52	14.87	672	0.54
Cook Islands			✓	0.00	0.02	9 174	-
Fiji			✓	18.27	0.88	3 573	0.70
Kazakhstan		✓		2 699.70	16.72	5 375	0.75
Kiribati	✓		✓	0.81	0.10	1 169	0.63
Kyrgyzstan		✓		191.80	5.47	586	0.62
Lao People's Democratic Republic	✓	✓		230.80	6.65	700	0.54
Marshall Islands			✓	0.18	0.05	2 938	-
Mongolia		✓		1 553.56	2.80	1 630	0.68
Myanmar	✓			653.29	52.80	433	0.50
Nepal	✓	✓		143.35	27.47	406	0.46
Papua New Guinea			✓	452.86	7.17	1 100	0.47
Samoa			✓	2.83	0.19	2 423	0.70
Solomon Islands	✓		✓	27.99	0.55	1 095	0.53
Tajikistan		✓		139.96	8.01	435	0.62
Timor-Leste	✓			14.87	1.11	3 134	0.58
Tonga			✓	0.72	0.11	2 677	0.71
Turkmenistan		✓		469.93	5.17	5 497	0.70
Tuvalu	✓		✓	0.03	0.01	2 640	-
Uzbekistan		✓		425.40	28.54	881	0.65
Vanuatu	✓		✓	12.19	0.25	2 100	0.63

^a Source: www.unescap.org/stat/data.

^b Source: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data>.

Table 2
Millennium Development Goals progress in selected least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries

	Goal	1		2			3			4		5			6			7				
		\$1.25 per day poverty	Underweight children	Primary enrolment	Reaching last grade	Primary completion	Gender primary	Gender secondary	Gender tertiary	Under-5 mortality	Infant mortality	Maternal mortality	Skilled birth attendance	Antenatal care (≥ 1 visit)	HIV prevalence	TB incidence	TB prevalence	Forest cover	Protected area	CO ₂ emissions per GDP	Safe drinking water	Basic sanitation
Afghanistan			▶				▶															
Armenia		●	▶	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	▶	▶	●	●	▶	▶	▶	●	●
Azerbaijan		●	■	▶	●	▶	●	●	●	■	■	■	■	■	▶	●	●	▶	●	●	■	●
Bangladesh		■	▶						●	▶	▶	▶	■	▶	▶	●	●	▶	●	▶	■	■
Bhutan		●	■	▶	■		●		■	▶	■	■	■	▶	●	●	●	▶	●	●	●	■
Cambodia		●	■		■	▶	▶	■	▶	■	■	■	■	■	■	●	■	▶	▶	▶	●	■
Cook Islands				●		●	●	●	■	■	■	■	■	■	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	▶
Kazakhstan		●	▶	●	●	●	●	●	■	■	■	■	■	▶	●	●	▶	▶	▶	▶	■	■
Kiribati				●	●	●	●	●	■	■	■	■	▶	▶	●	●	▶	▶	▶	■	■	■
Kyrgyzstan		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	■	■	■	■	■	▶	●	●	▶	▶	▶	▶	■	▶
Lao People's Democratic Republic		▶	■	●	■	■	▶	▶	■	■	■	■	■	▶	●	●	▶	▶	▶	●	●	●
Marshall Islands				●	■	●	●	●	■	■	■	■	■	■	▶	▶	▶	▶	▶	▶	■	■
Mongolia			●	●	■	●	●	●	●	▶	■	■	■	▶	▶	●	▶	▶	▶	●	●	■
Myanmar			■		■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	●	▶	▶	▶	▶	▶	●	▶
Nepal		●	■		■	■	▶	▶	▶	▶	■	■	■	■	●	▶	▶	▶	▶	▶	■	▶
Papua New Guinea						■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	●	▶	▶	▶	▶	▶	■	▶
Samoa				▶	▶	●	●		■	■	■	■	■		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	▶
Solomon Islands				■		●	■		■	■	■	■	■		●	●	▶	▶	▶	▶	■	■
Timor-Leste			▶	■		▶	●	■	■	▶	▶	■	■	■	▶	●	▶	▶	▶	▶	■	■
Tonga				●	▶	●	●	●	■	■	■	■	■		▶	●	▶	▶	▶	▶	■	▶
Turkmenistan		●	▶						■	■	■	■	■	■	●	●	▶	▶	▶	▶	▶	■
Tuvalu						●	●		■	■	■	■	■		●	●	▶	▶	▶	▶	■	■
Uzbekistan			●	■	●	▶	●	■	▶	▶	■	■	■	■	●	●	▶	▶	▶	▶	▶	■
Vanuatu			▶	■	■	▶	●		▶	▶	■	■	■		●	●	▶	▶	▶	▶	■	■
Asia-Pacific		●	■	▶	■	▶	●	●	■	■	■	■	■	■	●	●	▶	▶	▶	▶	■	■
Least developed countries		▶	▶	■	■	■	●	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	●	●	▶	▶	▶	▶	▶	■

● Early achiever ■ Slow ▶ On track ◀ Regressing/No progress

Source: United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Asian Development Bank and United Nations Development Programme, *Asia-Pacific Aspirations: Perspectives for a Post-2015 Development Agenda. Asia-Pacific Regional MDGs Report 2012/13* (Bangkok, 2013). Available from www.undp.org/content/rbap/en/home/library/mdg/asia-pacific-mdg-2012-2013.

6. The least developed countries as a whole are not making good progress in ensuring universal enrolment in primary education or its completion by those who do enrol. Data for tracking progress on primary enrolment are available for only eight least developed countries, three of which will not reach their targets. As regards completion of primary schooling, 4 of the 10 least developed countries with data are currently falling short of the target. As regards gender parity in education, progress has been satisfactory with parity likely to be reached at the primary and secondary levels, although not at the tertiary level.

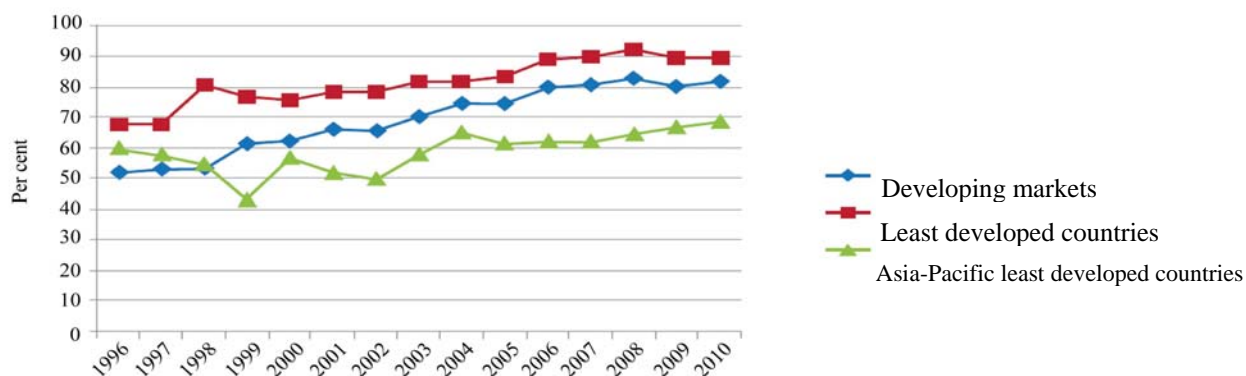
7. The least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries as a group reflect the Asia-Pacific regional trend as regards goals concerning health. The region is falling behind as regards improving child and maternal health, with primary health-care infrastructure still unable to meet needs. These countries as a group will also fail to meet the goal of reducing infant and childhood mortality by two thirds and maternal mortality by three quarters. However, more success has been made by them in tackling major diseases, such as the spread of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis.

8. As far as environment-related targets are concerned, the trend in the Asia-Pacific region reflects success as regards most indicators, except in the area of providing greater access to improved sanitation. Several least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries have been able to follow this trend, except as regards forest cover, which is being depleted rather than conserved. Although they are expected to meet the target on access to safe water, except perhaps in the case of certain Pacific island developing countries, they will fail to achieve the target on sanitation. Notable exceptions to the performance of least developed countries as regards environmental indicators are: the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar have met the target on sanitation; Bangladesh, Kiribati, the Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste will not meet the safe drinking water target; Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, and Kiribati will not meet the target on carbon dioxide; and Afghanistan, Bhutan, Kiribati, Samoa, Tuvalu and Vanuatu will be successful in reversing the loss of forest cover.

9. The performance of least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries has thus been quite unsatisfactory. Given the constraints they face, this was expected. However, the Millennium Development Goals were structured on the principle of global partnerships, which were to be formed so as to overcome the particular constraints of these countries and help them achieve their goals. Goal 8 of the Millennium Development Goals was set so as to further that idea of global partnerships. However, global development partners have failed to provide the necessary support.

10. As regards both trade and aid, least developed countries did not receive the necessary support from global partners. Although duty-free and quota-free access to the markets of developed country was a major commitment under the Millennium Development Goals, such duty-free access for Asia-Pacific least developed countries fell short of that received by least developed countries as a whole (69 per cent compared to 82 per cent), although such access has been increasing over the years. This is illustrated in figure 1.

Figure 1
Duty-free imports to developed markets, by selected groups of countries



Source: Compiled from data provided by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the International Trade Centre and the World Trade Organization. Available from www.mdg-trade.org/38.Table.aspx.

Notes:

1. Refers to all product categories measured in value terms, although not including armaments.

2. Petroleum tends to be subject to very low import duties, or is exempt. If this is excluded, these proportions are somewhat lower. In 2010, 79 per cent for developing countries, 80 per cent for least developed countries and 66 per cent for Asia-Pacific least developed countries.

11. Although they have been reduced over the years, developed countries continue to maintain tariff barriers on a range of products that figure prominently in Asia-Pacific least developed countries' exports, such as agricultural products, textiles and garments. The period between 2004 and 2009 also saw a gradual withdrawal of preferential quotas on textiles from least developed countries. In addition, non-tariff barriers and complex rules of origin also hurt exports from Asia-Pacific least developed countries.¹ In this context, it should be mentioned that aid for trade (to increase the capacity of least developed countries to expand exports) has increased to Asia-Pacific least developed countries, which is a welcome development. However, the share of such global aid going to the Asia-Pacific region remains below that of other developing regions, with most of this aid going to just two least developed countries, namely Afghanistan and Bangladesh.

12. Another important instrument of support to least developed countries in the region has been official aid. One of the major commitments made by developed countries at the International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, Mexico, in 2002 was to agree to devote 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product to aid. In pursuit of this, aid flows have been increasing to Asia-Pacific least developed countries. In 2011, least developed countries received a total of \$44.6 billion as ODA; although, barring Afghanistan and Bangladesh, the growth in ODA has been less than expected. In 2010, the principal recipients of such aid among least developed countries in the region were Afghanistan (\$6.3 billion) and Bangladesh (\$1.4 billion), followed by Cambodia (\$818 million) and Nepal (\$734 million). Other least developed countries received very little. In addition, the amount of aid received by least developed countries is low in terms of what is needed and when compared with other regions. Thus, although aid received per poor person by the region's least developed countries and other special category States was more than double that

received by poor people in the region as a whole, such aid per poor person is much lower than in both Latin America and the Caribbean, and sub-Saharan Africa.¹

III. Going forward: global and regional consultation processes and outcomes

A. The global process

13. Recognizing the need to continue the international development effort started by the United Nations Millennium Declaration² of 18 September 2000, while at the same time responding to the new global development needs, the United Nations has initiated a global consultation process to develop a new global development agenda beyond 2015, when the current Millennium Development Goals period comes to an end.

14. Pursuant to that objective, the United Nations organized the first major gathering of stakeholders at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012, initiating an inclusive intergovernmental process to prepare a set of sustainable development goals.³ At the Conference, there was broad agreement on the need for close linkages between the two processes to arrive at one global development agenda for the period beyond 2015, with sustainable development at its core.

15. The outcome document of the Conference, “The future we want”,⁴ tried to respond to all the development priorities indicated by the very large number of global participants representing all major stakeholder groups, many of whose agendas did not match. It placed emphasis on accelerating achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and also refocused on priorities for the period beyond 2015, often by enlarging the scope of the indicators and increasing the ambition of the targets.

16. Given the focus on emerging environmental objectives in the development agenda beyond 2015, the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development goes beyond the scope of the Millennium Development Goals to include many other themes, such as disaster prevention and management, and the promotion of more sustainable economic activities. The document also substantially strengthened the emphasis on global partnerships so as to stress the importance of regional cooperation and enhancing South-South flows.

17. Following this major Conference in June 2012, and in order to develop further the broad mandate arrived at in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, the Secretary-General appointed the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Its 27 members included representatives from the private sector, academia, civil society and local authorities. The

² General Assembly resolution 55/2.

³ See *Report of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 20-22 June 2012* (A/CONF.216/16 and corr.1). Available from www.uncsd2012.org/content/documents/814UNCSD%20REPORT%20final%20revs.pdf.

⁴ General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex.

Panel published its first report in May 2013.⁵ While it broadly endorsed the approach arrived at in Rio de Janeiro, including eradicating extreme poverty, it set a target of 2030 to do so. In its report, the Panel emphasized the need to bring about the following five “transformative shifts” in the period beyond 2015:

(a) *Leave no one behind.* End extreme poverty in all its forms and ensure that no person — regardless of ethnicity, gender, geography, disability, race or other status — is denied basic economic opportunities and human rights;

(b) *Put sustainable development at the core.* Integrate the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability;

(c) *Transform economies for jobs and inclusive growth.* Only a profound economic transformation can end extreme poverty and improve livelihoods, by harnessing innovation, technology and the potential of business;

(d) *Build peace and effective, open and accountable institutions for all.* Freedom from conflict and violence is the most fundamental human entitlement, and the essential foundation for building peaceful and prosperous societies. At the same time, people expect their Governments to be honest, accountable and responsive to their needs;

(e) *Forge a new global partnership.* A new spirit of solidarity, cooperation, and mutual accountability must underpin the agenda beyond 2015. This new partnership should be based on a common understanding of the shared global humanity, based on mutual respect and mutual benefit. Such a partnership should be centred around people, including those affected by poverty and exclusion, women, youth, the aged, disabled persons, and indigenous peoples. It should include civil society organizations, multilateral institutions, local and national governments, the scientific and academic community, businesses and private philanthropy.

18. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development also resolved to establish an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process on sustainable development goals, to be agreed upon by the General Assembly. Heads of State and Government decided that an open working group should be constituted that would submit its report containing a proposal for sustainable development goals to the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session.

19. The Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals was established by the General Assembly in January 2013⁶ in order to conduct discussions and consultations on a wide range of themes and formulate a proposal on sustainable developments goals. From March 2013 to February 2014, the Group held eight sessions on the themes identified in the above-mentioned outcome document.

20. The Co-Chairs of the Open Working Group have begun the work of consolidating the results of the consultations and will provide those to the Open Working Group in order to initiate the process of building consensus around a set of focus areas. These focus areas are underpinned by the three most pressing challenges facing humankind, namely: eradication of poverty; inequitable development within and among States; and protection of the environment.

⁵ *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development. The Report of the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda* (New York, United Nations, 2013). Available from www.post2015hlp.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/UN-Report.pdf.

⁶ Decision 67/555 of 22 January 2013.

B. The Asia-Pacific regional consultation process, including least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries

21. In parallel with those global consultations, the Asia-Pacific region also undertook a regional consultation process, which included least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries; as well as two major least-developed-country-specific consultations in Siem Reap, Cambodia, and Bangkok.

22. The regional consultations are important in understanding the aspirations of the Asia-Pacific least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries since these were specifically included in the discussions, and the outcomes also take into account their views and suggestions. The following regional consultations were undertaken — under the aegis of the ESCAP/ADB/UNDP regional Millennium Development Goals partnership — on supporting the development agenda beyond 2015:

(a) Regional Conference on Sustainable Development Goals, Manila, May 2012;

(b) Subregional Workshop on Millennium Development Goals and the Post-2015 Development Framework for Central and East Asia, Almaty, Kazakhstan, September 2012;

(c) Post-2015 Pacific Consultation, Nadi, Fiji, October 2012;

(d) Subregional Workshop on Millennium Development Goals and the Post-2015 Development Agenda for South-East Asia, Bangkok, November 2012;

(e) Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting on the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action, Siem Reap, Cambodia, December 2012;

(f) Subregional Workshop on Accelerated Achievement of Millennium Development Goals and the Post-2015 Development Agenda in South Asia, Dhaka, January 2013.

Both government and non-government participants from each developing country, including civil society groups, academics and development partners from the concerned subregions, participated at these consultations.

23. Based on these regional consultations with stakeholders, ESCAP, ADB and UNDP brought out a regional report.¹ The report highlighted the following major development challenges for the Asia-Pacific region:

(a) *Poverty and inequality*. The region faces massive extreme poverty, and inequality is rising both in terms of incomes and in access to opportunities;

(b) *Lack of decent and productive jobs*. The region's growth has not created sufficient jobs and about 60 per cent of workers are in low-productive, vulnerable employment;

(c) *Continuing hunger and food insecurity*. The region is home to 60 per cent of the world's hungry with the problem most acute in South Asia and among women;

(d) *An abiding bias against women*. Women in the region remain deprived with severe deficits in health and education, low life expectancies, and are subjected to continued violence;

(e) *Limited achievements in health.* Primary health care remains poor with high maternal and childhood mortality rates. The rise of non-communicable diseases has become a major threat;

(f) *Low quality education.* Although the region has made strides in providing universal primary education, the low quality of education has emerged as a major issue;

(g) *Heightened vulnerability and economic insecurity.* Households are facing increased risks due to factors such as the rise in frequency of economic shocks, natural calamities, inflation, climate change and exposure to diseases from across borders. Better social protection in the region — where over 60 per cent of the population has no such protection — must be ensured;

(h) *Rapid demographic change.* This presents new problems as some countries have to deal with higher dependency ratios among the elderly and others face the challenge of a large youth bulge;

(i) *Unplanned urbanization.* With rapid urbanization and huge internal rural urban migrations, challenges are increasing to provide basic services in urban areas and develop a liveable environment in such areas;

(j) *Pressure on natural resources.* The patterns of consumption and production in the region have become increasingly unsustainable and are taking a severe toll on the region's environment;

(k) *Exposure to disasters.* The region is the world's most disaster prone area and there is the risk of increasing frequency of such disasters in the future;

(l) *The rising threat of climate change.* This is producing a large number of new challenges, ranging from threats to agriculture and food security, to rising sea levels.

24. To address these development challenges, the regional report proposes the following 12 goals for the development agenda framework:

- Zero income poverty
- Zero hunger and malnutrition
- Gender equality
- Decent jobs for everyone of working age
- Health for all
- Improved living conditions for all
- Quality education for all
- Liveable cities
- Environmental responsibility and management of natural resources
- Disaster risk reduction
- Accountable and responsive Governments
- Strong development partnerships and reformed global governance

25. In addition to setting development priorities along with specific goals for them, the Asia-Pacific regional consultations suggest adopting a set of “guiding principles” to design the framework for the development agenda beyond 2015. These call for such framework to have the following features:

(a) To be based on the three pillars of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental;

(b) To be underpinned by inclusive growth;

(c) To be customized to national development needs;

- (d) To be embedded in equity;
- (e) To be backed by identified sources of finance;
- (f) To be founded on partnerships;
- (g) To be monitored by robust statistical systems.

26. The above regional views and perspectives reflect, in general, the views of the Asia-Pacific least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries as they incorporate feedback from these countries.

IV. Regional consultations and the major development priorities of least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries

27. Apart from the Asia-Pacific-wide consultations, which included least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries, there were specific consultations with most of them in order to ascertain their views on the development agenda beyond 2015. The first of these was in Siem Reap, Cambodia, from 17 to 19 December 2012, and it formed part of the discussions on reviewing progress on implementation in the Asia-Pacific region of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020⁷ (Istanbul Programme of Action). The final day of the discussions in Siem Reap was devoted to the development agenda beyond 2015. The second consultation⁸ was organized on 24 April 2013 at ESCAP headquarters, specifically to discuss the development agenda beyond 2015 with Asia-Pacific least developed, landlocked developing and small island developing countries. Both meetings were attended by officials from these groups of countries as well as United Nations entities, non-governmental organizations and development partners. The basic messages and outcomes⁹ from these consultations are discussed below.

A. Overall objectives and general principles

28. *The development of least developed, landlocked developing and small island developing countries must be at the forefront of the future development agenda.* Least developed countries observed early on that their development was quite unsatisfactory and that they had fallen far behind other countries in terms of economic and social development, that they continued to suffer from the constraints imposed on them by their geographic and structural impediments and that they were subject to frequent economic shocks and natural calamities, which increased the vulnerability of their populations. They have therefore urged that any future global development agenda must

⁷ *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9-13 May 2011 (A/CONF.219/7), chap. II.*

⁸ Meeting on the United Nations Development Agenda Beyond 2015 for Asia-Pacific Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

⁹ Bangkok Declaration on the United Nations Development Agenda for Asia-Pacific Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (ESCAP resolution 69/3, annex). "Siem Reap Outcome Document: Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting on the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action, Siem Reap, Cambodia, 17-18 December 2012". Available from http://old.escap.un.org/pdd/calendar/CSN-AP-RegionalMeeting-IPOA-SiemReap-Dec2012/Siem-Reap-Outcome-Documents_Final.pdf.

place the development of least developed countries at the forefront of such an agenda.

29. *Eradication of poverty and hunger, as well as the attainment of happiness and well-being of all.* Least developed countries would like to see this overall vision achieved through more inclusive and balanced economic growth that promotes these objectives, while achieving sustainable development (paragraph 11 of the Bangkok Declaration).

30. *Integration of international programmes of action.* Least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries have also called for the complete implementation of all internationally endorsed existing programmes of action and general resolutions that expressly reference them so as to further their development. They also want to see those programmes of action and general resolutions integrated into the future development agenda, including the following:

(a) The Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020⁷ identified eight priority areas of action, each supported by concrete deliverables and commitments. These eight development priorities include: (i) productive capacity; (ii) agriculture, food security and rural development; (iii) trade; (iv) commodities; (v) human and social development; (vi) multiple crises and other emerging challenges; (vii) mobilizing financial resources for development and capacity-building; and (viii) governance at all levels;

(b) The Almaty Programme of Action¹⁰ sets out the needs of landlocked developing countries in an integrated document, which was the first to coordinate global efforts to tackle the unique needs of such countries. The Almaty Programme of Action identified the following major priorities for global action to support development of landlocked developing countries: (i) solving the fundamental transit issues of landlocked developing countries; (ii) developing and maintaining infrastructure; (iii) developing and facilitating international trade as an engine of development for landlocked developing countries; (iv) scaling up international support for landlocked developing countries; and (v) periodically reviewing and monitoring action taken by the United Nations and other partners of landlocked developing countries;

(c) The Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States¹¹ (Barbados Programme of Action) comprehensively addressed the economic, environmental, and social developmental vulnerabilities faced by such countries. It outlined a strategy to mitigate such vulnerabilities. It was the first internationally approved programme specifically for small island developing States, which have unanimously endorsed it.

¹⁰ Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries (*Report of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation, Almaty, Kazakhstan, 28 and 29 August 2003 (A/CONF.202/3)*, annex I).

¹¹ *Report of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Bridgetown, Barbados, 25 April-6 May 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.I.18 and corrigenda), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

B. Priorities for the development agenda beyond 2015

31. *Support for the three pillars of sustainable development.* A number of suggestions on the overall framework of the development agenda beyond 2015 have been made. First, least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries have endorsed the idea that the development agenda must be based on the three pillars of sustainable development. They also feel that the integrated agenda based on the three pillars of sustainable development will require considerable international cooperation on science and technology and that there must be equitable burden sharing, paying particular heed to development finance in these countries.

32. *Adopt a single, unified but differentiated framework to meet the needs of least developed, landlocked developing and small island developing countries.* In furtherance of this idea, the Bangkok Declaration proposed “the adoption of a single and unified but differentiated and inclusive global development agenda, which will address the severity of the challenges faced by least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States”.¹² The same view was also expressed at the Pacific subregional consultation.

33. In addition, least developed, landlocked developing and small island developing countries have indicated 11 major development priorities, which are discussed below.

1. Eradication of extreme poverty and hunger

34. This development priority — with the goal of zero extreme poverty, and hunger and malnutrition — has also been emphasized by the Asia-Pacific region as a whole. This is particularly important as there is still widespread and persistent poverty in many of the least developed and landlocked countries. Multidimensional poverty is also endemic in Pacific island States.

2. Promoting inclusive growth, employment generation and decent work

35. At Siem Reap, the participants stated that “economic growth is vital for realizing any post-2015 development goals but growth must be inclusive and sustainable and it must address inequalities and disparities”.¹³ This is in recognition of the fact that some have not experienced satisfactory growth rates while others that have had fairly robust growth have not found such growth to be inclusive or equitable.

36. One of the crucial characteristics of inclusive and equitable growth is its ability to generate employment on a large scale so as to provide youth employment. The recent pattern of growth in the region is characterized by insufficient job creation. This is a matter of serious concern as many of these countries are experiencing rapid increases in youth population. Insufficient decent and productive job creation would not only deprive them of the “demographic dividend”, but also likely threaten social and political stability, which may throw these countries into a vicious circle of low growth, insufficient jobs, poverty and instability.

37. Finally, even in cases where jobs are being created, large numbers are in the informal urban sector. With a lack of decent jobs in the organized

¹² Resolution 69/3, annex, para. 10.

¹³ See Siem Reap Outcome Document, para. 33.

sectors paying at least minimum wages, large numbers of the region's youth are migrating from traditional occupations to the cities looking for work, but ending up in low paid jobs in the informal sector with poor working conditions.

3. Educational goals with emphasis on quality of education

38. Least developed, landlocked developing and small island developing countries have concurred with the regional perspective on improving educational outcomes, focusing in particular on improving the quality of education. At Siem Reap, they stated that "Several other areas also need renewed emphasis including ... education goals with more emphasis on quality dimensions ..." ¹³ However, as in the case of the Asia-Pacific region as a whole, their concern for quality education would also extend to all other levels of education, such as secondary and tertiary as well.

4. Health outcomes including those on non-communicable diseases

39. Least developed, landlocked developing and small island developing countries have identified improving health outcomes with an emphasis on non-communicable diseases as a major priority in the development agenda beyond 2015. As in the region as a whole, least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries have also been performing very poorly as regards the health indicators contained in the Millennium Development Goals; quality health care for all remains a major challenge. Apart from traditional diseases, non-communicable diseases are also on the rise. Health infrastructure and services remain very poor in the majority of these countries and upgrading them and making them accessible to all is a major development challenge that has to be overcome after 2015.

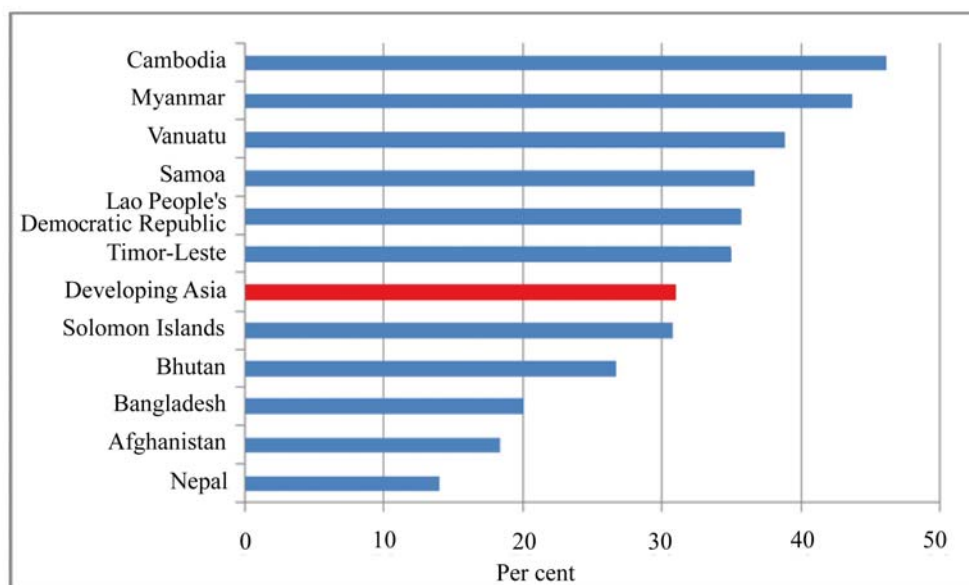
5. Gender equality and empowerment

40. Least developed, landlocked developing and small island developing countries have placed emphasis on achieving gender equality and empowerment in the development agenda beyond 2015. While the goal of equality in access to education has already been achieved by these groups of countries, they are a long way off achieving parity in tertiary education. Apart from parity in educational access, the most difficult outcome is to achieve gender empowerment, on which these countries, and the region as a whole, are still far behind.

41. A good proxy index for women's empowerment is the extent to which they are able to participate in labour markets outside traditional agriculture. To do so, they need education, skills and a conducive and safe work environment. In figure 2, the current levels of such participation for women in selected Asia-Pacific least developed countries are shown, indicating that most are well behind the average for developing Asia; this is particularly true for South Asian least developed countries.

42. Apart from greater participation in the workforce in non-traditional areas, other areas include better representation of women in parliament and the higher echelons of bureaucracy and the private sector, more reproductive rights and freedom from violence. All these areas have also been recommended in the overall regional perspective, which least developed countries endorse.

Figure 2
Share of women in non-agricultural wage employment, selected least developed countries, 2011



Source: United Nations, Millennium Development Goals Indicators (available from <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/default.aspx>) and *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2011* (United Nations publications, Sales No. E.11.I.10).

6. Managing demographic dynamics and urbanization

43. Least developed, landlocked developing and small island developing countries have also highlighted the issue of combating the challenges that demographic change is bringing to their societies. While the problem of ageing is an issue with some least developed countries, a larger — and common — problem relates to tackling rapid rural-urban migration and urbanization. Economic growth is creating rapid large-scale migration of populations from rural to urban areas, leading to major social, human and environmental challenges, which must be addressed. The example of Dhaka is a good one: it has rapidly expanded to become one of the largest Asian metropolises.

44. Therefore, the development agenda beyond 2015 must tackle the issues connected with urbanization and migration. Internal rural-urban migration and the growth of urban sprawl pose major human challenges. Those include the welfare of migrants and their families and also the provision of basic services and infrastructure, as well as the reduction of urban pollution, all of which are necessary for decent urban living.

7. Upgrading infrastructure

45. In both the Siem Reap Outcome Document and the Bangkok Declaration, emphasis has been placed on the importance of infrastructure. For many least developed countries, particularly those that are landlocked and island States, better transport and communications is crucial for their development. Both the Almaty and Barbados programmes of action have transport and communications at the core of their agendas in recognition of this. The state of infrastructure in landlocked and small island developing countries remains extremely poor.

46. Apart from its necessity for growth, improved infrastructure is essential for achieving the Millennium Development Goals as well. For example, access to schools and health centres is not possible without good roads. The relationship between roads and the attendance of health personnel at birth, for example, was shown to be strong for the region in the 2011-2012 regional Millennium Development Goals report.¹⁴ Infrastructure for distribution of water and providing sanitation help improve health and hygiene and so directly support human development and reduction of inequality.

8. Expanding productive capacities

47. Least developed, landlocked developing and small island developing countries have emphasized expanding productive capacities in the development agenda beyond 2015 in view of the constraints limited capacities are placing on their growth and development. The areas identified for improvement include: value addition in natural resource-based industries; diversification of local productive and export capabilities to better access the global value chain; information communications technology services and primary energy supply; and transport and communication networks. Increases in productive capacity, especially growth in labour productivity and total factor productivity with diversified and decent jobs, is critical for these countries to address their existing vulnerabilities, build resilience and promote inclusive, sustainable growth and development.

48. To achieve these capacity-building objectives, critical actions have been emphasized. These include: strengthening policy frameworks to ensure stable investment, including foreign direct investment inflows, growth in manufacturing and diversification through industrial and technological upgrading; rapid infrastructure development for domestic growth and export facilitation; enhanced international, regional and South-South partnerships; and learning lessons from countries transforming their economies even in the absence of resource-based comparative advantages. That would require creating a supportive, development-centred macroeconomic environment characterized by increased domestic resource mobilization; harnessing remittances to build productive capacities, vocational training and entrepreneurship development; enhancing functional literacy and creating productive youth employment; adopting measures for value-chain development for climbing the ladder of local, regional and global value chains; improving supply-chain management through supplier development and enterprise upgrading; and promoting effective networking aiming to ensure profitable supplier-buyer matchmaking.

9. Increased access to trade in products and services and building trade facilities

49. Greater access to trade in commodities and services and strengthening their export capabilities are keys to future development, and hence must be an area of major emphasis in the development agenda beyond 2015. More trade will also reduce dependence on aid and debt relief. The economies of least developed, landlocked developing and small island developing countries are characterized by important differences with respect to the composition and destinations of exports. Some are mainly exporters of manufactures, others of

¹⁴ United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Asian Development Bank and United Nations Development Programme, *Accelerating Equitable Achievement of the MDGs: Closing Gaps in Health and Nutrition Outcomes. Asia-Pacific Regional MDG Report 2011/12* (Bangkok, 2012).

services, while for some the focus is primary commodities. These separate challenges have to be tackled with additional development assistance focused in these areas. Priority areas include improved agricultural productivity and physical infrastructure.

50. Another critical area identified is enhanced labour market access for their migrant workers, particularly low-skilled workers. After merchandise exports, remittances are proving to be the second largest source of private financial flows in many of these countries. There is a need to focus on encouraging formal transfer of remittances by reducing costs through competition and removing other bottlenecks, together with mobilizing diaspora by building reliable databases and organizing knowledge networks to leverage engagement. There is also a need to ensure the protection of the rights of migrant labour.

10. Promoting accountable and responsive governance

51. Accountable and responsive governance at the local, national, regional and global levels has been identified as an essential priority for the future development agenda. Conflict-affected countries also require context-specific approaches to address security, governance and peace. The countries in question have made good progress over the last decade in improving governance, protection and promotion of human rights and democratic participation. However, for further progress they need to develop human and institutional capacities for effective governance; to improve capacity for coordination of international financial, trade and development institutions; and to participate effectively and to ensure that their voices are heard in international dialogues and actions on development and in decision-making in all areas affecting their development. They would need assistance to achieve all these, including conflict resolution and other country-specific needs.

11. Protecting natural capital, promoting green growth and tackling climate change

52. In their approach to environmental issues, least developed countries have reaffirmed their belief in the three pillars of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. Areas that have been particularly highlighted include: the increasing challenges of climate change, such as rising sea levels, desertification, land degradation and the loss of biodiversity; managing natural disasters and rehabilitation measures; protecting natural capital; and promoting green growth, including clean energy and other environmentally friendly patterns of production and consumption.

53. The environment is an important determinant in the lives and economies of the island countries. Environmental issues figured prominently in their recommendations for the development agenda beyond 2015 during the consultations with Pacific island countries.¹⁵

54. The Polynesian group agreed that the future they want is one of peace and security, sustainability and resilience with renewable energy, sustainable economies, climate change adaptation and ecological sustainability as leading issues. The future that Melanesian participants agreed upon highlighted, in particular, environmental sustainability, climate resilience and green growth. The key issues for Micronesia were closely related to the priorities put forward by Melanesia and Polynesia. As expected, climate change was identified as the most significant priority for the subregion.

¹⁵ Available from: www.worldwewant2015.org/file/284809/download/308788.

55. The Pacific subregion as a group identified several important priorities in this context, including:

(a) Environment targets must be contextualized. In addition to global targets, there must be room for regional, subregional and national targets with allowance for the special nature of small island developing States;

(b) There are numerous environmental goals and mechanisms already in place at the international level that should be incorporated into the development agenda beyond 2015;

(c) Environmental challenges cannot be solved at just one level. The fundamental notion of shared ownership of, and responsibility for, environmental action involving all stakeholders — Government, civil society, the private sector, individual citizens — must be promoted;

(d) Serious attention should be given to building the capacity of all stakeholders to understand the environmental issues and its linkages to sectoral activities;

(e) Pacific island countries should use climate change funds effectively and tie them to infrastructure development and other adaption activities that can help achieve the goals of the development agenda beyond 2015;

(f) The Pacific Ocean provides the countries in the region with enormous opportunities. Marine and oceanic resources could be sustainably used, exploiting green economic policies, to meet social and economic goals. The protection, preservation, management and development of oceans should be included in the development agenda beyond 2015;

(g) Achieving energy security is and will be increasingly important for Pacific island countries. For that to occur, policy instruments for sustainable energy production need to be implemented; access to energy needs to increase (particularly in Melanesia); and fuel supply arrangements and energy efficiency need to be improved.

V. International and regional partnerships for least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries

56. Least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries have all highlighted the need for international support in order for them to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and the future development agenda they have prioritized. One of the fundamental principles of the Millennium Declaration was promoting international partnerships to support, in particular, these countries with special needs, which would not be able to achieve the Millennium Development Goals solely through their own efforts. In this context, the Bangkok Declaration specifically highlights this issue in paragraphs 8 and 9:

8. We express our deep concern that, in 2012, ODA from the members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development dropped by 4.0 per cent compared with 2011 and by 6.0 per cent compared with 2010 in real terms. We are further concerned that the bilateral net ODA to least developed countries fell by 12.8 per cent in real terms in 2012 compared with 2011 and by 3.4 per cent between 2010 and 2011 for landlocked developing countries. We are particularly

concerned over the declining trends in ODA to the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small islands developing States in Asia and the Pacific.

9. We recognize that, given the intensity of the challenges, business as usual is not an option, and we call upon all our development partners to fulfil their commitments, take decisive action and accord high priority to the poorest and the most vulnerable countries, which are finding it most difficult to make progress despite their best efforts, with a view to accelerating the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in the remaining two years.

57. Both the Siem Reap Outcome Document and Bangkok Declaration identified a number of critical issues on partnerships for the future. First, with respect to ODA, along with increasing levels, there is need to bring about a fundamental restructuring and refocusing of aid flows to the Asia-Pacific least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries.¹⁶ At the same time, it is important that the quality of aid be improved and its development impact increased by building on the fundamental principles of national ownership, harmonization, mutual accountability and managing for results. That also requires aligning aid by sector with internationally agreed development goals and country priorities. In order to make ODA more effective, these countries need to address the gaps in existing institutions and governance structures, while the donors need to increase the predictability of their support, reduce fragmentation, and invest in areas keeping long-term national goals in view.

58. Secondly, apart from the public sector, the role of non-traditional partners must become more important in the future. This includes civil society and the private sector, such as international and national foundations. In order for the private sector to play a bigger and more responsible role, however, the necessary institutional and policy environments must be put in place. Similarly, Governments must actively promote the participation of civil society and identify roles that they can perform well, so that the overall resources for development can be augmented in the future.

59. Thirdly, they have identified regional cooperation as an important element in the global partnership on development. Apart from aid from new regional donors, they feel that other areas of regional cooperation, such as more intraregional trade, building regional infrastructure, facilitating mutually beneficial flows of labour, promoting regional flows for long-term investments and combating illicit fund transfers, are equally important. In the future, they feel that both regional and South-South cooperation will have to play a much bigger role.

60. Finally, partnerships should also focus on greater market access to least developed countries' exports and trade facilitation.

VI. Conclusions

61. The world is poised at a crucial stage in its development. A large momentum has built around formulating the development agenda beyond 2015. This presents a sizeable opportunity to end large-scale deprivations and unsustainable patterns of development. The development project cannot be

¹⁶ There is increasing evidence to suggest that most ODA is now flowing to the middle-income countries.

considered to have succeeded unless these are tackled with the greatest urgency.

62. This is the most opportune time to focus the world's attention on least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries. As has been observed, the development challenges faced by them should be brought to the forefront of the world's attention and its future development agenda. Fulfilment of the promises that the international community has made to least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries, and their own redoubled efforts, would enable the populations in these countries finally to attain the future they rightly demand.

63. Least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries consist of the economically weakest countries in the region. They face several major constraints — both in terms of financial resources and technical and physical capacities — in achieving their goal of ending poverty and attaining acceptable minimum levels of human and social development entirely through their own efforts. A new strengthened development agenda, with support from international and regional partners, is therefore particularly critical for them.
