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Work of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries

Report of the Secretary-General*

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 78/233, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report to inform it about the work of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries. It covers progress since the last report in November 2021. The present report was prepared with a view to enhancing the accountability of the Technology Bank to the General Assembly, its oversight by Member States and the visibility of its work and results. The report provides information on the results achieved and the progress made to date by the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries.

* The present report was submitted to the conference services for processing after the deadline for technical reasons beyond the control of the submitting office.

Contents

I. Background

1. The world's 45 least developed countries face unique challenges in their pursuit of sustainable development. They experience structural impediments, low income, limited infrastructure, weak productive capacities and a low level of technological development. In recognition of their unique needs, the international community implements special support measures to assist this group of countries in their development efforts.

2. As part of these measures, in 2016, by its resolution 71/251, the General Assembly established the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries. The establishment of the Technology Bank was significant because Sustainable Development Goal target 17.8, "fully operationalize the technology bank and science, technology and innovation capacity-building mechanism for least developed countries by 2017 and enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology", was the first target to be implemented well ahead of 2030. The Technology Bank initiated operations in 2018.

3. The establishment of the Technology Bank also symbolized the recognition of the critical role that science, technology and innovation play in fostering sustainable development and the urgent need to close the technological gap between the least developed countries and the rest of the world to ensure that no one is left behind.

4. In the Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the decade 2021–2030, it was affirmed that the Technology Bank would serve as a focal point for the least developed countries to strengthen their science, technology and innovation capacity towards building sustainable productive capacities and promoting structural economic transformation. This mandate places the Technology Bank at the centre of the least developed countries' efforts to advance their science, technology and innovation capacities through technology transfer and local technological capacity-building.

5. The Technology Bank operates with a core mission: supporting the least developed countries in harnessing the transformative power of science, technology and innovation for sustainable development and irreversible graduation from the least developed countries category. This translates into a multi-pronged approach that includes identifying appropriate technologies, facilitating access to such technologies and building local capacities in science, technology and innovation.

6. This emphasis also aligns with the six key transitions (food systems; energy access and affordability; digital connectivity; education; jobs and social protection; and climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution) conceptualized by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group to overcome siloed approaches and create entry points for cross-cutting synergies across all the Sustainable Development Goals.[1] Within this framework, digitalization represents one of the six transformative areas to accelerate the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, emphasizing the importance of the role of the Technology Bank.

7. The domestic institutionalized knowledge base in the least developed countries is often very limited and the level of technological capabilities of domestic enterprises is very low. In its Technology and Innovation Report 2023, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development highlighted that only 25 per cent of the population in the least developed countries has basic digital skills, in contrast to

[1] United Nations Sustainable Development Group, "Six transitions: investment pathways to deliver the SDGs", 2023.

75 per cent in developed nations.[2] These gaps in digital skills and innovation capacity present challenges for the least developed countries in terms of participation in the global technology market. A strategy for catch-up with relatively more developed countries needs to be focused on technological learning, as well as the transfer and effective absorption of technology. The challenges for the least developed countries include how to identify the technologies that they need, how to access the international knowledge pool and transfer the appropriate technology, including from developing countries, and how to promote a process of technological learning. To address those challenges, the Technology Bank plays a critical role as the facilitator of these knowledge accumulation and capacity-building processes.

8. By fostering technological development and innovation, the least developed countries can tackle some of their most pressing challenges:

(a) *Poverty reduction*. Technology and innovation can significantly contribute to poverty reduction by improving access to essential technologies, services and resources. Advances in agriculture, healthcare and education – all areas heavily influenced by science, technology and innovation – empower the least developed countries to address the root causes of poverty. Innovative solutions, including the application of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, can improve food security, enhance access to healthcare services and equip populations with the skills needed to improve their livelihoods;

(b) *Economic transformation and diversification*. Economies in many of the least developed countries are reliant on a narrow range of primary commodities. This dependency makes economies vulnerable to market fluctuations and risks, and limits their growth potential. Science, technology and innovation have the potential to fuel economic growth by driving productivity, enabling value addition, creating new industries and fostering entrepreneurship. The least developed countries can leverage technologies to diversify their economies, move beyond dependency on primary commodities and create decent jobs;

(c) *Climate change mitigation and adaptation*. The least developed countries are on the front lines of climate change, facing severe impacts despite contributing the least to its causes. Science, technology and innovation offer solutions for developing renewable energy sources, building climate-resilient infrastructure, improving disaster preparedness and generating opportunities connected with a green transition.

9. In comparison with developed countries, however, the least developed countries continue to lag behind in innovation, the adoption of new technologies and the implementation of policies and approaches for the growth and expansion of science, technology and innovation. According to the Global Innovation Index 2023, 20 out of 33 countries in the bottom quartile are least developed countries.[3] This is due to limited infrastructure, lack of resources and therefore inadequate fiscal space for investments in education, skills and research and development in science, technology and innovation. Bridging the technology and knowledge gaps is a necessary condition to accelerate their growth, income and productivity levels and a pathway towards sustainable development.

[2] *Technology and Innovation Report 2023: Opening Green Windows – Technological Opportunities for a Low-Carbon World* (United Nations publication, 2023).

[3] World Intellectual Property Organization, *Global Innovation Index 2023: Innovation in the Face of Uncertainty* (Geneva, 2023).

II. Work of the Technology Bank

10. The Technology Bank is a relatively new United Nations institution with a critical mandate to serve the most vulnerable countries in the world in their efforts to build capacities to eradicate poverty and fast-track their development. In 2022, and in preparation for the Fifth Conference on the Least Developed Countries, the Technology Bank launched the first-ever comprehensive review of the state of science, technology and innovation in the least developed countries.[4] Through the report, the Technology Bank aimed to raise global awareness of the challenges and opportunities associated with building science, technology and innovation in the least developed countries.

11. The analysis showed very low levels of investments in science, technology and innovation; indeed even most developed countries fall short of the often-used benchmark of devoting 1 per cent of GDP to research and development,[5] highlighting a significant funding gap between current investments and policy targets. It was also pointed out that the least developed countries are unable to fully capitalize on the opportunities presented by digitalization and the fourth industrial revolution, owing primarily to poor and unreliable infrastructure and skills shortages. Moreover, it was noted that innovation systems in most countries are still in their nascent stages. The importance of tailored policy interventions and support mechanisms to boost science, technology and innovation in the least developed countries was emphasized. Lastly, the report served to underscore the key role of international partnerships and enhanced cooperation between the least developed countries and more technologically advanced countries to facilitate knowledge transfer, enhance technological capabilities and foster innovation ecosystems.

12. Aiming to facilitate and drive such cooperation opportunities, the Technology Bank delivers its mandate through three main pillars of work:

(a) Facilitating the systematic and evidence-based identification of appropriate technologies and innovative solutions that are relevant to the needs of the least developed countries;

(b) Facilitating the transfer of appropriate technologies in identified priority areas for the least developed countries;

(c) Building science, technology and innovation capacity to support the development of productive capacity and structural economic transformation.

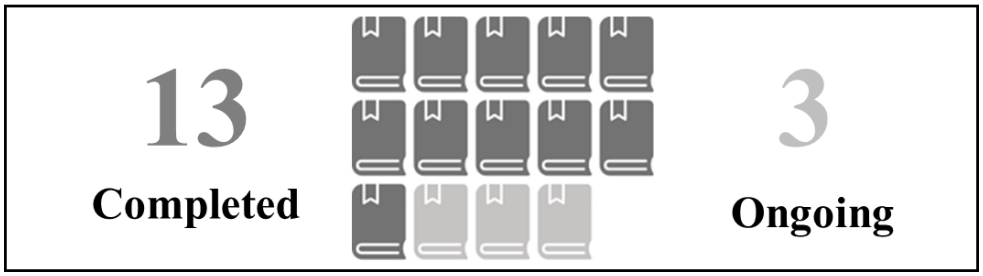
A. Facilitating the identification of appropriate technologies

13. The Technology Bank conducts technology needs assessments to identify the technologies and technical know-how that the least developed countries need to address key development challenges and, in the long term, assist them to in developing the technological and innovative capabilities required to achieve growth, promote structural transformation and attain the Sustainable Development Goals.

[4] Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries, *The State of Science, Technology and Innovation in the Least Developed Countries* (2022).

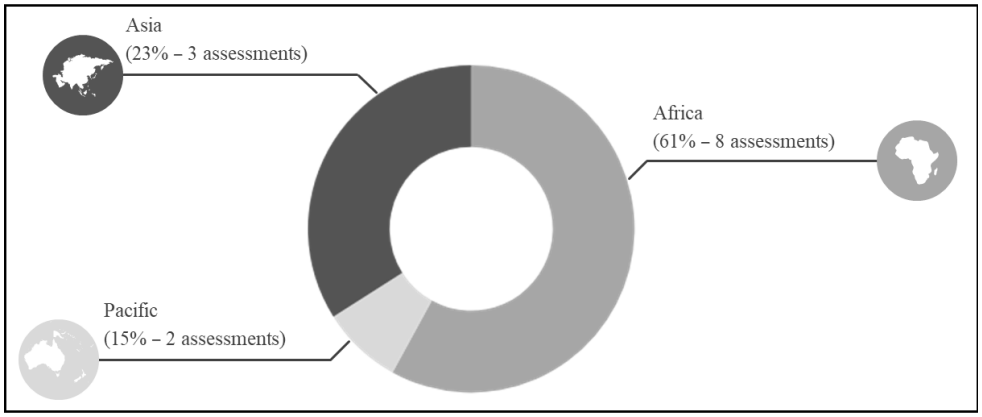
[5] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics (accessed on 29 July 2024).

Figure I
Number of technology needs assessments completed and ongoing



14. To date, 13 technology needs assessments have been completed, in Bangladesh (in partnership with the Commonwealth Secretariat), Bhutan, Cambodia, Djibouti, Guinea, Kiribati, Lesotho, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, the Gambia, Timor-Leste and Uganda. In 2024, three more assessments have been initiated, in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malawi and the United Republic of Tanzania (in partnership with the International Seabed Authority).

Figure II
Completed technology needs assessments by region



15. The technology needs assessments provide a comprehensive mapping of the most pressing technological needs of each country, with a view to serving as a knowledge repository to inform policy action and development partners' support to the least developed countries (see figure III for an overview of the process). In this context, technology needs assessments offer valuable insights into the state of technological development at the national level, which are relevant for informing the development of the common country analysis. Recently, the results of the technology needs assessments conducted in Djibouti were used in the preparation of the 2024 common country analysis to identify the significant role that technology will play in addressing the country's sustainable development needs. The value of the technology needs assessments lies in their capacity to provide targeted, contextualized and evidence-based insights on the specific areas or sectors where countries can most benefit from technological inputs. The technology needs assessment methodology emphasizes national stakeholder consultation, including private sector actors, and the alignment of the needs assessment with national development strategies and priorities. Technology needs assessments are demand driven and help to form the basis for designing technology transfer and capacity-building programmes that the Technology Bank implements in the least developed countries. It can also be used as a valuable programming tool by the United Nations and other development partners at the country level.

Figure III
Technology needs assessment process overview

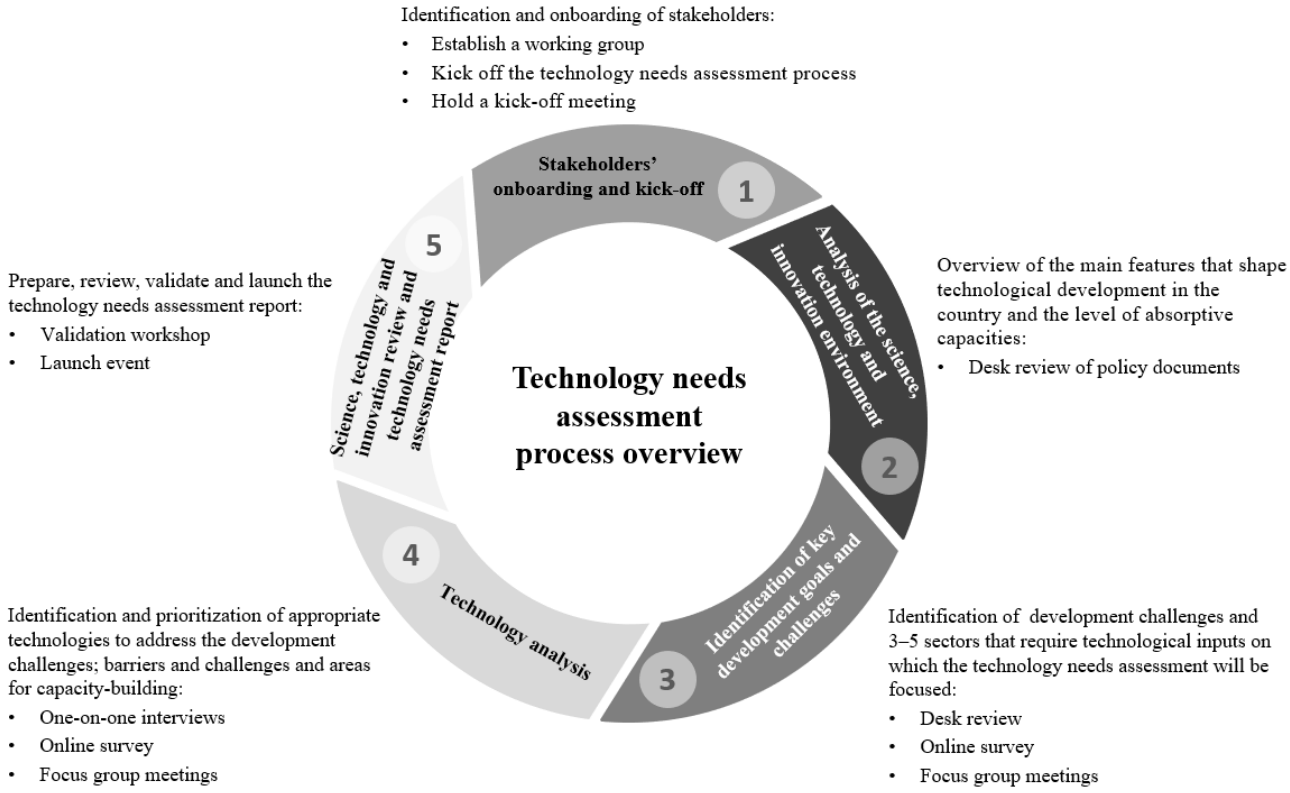
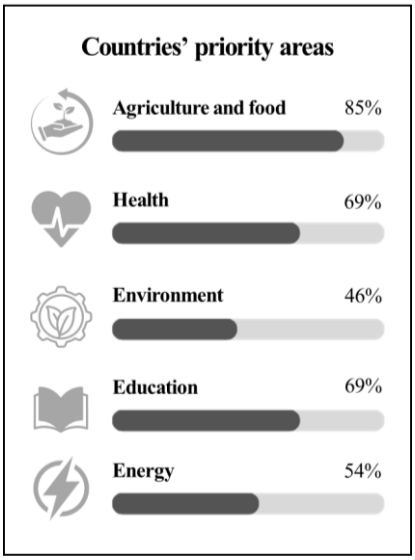


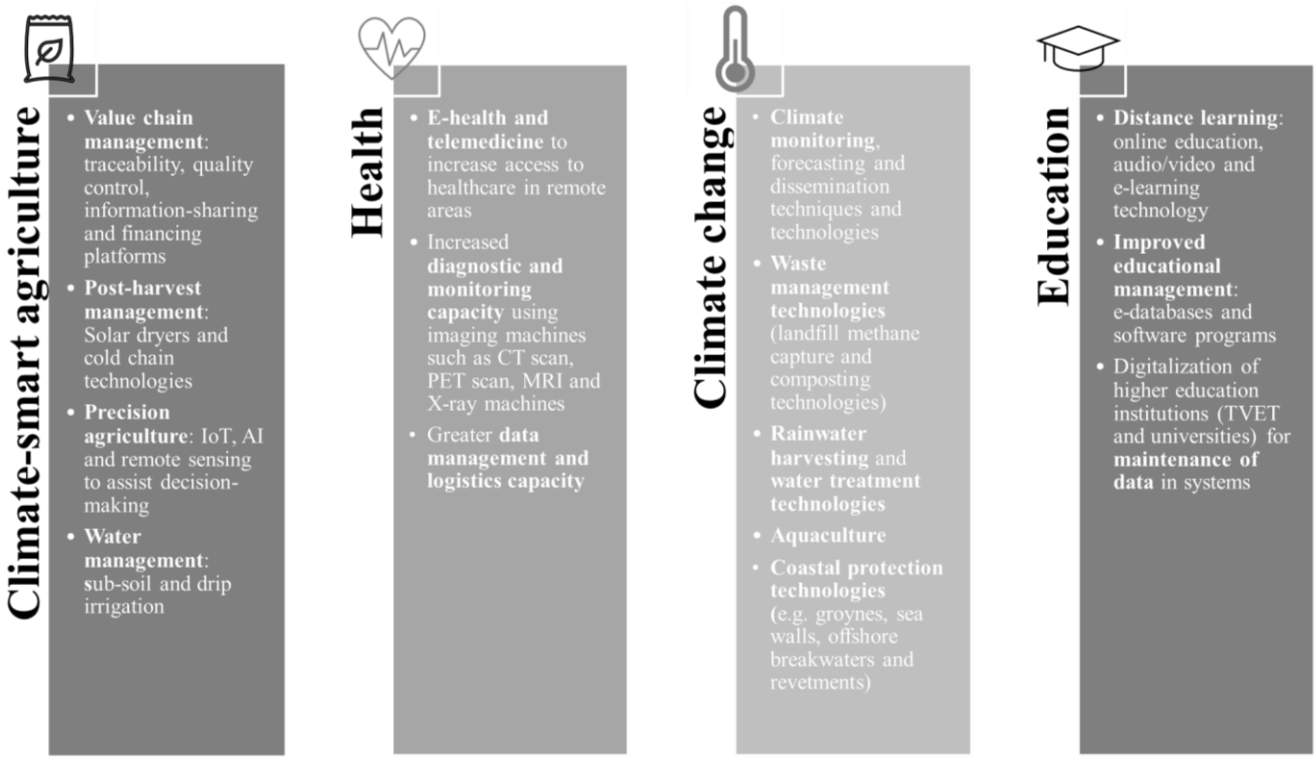
Figure IV
Priority areas identified by technology needs assessments[6]



[6] Technology needs assessments provide a clear picture of the country's science, technology and innovation ecosystem, identifying between three and five priority sectors that require technology inputs to address the country development challenges. Of the 13 completed technology needs assessments, 11 tackle agriculture and food, 9 address education and health, 7 include a focus on energy, and 6 identify the environment as a priority area.

16. The 13 technology needs assessments completed thus far have highlighted clear priorities across several socioeconomic sectors, highlighting the important role that technological solutions and innovation can play in addressing pressing challenges in such areas as agriculture, energy, climate change, health, manufacturing and education. As most economies in the least developed countries, especially those located in Africa, are agrarian-based, agriculture has featured prominently as a priority sector in over 80 per cent of the completed technology needs assessments. Technology is urgently needed to transform food systems to become more sustainable, efficient and resilient, to improve food production and the quality of nutrition, and to create a better environment and a better life. With over 270 million people in the least developed countries still suffering from severe food insecurity,[7] these countries urgently need access to a variety of technological solutions.

Figure V
A sample of technological solutions identified in the technology needs assessments



Abbreviations: AI, artificial intelligence; CT, computed tomography; IoT, Internet of things; MRI, magnetic resonance imaging; PET, positron emission tomography; TVET, technical and vocational education and training.

17. As an example, many of the least developed countries have to deal with post-harvest losses that reach 30 to 40 per cent. The main reason for these losses is a lack of technologies and know-how, as shown by the technology needs assessment for the Gambia, which highlighted the need for investment in post-harvest, food processing and preservation techniques and technologies (e.g. drying, freezing, vacuum packing, canning and bottling). The application of appropriate technologies could minimize, if not totally reduce, unnecessary wastage of harvested products, thereby enabling countries to export more or process locally. These technologies are crucial for increasing food availability, enhancing food accessibility, improving quality and

[7] See https://unstats.un.org/UNSDWebsite/undatacommons/countries?p=undata-geo%2FG00404000&v=dc%2Ftopic%2Fsdg_2.1.2.

nutritional value, and reducing uncertainty and instability in food supplies. The Technology Bank is the only United Nations organization that conducts technology needs assessments for the least developed countries with the specific objective of creating follow-up technical cooperation programmes to support the country's specific technology needs. This guarantees that the technology-related support that the Technology Bank or any other development partner initiates in the least developed countries is evidence-based, demand driven and derived from consultations with key stakeholders at the national level. Based on the technology needs assessment, the Technology Bank also provides technical support to countries that wish to prepare a road map for addressing the identified priority areas. For example, the Technology Bank assisted Lesotho in organizing an assessment implementation workshop, held in Maseru, bringing together various national and regional stakeholders, including the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Southern African Development Community, the United Nations country team, the private sector, potential donors, academia, civil society organizations and the media, to discuss practical ways to implement some of the recommendations from the technology needs assessment.

B. Facilitating the transfer of appropriate technologies

18. One of the core mandates of the Technology Bank is to assist the least developed countries in gaining access to appropriate technologies and strengthening their science, technology and innovation capacity, including the capacity to identify, absorb, develop, integrate and scale up the deployment of technologies and innovations. Based on the findings and recommendations of technology needs assessments, the Technology Bank ensures that the support provided through the transfer of technology is tailored to specific areas or sectors where technological solutions will have a meaningful impact.

19. The support that the Technology Bank provides to the least developed countries is currently focused on four thematic areas derived from the technology needs assessments that the Technology Bank has completed to date. These are: agriculture and food systems; environment, climate change and resilience; health; and education and digital skills development. In this context, the Technology Bank acts as a bridge-builder, matching the specific needs of the least developed countries with suitable technologies that address them and assisting these countries in attracting resources for the implementation of initiatives to address existing gaps. This might involve facilitating technology transfer agreements, promoting South-South cooperation, facilitating partnerships with the private sector and supporting the adaptation and scaling-up of existing technologies.

20. An example of relevant work implemented in this area is the "Hear, listen, speak" programme for children in Bhutan, which has been implemented since 2021. The programme is aimed at strengthening the ear and hearing care on offer in Bhutan through technology transfer and capacity-building, with a view to improving the screening, rehabilitation and treatment of hearing loss and ear disorders in children. The initiative is undertaken in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and private sector partners, Medtronic LABS, MED-EL (under the public-private partnership programme with the Austrian Development Agency) and the Hear the World Foundation. The Technology Bank supported Bhutan by facilitating technology transfer and capacity-building, focusing on training and screening as critical areas of intervention. The training needs were identified on the basis of the limited availability of personnel with the capacity to conduct effective hearing screenings and treatments. The support played out through a collaborative approach, equipping school health coordinators, audiologists and ear, nose and throat technicians with the necessary skills and latest technologies to improve ear care services across Bhutan. Currently

in the last phase of implementation, the programme has screened over 76,000 schoolchildren and treated over 3,000 children in nine districts. To date, 248 school health coordinators have been trained to conduct hearing screening in schools, and 20 audiologists and ear, nose and throat technicians have received training on the use of audiology equipment and screening devices incorporating the latest technologies, which were provided to Bhutan through the project.

21. During 2023 and to date, the Technology Bank has launched other country-specific pilot projects in some of the areas of focus identified through the technology needs assessments. These projects include: a post-harvest loss management project in the Gambia; a rammed earth construction project to be implemented in Mozambique; and the Technology Makers Lab project. The Technology Makers Lab project is an initiative focused on youth empowerment and skill development through hands-on learning in various scientific and technological fields, aimed at fostering innovation and addressing youth unemployment.

22. For example, the Technology Bank conducted a technology needs assessment in the Gambia, where agriculture and agroprocessing emerged as priority areas in need of enhanced investment for technological development. Within that context, the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology of the Gambia requested support to develop technological capacity and support know-how transfer to strengthen the cashew value chain and reduce harvest loss, which is often caused by the lack of appropriate technologies and technical know-how for drying, storing, packaging and processing cashews. The Technology Bank has designed a learning exchange for 10 Gambian experts and facilitated access to technical solutions, leveraging the support and expertise of Türkiye in groundnuts and pistachios.

23. The Technology Makers Lab model, developed in partnership with the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye and the Ministry of Industry and Technology of Türkiye, was piloted in the Niger in anticipation of a broader future roll-out. The project is aimed at enhancing digital and entrepreneurial skills among young people and preparing them for the diffusion and uptake of frontier technologies through workshops and training, including on: robotics and coding; design and production; materials science and nanotechnology; software technologies; and cybersecurity.

C. Building science, technology and innovation capacity

24. Technology transfer is not, by itself, sufficient for inducing technological development. Effective utilization and deployment of acquired technologies and their absorption and scaling-up depends on the level of development of domestic science, technology and innovation capacity and the policy and regulatory environment that supports the science, technology and innovation ecosystem. In the long-term, the impact of technology transfer is determined by the ability of recipient countries or their enterprises to learn about and effectively use the acquired technologies. Thus, central to the support provided by the Technology Bank is a capacity-building component designed to ensure local technological learning. The Technology Bank collaborates with national and international partners to create an enabling environment for sustainable technological capability building, including for the effective utilization of Indigenous technologies. This includes training government officials, researchers and entrepreneurs on technology identification, adaptation and management.

25. In this connection, in 2023, the Technology Bank and the Istanbul International Centre for Private Sector in Development of the United Nations Development Programme launched the Frontier Tech Leaders Programme, with the objective of

bridging the digital divide and contributing to the 2030 Agenda by strengthening local technology and entrepreneurial capacities in the least developed countries. Digital technologies can play a role in achieving up to 70 per cent of all Sustainable Development Goal targets, making digital upskilling, particularly in the context of emerging technologies, an important enabler of sustainable development.[8] In less than one year, over 120 students from the least developed countries have been trained in machine learning and coding.

26. On the higher education front, the Technology Bank has collaborated with the World Eco-Design Conference and the International School of Design at Zhejiang University in Ningbo, China, to support students from the least developed countries in obtaining access to opportunities to enhance their industrial design capacities. Over the course of three years, 100 students from 22 of the least developed countries were awarded full scholarships and joined the International Design Education Programme to undertake a master's level degree at Zhejiang University. The total value of the scholarships awarded is approximately $750,000 per year. The Technology Bank has already initiated discussions for a successor to this initiative.

27. The Technology Bank continues to coordinate its work on science, technology and innovation with other United Nations entities through the Technology Facilitation Mechanism, in particular the United Nations Inter-agency Task Team on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals and the multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals. Under its workstream 6, the Inter-agency Task Team, of which the Technology Bank is a member, has developed capacity-building opportunities for policymakers in science, technology and innovation, including from the least developed countries. Since 2018, over 800 officials from over 90 countries have benefited from the regional training and webinars delivered under workstream 6.

III. Reforms and recent efforts to strengthen the effectiveness of the Technology Bank

28. The Technology Bank underwent a period of transition and reform in 2022–2023. In 2022, the Council of the Technology Bank initiated several measures aimed at re-evaluating the strategic direction that the organization had followed since it had begun operations in 2018, the effectiveness of its business model and its organizational structure.

29. At its fifth session, the Council requested that an independent functional review of the Technology Bank be conducted in 2022 to assess, among other things, the functions, skill sets, capacities and organizational structures needed to better fulfil its core mandate, while ensuring its financial sustainability as a United Nations system entity. The primary objective of the review process was to enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of the work of the Technology Bank. During the review period, the Technology Bank underwent a process of downsizing and organizational restructuring, with adjustments of post and non-post expenditures to meet the level of available and sustainable funding.

30. More recently, several additional measures have been put in place to reinvigorate and strengthen the Technology Bank, including with respect to its governance, accountability mechanisms, and resources to ensure its ability to fully deliver on its mandate and fulfil the expectations of the least developed countries.

[8] International Telecommunication Union and United Nations Development Programme, "SDG digital acceleration agenda", 2023.

31. In December 2023, the Secretary-General appointed new members to the Council of the Technology Bank. The previous members served from 2017 for two terms. In view of the Secretary-General's efforts to revitalize the Technology Bank and improve its accountability to the General Assembly, the current Council includes six Permanent Representatives of Member States to the United Nations based in New York. The other members are prominent experts on science, technology and innovation and development cooperation.

32. The Charter of the Technology Bank also provides that representatives of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Intellectual Property Organization and the World Bank may participate as observers in the meetings of the Council. In 2023, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the International Telecommunication Union and the World Food Programme were invited to participate as observers. The present report was also prepared with a view to enhancing the accountability of the Technology Bank to the General Assembly, its oversight by Member States and the visibility of its work and results.

IV. Resources and funding

33. The budget of the Technology Bank relies on voluntary contributions. Since 2022, the Technology Bank has been operating under a new approach to project financing based on targeted resource mobilization.

34. In February 2022, the Technology Bank signed a five-year financial agreement with the Government of Türkiye, in which the latter, as a host country, pledged to provide $1.7 million a year to support the operational and programmatic activities of the Technology Bank. This is the only source of funding available to the Technology Bank to cover the cost of its main office and its day-to-day operations, including support to the management of programmes. In addition, the financial agreement includes supplementary earmarked funding in the amount of $0.2 million a year to be used for joint projects relevant to the Sustainable Development Goals.

35. Despite the financial support provided by the Government of Türkiye, the resources currently available to the Technology Bank are limited, especially when compared with its ambitious mandate to serve as a focal point within the United Nations system for strengthening the technological capabilities of the 45 least developed countries. While it has been exploring innovative pathways to strengthen partnerships with key stakeholders, including the private sector, with the current level of resources, the Technology Bank has very limited flexibility to implement programmatic activities across all 45 of the least developed countries and deliver strong results.

36. Addressing the structural challenges constraining technological development in the least developed countries requires a renewed and increased commitment from Member States to allocate adequate resources to the Technology Bank. The feasibility study for the Technology Bank initially indicated that $17.7 million would be required to fund activities during its first biennium (2016–2017). However, since its establishment, the total financial resources committed to it over a decade have amounted to only $21.9 million. Notably, $3.8 million of that total is committed for the upcoming years 2025–2026.

37. This amounts to only a small fraction of what was initially indicated as the volume of resources needed to operationalize the Technology Bank and meet expectations regarding the level of support to be provided by the organization. In the Doha Programme of Action, Member States, as well as international organizations, foundations and the private sector, were invited to provide voluntary financial and in-kind resources to the Technology Bank in order to enhance its capacity and effectiveness.

V. Way forward to deliver on the mandate of the Technology Bank as a focal point on science, technology and innovation for the least developed countries

38. Over the past eight years, the world has seen an unprecedented mobilization around the Sustainable Development Goals. However, over the halfway line towards 2030, the Goals are still very far from being achieved. A preliminary assessment of the 135 targets for which data are available shows that, globally, only about 17 per cent are on track; nearly half, although showing some progress, are moderately or severely off track; and some 30 per cent have either seen no movement or regressed below the 2015 baseline.[9]

39. A recent analysis showed that the least developed countries had made progress on only 28 per cent of the 169 Sustainable Development Goal targets since 2015, while on the remaining 72 per cent (121 targets), they had either shown a regression or the level of progress made was unknown owing to insufficient data.[10] The Sustainable Development Goals include 24 targets that are specific to the least developed countries.[11] Across these targets, progress has mostly been limited or lacking.

40. While the lack of progress towards the Goals is universal, the least developed countries and their people are being left the farthest behind. Since the establishment of the least developed country category in 1971, only seven countries have graduated from the category, while five more countries are expected to graduate between 2024 and 2027. More than 380 million people in the least developed countries are still living in poverty, and over 270 million people still suffer from severe food insecurity. People in the least developed countries are also disproportionately affected by climate change, with more than two thirds of deaths caused by climate-related disasters worldwide occurring in the least developed countries. Some 720 million people are still offline, which means that they cannot access the economic and social opportunities provided by digital technologies.

41. Technological innovation can be a powerful driver of sustainable development across all these dimensions, which is widely recognized and was reaffirmed by Member States in the political declaration adopted at the 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Summit and documented as one of six key transitions for Sustainable Development Goal acceleration. However, that potential remains vastly underrealized, especially in the least developed countries. Technology can increase productivity, advance inclusion, build resilience against crises and address urgent global priorities such as climate change, access to quality healthcare, food insecurity, and gender and other social inequities.

[9] See A/78/80-E/2023/64.

[10] Peter Lunenborg, “Least developed countries and their progress on the Sustainable Development Goals”, Research Paper 183 (South Centre, 2023).

[11] Targets 1.a, 2.a, 3.c, 4.b, 4.c, 7.b, 8.1, 8.a, 9.2, 9.a, 9.c, 10.a, 10.b, 11.c, 13.b, 14.6, 14.7, 14.a, 17.2, 17.5, 17.8, 17.11, 17.12 and 17.18.

42. However, the potential of technological innovation, in particular for the structural transformation of the least developed countries and their transition out of systemic vulnerability, has not been fully realized. For that reason, the Summit of the Future, with the adoption of the Pact for the Future and the Global Digital Compact by Member States, represented a crucial opportunity to achieve significant commitments that will help to accelerate digitalization and improve connectivity in developing countries, in particular the least developed countries.

43. Critical gaps include the undersupply of technologies for many development priorities; the extreme concentration of global science, technology and innovation investments and capacity in a few developed countries; and weak science, technology and innovation capacity and knowledge assets in most of the least developed countries. As a result of inadequate incentive structures and institutional and policy weaknesses, technology is often inaccessible to the least developed countries. Bridging the technology and knowledge gaps is a necessary condition to accelerate convergence in terms of growth, income and productivity levels and thus to foster development.

44. In the 2024 Political Declaration of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, Member States have reiterated the need to accelerate the transfer of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries on favourable terms, including on concessional and preferential terms, as mutually agreed. The commitment to bridging the science, technology and innovation divides between the least developed countries and the rest of the world requires urgent resource mobilization to ensure action at scale.

45. The least developed countries require all sorts of technological inputs and innovations to accelerate their growth and development and to meet the Sustainable Development Goals. However, identifying technologies and innovative solutions that are appropriate and relevant for the needs of the least developed countries and sustainable is neither easy nor straightforward, in particular given the heterogeneity and multidimensional vulnerabilities of the least developed countries.

46. The least developed countries can build on and leapfrog by choosing and utilizing existing technologies and technical know-how to promote their sustainable development. However, the identification and prioritization of technologies can be challenging. In this regard, the technology needs assessments conducted by the Technology Bank are a critical tool for identifying the specific areas and sectors of need and as well as pertinent technological solutions technologies.

47. The technology needs assessments enable the least developed countries and their development partners to identify and tailor appropriate technologies to sectors and economic activities that are aligned with national development objectives, including cooperation frameworks and the Sustainable Development Goals. Over the period 2025–2027, the Technology Bank aims to complete technology needs assessments in 15 additional countries. By 2027, at least 30 of the least developed countries will have a comprehensive and in-depth map of their most urgent technological needs. This will contribute to prioritizing strategic investments in accelerating sustainable development by achieving higher productivity, in creating decent jobs and enhancing growth.

48. Through the lessons that it has learned from the work that it has done in its first six years of operations, the Technology Bank has already identified key action areas in which the least developed countries need enhanced support, which are in line with the Doha Programme of Action: developing small, medium and large agribusinesses and industries with sustainable value addition along the agricultural value chain; scaling up the adoption of technology for climate change adaptation and resilience; and developing digital skills and building human capital and innovation capacity to

leverage the opportunities provided by emerging technologies across all sectors. These three areas are highly interlinked and have a synergic potential to drive transformation in the least developed countries. Growing agricultural productivity by developing sustainable agribusinesses is a prerequisite for unleashing industrialization potential and structural transformation, and accelerating the green and digital transitions in these countries will not be possible without inclusive and lasting technology adoption. Likewise, without technological capabilities and digital connectivity, the least developed countries are at risk of falling behind again – this time in the global digital transformation race.

49. Therefore, agribusiness, climate change and digital skills will form the focus of the work of the Technology Bank in facilitating access to relevant and appropriate technologies through technology transfer and capacity-building over the course of its strategic plan for 2025–2027. As technology transfer is not, by itself, sufficient for inducing technological development, it is important that the support provided by the Technology Bank is not limited to identification and deployment of technologies but also includes creating – in partnership with key national and international partners – the enabling environment necessary to sustain the building of local technological capabilities. This is crucial, as the effective utilization of acquired technologies and their absorption and scaling-up will ultimately depend on the level domestic science, technology and innovation capacity and the policy and regulatory environment that supports the ecosystem. A cross-cutting theme will therefore be the Technology Bank boosting its capacity to serve as the knowledge hub for the least developed countries on matters related to science, technology and innovation.

50. Moving forward, the work of the Technology Bank will be guided by the lessons learned and experience acquired in the first six years of its operations and the key principles emerging from the reform process, especially: emphasis by the Technology Bank on demand-driven, country-owned support; continued improvement and dissemination of the technology needs assessments and their insights; building and leveraging partnerships in support of science, technology and innovation capacity in the least developed countries; maintaining agility and responsiveness to new challenges and opportunities; giving priority to resource mobilization; focusing on comparative strengths; and commitment to inclusive technological development, paying special attention to young people and gender equity in science, technology and innovation.

51. The Technology Bank will continue to partner with the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States in support of the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action and its key deliverables pertaining to technological development.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

52. As an institution dedicated to supporting the least developed countries as a core part of its mandate, the Technology Bank plays a critical role. Science, technology and innovation are essential to accelerate progress towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Doha Programme of Action. The importance of access to technology and technological capacity, as well as the financing of technology, were also recognized in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and continue to be under discussion in the preparations for Economic and Social Council forum on financing for development follow-up, to be held in 2025. However, the current level of financing makes it challenging to achieve the goals of the Technology Bank. Therefore, to realize its

ambitious objectives, commensurate financing is required to help the least developed countries to fast-track their development by leveraging science, technology and innovation.

53. It is imperative that adequate and predictable funding be made available. I call upon Member States to lend their full support to the Technology Bank and urgently commit predictable and sustainable funding towards the implementation of its mandate. Now, more than ever, there is a need to ensure that the least developed countries have equal access to the opportunities created by science, technology and innovation to ensure that no one is left behind.

54. The primary ownership, leadership and responsibility for development in the least developed countries rests with the least developed countries themselves. It is crucial that the least developed countries leverage opportunities for enhanced engagement with development partners through the Technology Bank, including by utilizing the technology needs assessments to identify priority needs and seek targeted international support to address technological gaps and to accelerate sustainable development. In this regard, I welcome the objective of the Technology Bank to complete 15 technology needs assessments over the next three years and encourage an emphasis on countries in which progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and levels of human development are very limited and support for sustainable development is therefore particularly crucial.

55. The United Nations remains committed to ensure that people in the least developed countries have access to and can benefit from the vast opportunities provided by science, technology and innovation, including through the Technology Bank. The entire United Nations system will continue to support and cooperate with the Technology Bank in a collaborative spirit and join efforts to assist the least developed countries in addressing their technological development needs. The United Nations system will intensify partnerships aimed at promoting and facilitating access by the least developed countries to appropriate technologies and building the capacities that they need to ensure that technology becomes a catalyst for a more equitable, sustainable and prosperous world.

56. The commitment to inclusive technological development, with a focus on young people and gender equity, will remain at the core of the United Nations efforts, including through the Technology Bank, to drive sustainable development and transforming lives in the most vulnerable regions of the world.

57. As the Technology Bank embarks on its strategic plan for 2025–2027, I call upon Member States and the international community to collaborate and support, including through the provision of financial and human resources, this renewed set of ambitious actions. The strategic plan will deliver transformative outcomes in the least developed countries and sustain progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

58. I encourage the General Assembly to request further updates on the work of the Technology Bank at its eightieth session, under the sub-item entitled “Follow-up to the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries”.