

How transfer of technology can create the enabling conditions for LDCs to participate effectively in existing and emerging ocean sectors of the blue economy

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests, and

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish, first, to express my thanks and appreciation to His Excellency Mr Michael Lodge, Secretary General of the International Seabed Authority, for his kind invitation and for giving me the opportunity to participate in this pertinent and timely side-event. Let me also apologize for not joining you in person due to conflicting commitments. However, I am grateful for the opportunity to make a brief intervention through pre-recorded message.

The topic for this side-event identified by ISA is highly relevant for the UN Technology Bank for LDCs – an organization established by the UN General Assembly, as one of the concrete outcomes of the Fourth UN-LDC Conference, held in Istanbul Turkiye, in 2011. Indeed, the establishment of the UN technology Bank for LDCs is the only SDG target (17.8) to be achieved well before 2030, the year that the SDG goals and targets are expected to be met.

The UN Technology Bank became operational in 2018 and its primary mandates and objectives include assessing the technological needs of LDCs, facilitating the transfer of appropriate and applicable technologies that LDCs need to tackle key development challenges and assisting LDCs in the development of their Science, Technology, and Innovation capacities. In fact, when it comes to technological advancement and its effective use, the LDCs are at the bottom end of the technological development ladder.

The technological gap between LDCs and other countries was exposed during the Covid-19 shock, when the role of technology became critical for production, maintaining trade, social interaction, and sustaining education and health care services. It was a wake-up call for the least developed countries (LDCs) and an important lesson that they cannot afford to lag behind in their technological capabilities or miss active engagement in the new wave of rapid technological change.

In this respect, the Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (DPoA) comes at a right and critical time – since it recognizes Science, Technology and Innovation as powerful drivers of change and sustainable development.

Long-term productivity upgrading, economic development and job creation, as well as addressing societal challenges, are all dependent on sustainable and strong STI systems. Paragraph 31(b) of the Doha Programme of Action identifies “*leveraging the power of science, technology, and innovation to fight against multidimensional vulnerabilities and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals*” as one of the six priority areas for this decade. Moreover, in paragraph 113, the Programme of Action singles out the UN Technology Bank as a focal point for LDCs to strengthen their Science, Technology, and Innovation capacities towards building productive capabilities and promoting sustainable economic transformation.

We are ready to play our part, including in partnership with other UN organizations and key stakeholders in LDCs. In this connection, the recently established partnership between the UN Technology Bank for LDCs and the International Seabed Authority (ISA) is timely and will provide the opportunity for LDCs to benefit from the common ocean resources through the application of appropriate technology and scientific knowledge.

Sadly, not all LDCs are beneficiaries from the global ocean economy, which contributes more than 1.5 trillion US dollars in value added to the global economy. The World Bank estimates that currently 3-5% of global GDP comes from the oceans and close to three billion people rely on oceans for their livelihoods. Furthermore, 80% of the world’s goods are transported via maritime routes. Going beyond the direct economic benefits, oceans also conserve habitats, provide fuel, and absorb about 30% of CO₂ emissions. Indeed, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the OECD had estimated that the ocean’s contribution would double in size to US \$3 trillion by 2030, the year that SDGs are expected to be achieved.

In short, the blue economy contains huge potential in resources and services that the LDCs – be it costal countries or landlocked - are yet to tap and utilize in support of their economic development and structural transformation agenda. Ensuring the health and sustainability of the ocean’s ecosystem is key to support livelihoods and drive economic growth, especially in coastal LDCs, and it requires targeted support for sectors such as fisheries and aquaculture, tourism and shipping, as well as innovative initiatives in areas such as renewable energy and marine biotechnology. Facilitating the participation of LDCs in marine scientific research and their access to the latest technological innovation in this field is essential.

The UN Technology Bank will work closely with the ISA to ensure that LDCs attain a fair share of the benefits that can be gained from deep-seabed related science, technology and innovation in support of sustainable development of blue emerging economies.

We have already agreed that the Technology Needs Assessment that the Technology Bank conducts among the LDCs will be used - as entry point - for identifying the technologies and innovations that the LDCs can utilize to increase the economic, social and environmental benefits from deep-sea related activities. Initially, we will focus on two LDCs – one from Africa – Tanzania, which is a coastal country, and another from Asia – Nepal, a landlocked country and about to graduate from the LDC category. The aim is to strengthen their capacities for the exploration, conservation and management of marine resources and the protection and preservation of the marine environment. Building on these two cases, we hope to intensify our collaboration and joint activities in support of the LDCs and the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action.

Thank you for your attention.