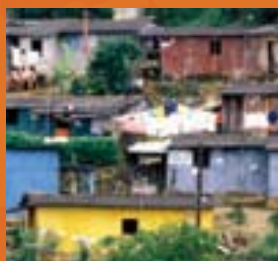


## Export competitiveness and development in LDCs

policies, issues and priorities  
for least developed countries for action  
during and beyond UNCTAD XII



UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

**Export competitiveness and development in LDCs: policies,  
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**UNITED NATIONS**

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## **Executive summary**

For several decades now, the least developed countries (LDCs)<sup>a</sup> have been pursuing wide-ranging economic policies and strategies, mainly in the context of structural adjustment programmes and, more recently, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. Trade liberalization and integration have remained a central focus and an essential component of development policies and strategies of LDCs. Unfortunately, the extensive policies and measures undertaken by those countries have not yet generated the form and quality of growth required for reversing their continued marginalization in the world economy. Their persistent underdevelopment and, in many cases, long-term decline illustrate how trade and integration may be necessary but not sufficient for development and poverty reduction in LDCs. This is due to the interplay of external and internal development challenges and the problems facing the LDCs. The present study argues that despite the many and complex obstacles, there is considerable scope for many LDCs to join the group of successful exporters, particularly in the field of traditional exports such as oil, copper, coffee, cocoa and groundnuts. It emphasizes three important areas of non-traditional exports with significant growth potential for LDCs: horticulture, fishing and tourism. There could also be dynamic gains particularly in traditional exports and horticulture, notably in the form of technological upgrading, quality control, marketing networks and market connections.

## **Key words**

Export competitiveness, trade policies, challenges and opportunities, LDCs, UNCTAD XII

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<sup>a</sup> The 49 countries that currently belong to the group of LDCs are as follows: Afghanistan, Angola, Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Kiribati, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Niger, Rwanda, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Somalia, Sudan, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tuvalu, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Vanuatu, Yemen and Zambia.

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Mathias Pofagi (Benin), Sonam Wangchuk (Bhutan), Célestine Bere Lompo (Burkina Faso), Dismas Baransaka (Burundi), Hamacire Dicko (Mali), Lourenço Sambo (Mozambique), Andre Habimana (Rwanda), Cherif Salif Sy (Senegal) and Lindani Ndlovu (Uganda) prepared case studies<sup>c</sup> on their respective countries. The case studies were presented at the expert meeting of LDCs which was held, as part of the project, in Arusha (United Republic of Tanzania) from 22 to 24 October 2007. The meeting, the outcome of which forms chapter IV of this report, was opened by H.E. Mr. Basil Mramba, Minister of Trade, Industry and Marketing of the United Republic of Tanzania, and was chaired by H. E. Mr. Arsene Balihuta, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Uganda to the United Nations Office at Geneva. Fredrik Arthur (Norway), Elisabeth Marschang and Georg Zehetner (Austria) were involved in the various stages of the project and contributed to its smooth implementation.

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<sup>c</sup> The case studies are available at <http://www.unctad.org>.

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## Foreword

Meeting every four years, ministerial conferences are the highest decision-making body of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The eleventh conference (UNCTAD XI) took place in São Paulo (Brazil) in June 2004 and adopted the São Paulo Consensus – the outcome document that guides the engagement of UNCTAD in advancing the trade and development interests and objectives of developing countries in an increasingly interdependent and globalizing world economy. The 12th session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XII) will take place in Accra (Ghana) in April 2008. UNCTAD XII will deliberate on the agreed theme and sub-themes,<sup>d</sup> which deal with trade and development challenges, prospects, policies and strategies, particularly from the perspectives of developing countries. At the conference member States are expected to reach consensus on desirable policies and strategies for action at the national, regional and international levels, as well as to adopt the UNCTAD secretariat's programme of work for the years ahead.

The participation of the least developed countries (LDCs) in major conferences and summits, despite improvements in recent years, is still weak and much remains to be done. Their effective participation in global conferences and summits such as UNCTAD XII requires, among other things, an adequate assessment of their needs and a clear identification of their common interests during the preparatory process and at the Conference itself. To that end, the UNCTAD secretariat designed and implemented a project (INT/OT/5BP) aimed at contributing to the improved and informed participation of LDCs in the preparatory process for UNCTAD XII and at the conference itself. The project assisted LDCs in comprehensively assessing their needs and clearly identifying their collective interests for action at the national and international levels.

This publication, which is the direct outcome of the project, is expected to contribute to a better understanding of the complexities of development challenges, prospects and potential that exist in LDCs. Chapter I endeavours to address and respond to broader policy issues, such as what should be done to help LDCs improve their export competitiveness and advance the achievement of their development objectives. The analysis and policy conclusions of that chapter are based on case studies undertaken on various export items and sectors of strategic interest to the LDCs. They include analysis of case studies on coffee, cotton, clothing, groundnuts, fishing, horticulture, tourism, oil and mining. The case study on Uganda in chapter II provides succinct analysis of that country's development experience including its recent trade performance, the challenges remaining and the policy responses or interventions needed at the national, regional and international levels. The case study of Rwanda, also in chapter II, describes the potential for growth and trade expansion, the challenges facing Rwanda and the policy recommendations required in order to address the existing gaps. Chapter III provides policy conclusions and lessons learned, while chapter IV sets out the negotiating proposals for LDCs as adopted by the expert meeting held, as part of the project, in Arusha (United Republic of Tanzania) from 22 to 24 October 2007.

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