

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES REPORT 2002

Escaping the Poverty Trap



UNITED NATIONS

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*The front cover shows detail from **Le Mouvement des Peuples**, painted by the Senegalese artist Issa Samb. It is reproduced with the permission of the artist.*

Born in 1945, Issa Samb works in Dakar as a painter, sculptor, playwright, actor, performance artist, installationist and shaman. He is the co-founder of the gallery TENQ of the Village des Arts and the co-founder of the Laboratoire Agit-Art in Dakar.

“Le Mouvement des Peuples”, he writes, “shows all those men, women and children who in today’s political and ideological chaos dream of a haven of peace and dignity. Their silhouettes are unfinished...Painting for me is a way of decoding complex and irreversible events. I take risks in this process of initiation...Le Mouvement des Peuples is an active engagement for a different consciousness of time, love and utopia.”

WHAT ARE THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES?

Forty-nine countries are currently designated by the United Nations as “least developed countries” (LDCs). The list is reviewed every three years by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), in the light of recommendations by the Committee for Development Policy (CDP).

The criteria underlying the current list of LDCs are:

- (a) **A low income**, as measured by the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita;
- (b) **Weak human assets**, as measured by a composite index (Augmented Physical Quality of Life Index) based on indicators of: (i) nutrition (per capita calorie intake as a percentage of relevant requirements); (ii) health (child mortality rate); (iii) education (combined primary and secondary school enrolment ratio); and (iv) literacy (adult literacy rate);
- (c) **A high level of economic vulnerability**, as measured by a composite index (Economic Vulnerability Index) based on indicators of: (i) instability in the agricultural production; (ii) instability in exports of goods and services; (iii) the economic importance of non-traditional activities (share of manufacturing and modern services in GDP); (iv) export concentration (UNCTAD’s merchandise export concentration index); and (v) economic smallness (population in logarithm).

Different thresholds are used for addition to, and graduation from, the list of LDCs. A country qualifies for addition to the list if it meets inclusion thresholds on all three criteria, and if its population does not exceed 75 million. A country qualifies for graduation from the list if it has met graduation thresholds under at least two of the three criteria over two consecutive triennial reviews of the list.

At the time of the 2000 review, the low-income threshold for addition to the list of LDCs was a GDP per capita of \$900, and the counterpart threshold for graduation was \$1,035.

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