



United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa

2020 REVIEW OF PROGRESS MADE ON THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

FOR THE DECADE 2011–2020





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Summary

Of all the regions of the world, Africa has the greatest number of least developed countries (LDCs). The Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 is therefore of considerable importance to the continent. Organized along eight different priority areas, the Programme of Action sets out targets, aspirations and actions for both the LDCs and their development partners, to advance the sustainable development of those countries that contain the most vulnerable and least wealthy people of the world.

Progress against these eight priority areas has not been smooth, and across Africa's 33 LDCs, it is becoming clear that growth to the level aspired to in the Programme of Action will not be achieved. While progress on a number of indicators, particularly those focused on social and human development, has been positive, it has been slow. Child and maternity mortality rates are falling, and literacy rates are rising, as are rates of access to clean drinking water and basic sanitation services. Nevertheless, African LDCs (and Haiti) are a very long way from universal access, and at the rate of progress, achievement of this goal seems unacceptably far in the future. In the domain of economics and commerce, the value added in manufacturing and agriculture that LDCs are attaining does not appear to be substantially increasing over time. Connections to telecommunications services and electricity are rising rapidly on a per capita basis, but vast differences between countries remain. The LDCs remain almost exclusively commodity-dependent, which implies that their economies remain vulnerable to fluctuations in the prices of the raw materials they export, and that there is relatively little complexity in their economies that will support ongoing growth and meaningful employment for their people.

The Programme of Action commits the LDCs to "Promote and respect all internationally recognized human rights", and to "Continue efforts to establish or strengthen... [a] legal and regulatory framework in order to strengthen the rule of law", among other governance targets. In this area, there looks to be retrogression or stagnation in the African LDCs, even as other non-LDC African countries improve their institutions. Without fully committing to improving governance, the African LDCs (and Haiti) are likely to continue to struggle to rapidly improve the lives of their people.

In total, the progress being made against the Programme of Action is not entirely positive, although there are definitely noteworthy achievements being made. Without further commitments from both the LDCs themselves and the support of their development partners, progress comparable to that made over the period to date (2011–2019) will not enable the graduation of significant numbers of African LDCs over the coming years.

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