

POOR PROGRESS FOR 'LEAST DEVELOPED' COUNTRIES

Every ten years since 1971, the United Nations has convened a special conference to consider global action programs to support development in 'least developed' countries (LDC) which currently number 48 countries. This group of countries is deemed to be the most disadvantaged in the development process and face the greatest risk of failing to overcome poverty.

LDC IV Monitor recently conducted a mid-term review of the Istanbul Program of Action 2011-2020 (IPoA). The IPoA is a global policy agenda for 'least developed' countries, including targets to help them progress from this ranking. The target was for 24 countries to move out of that ranking by 2020 however with existing support mechanisms only 10 countries are predicted to change their ranking by 2020.

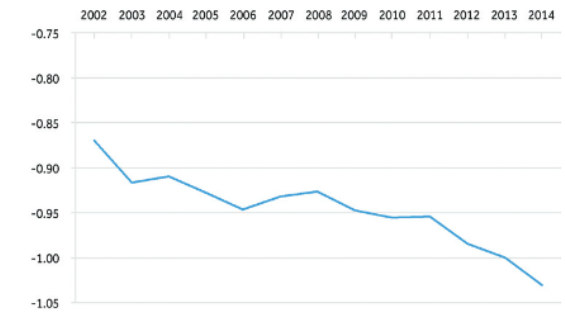
In the 'least developed' country list, 34 countries are located in Africa; 9 in Asia; 4 are Pacific Island countries; and 1 is located in Latin America. Thirteen countries with a 'least developed' ranking are Commonwealth countries.

LDC IV Monitor, established in 2011, is a consortium of seven development partners which includes the Commonwealth Secretariat, established to provide independent and objective monitoring of the IPoA. The mid-term review of the IPoA focused on four themes: structural transformation; export diversification; prospects for countries' graduation from 'least developed' classification; and implications for achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs). The report found that many objectives set out in the IPoA are unlikely to be achieved.

The review report, *Achieving the Istanbul Programme of Action by 2020: Tracking Progress, Accelerating Transformations*, published in 2016 showed that over the forty years since the Least Developed Countries (LDC) category was created, international efforts to eliminate the conditions that make these countries 'least developed' have shown only meagre results. Only four countries have graduated from the LDC status in four decades (Botswana 1994, Cape Verde 2007, Maldives 2011 and Samoa 2014). 'Graduation' is based on an analysis of specific income criteria, a human assets index, and an economic viability index.

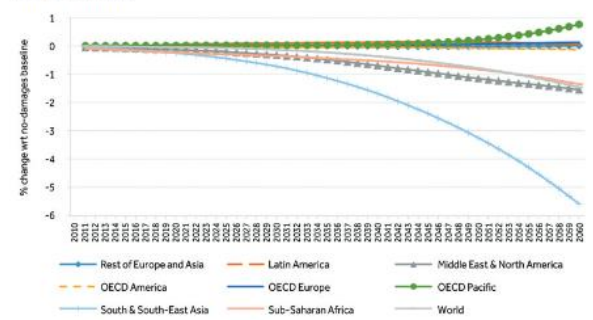
The report found that the LDCs face a set of interconnected global challenges: economic, technological, demographic, environmental, security and governance, with the potential to seriously undermine their prospects of achieving the SDGs, as well as the IPoA goals.

Figure 4.8 Perceptions of government effectiveness in LDCs have been declining



Source: World Bank (2015b).
Note: Estimate of governance ranges from approximately -2.5 (weak) to 2.5 (strong) governance performance.

Figure 4.6 Climate change will reduce economic growth in most regions (OECD projection of regional economic impact (in % of GDP) owing to climate change)



Source: OECD (2014b).

Table 4.2 LDCs are among the world's most fragile states

Ranking	Country	Fragility Index 2015	Status since 2006
Very High Alert			
1	South Sudan*	114.5	Some worsening
2	Somalia*	114	Worsening
3	Central African Republic*	111.9	Significant worsening
4	Sudan*	110.8	Some Improvement
High Alert			
5	Congo (D. R.)*	109.7	Marginal change
6	Chad	108.4	Some worsening
7	Yemen*	108.1	Worsening
9	Syria	107.9	Significant worsening
8	Afghanistan*	107.9	Worsening
10	Guinea*	104.9	Some worsening
11	Haiti*	104.5	Marginal change
12	Iraq	104.5	Strong Improvement
13	Pakistan	102.9	Marginal change
14	Nigeria	102.4	Some worsening
15	Cote d'Ivoire	100	Strong Improvement
16	Zimbabwe	100	Strong Improvement
Alert			
17	Guinea Bissau*	99.9	Critical worsening
18	Burundi*	98.1	Marginal change
19	Niger*	97.8	Significant worsening
20	Ethiopia*	97.5	Some worsening
21	Kenya	97.4	Significant worsening
21	Liberia*	97.3	Some Improvement
23	Uganda*	97	Marginal worsening
24	Eritrea*	96.9	Significant worsening
25	Libya	95.3	Critical worsening
26	Mauritania*	94.9	Some worsening
27	Myanmar*	94.7	Some Improvement
28	Cameroon	94.3	Some worsening
29	North Korea	93.8	Some Improvement
30	Mali*	93.1	Critical worsening
31	Sierra Leone*	91.9	Strong Improvement
32	Bangladesh*	91.8	Some Improvement
33	Congo (Republic)	90.8	Some Improvement
34	Sri Lanka	90.6	Marginal change
34	Timor-Leste*	90.6	Some Improvement
36	Nepal*	90.5	Some Improvement
37	Rwanda*	90.2	Some Improvement
38	Egypt	90	Marginal worsening

Note: LDCs are marked with an asterisk. Source: Fund for Peace (2015).

The report can be downloaded from: <http://ldc4monitor.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Achieving-the-Istanbul-Programme-of-Action-by-2020.pdf>.