



**Para 8.** We also recognize that many LDCs continue to face multiple structural challenges and constraints, including narrow production and export bases, stagnant trade and investment flows, diminishing productivity growth, smallness, isolation and remoteness from major markets with almost half being landlocked and small island countries, weak land and natural resource base, and widespread poverty, hunger and malnutrition, **and poor, or lack of, quality education and underdeveloped human capital.** These long-standing challenges are compounded by new and emerging challenges, such as climate change, increased incidences of natural disasters and public health emergencies, **protracted** conflicts, fluctuating commodity prices and rising capital outflows. Without a structural transformation that tackles institutional and capacity constraints, the least developed countries will remain vulnerable to various socio-

that relieve women of the unpaid care work burden, supporting policies and actions that foster youth employability in the creative economy, thus enhancing community livelihoods, inclusive growth, sustainable social and economic development.

**Para 21.** We are committed to building a stronger and multifaceted resilience system in the LDCs. With the support of the international community, LDCs need to design systems, including infrastructure in transportation and communications, energy and ICT, supply chains, economic, financial and public health systems, cultural infrastructure, arts and creative hubs that are dynamic, smart and resilient. Such actions have the potential to make the national economic system stronger and more resilient against any future shocks and ensure sustainable and irreversible graduation as well as achievement of the SDGs.

**Para 22.** We affirm that the multidimensional nature of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals requires the involvement of all stakeholders at all levels – local, national, international – with solutions that are context-appropriate, respond to the needs and rights of populations, in particular those furthest behind, and tap into the full diversity of existing knowledge and experience, including harnessing the rich cultural diversity of LDCs as a source for resilience and development. It is, in fact, encouraging that national and local governments, civil society, academia and other stakeholders have engaged with the Sustainable Development Goals process and are developing innovative approaches and practices. International financial institutions and several central and national development banks have started to better reflect the Goals as a whole in their strategies and policies.

**Para 26.** The Program of Action will have six key focus areas for Action as follows:

- I. Investing in people in LDCs: Eradicating poverty and building capacity to leave no one behind
- II. Leveraging the power of science, culture, technology, and innovation to fight against multidimensional vulnerabilities and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals
- III. Structural transformation as a driver of prosperity
- IV. Enhancing International trade of least developed countries and regional integration,
- V. Addressing climate change, recovering from COVID-19 pandemic, and building
- VI. Mobilizing international solidarity, reinvigorated global partnerships -informed sustainable development - A march towards sustainable graduation

**Para 30.** We are guided by the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and will ensure everyone's human rights and fundamental freedoms. We recognize that good governance at all levels, strong institutions, democracy, the rule of law, transparency and accountability along with a healthy, universal respect for human dignity, justice, equality and non

the impacts of climate change. [Jobless young people are vulnerable to enrollment in violent movements particularly in non-democratic and high rate of misinformation context accentuated by social networks development.](#)

### **Achieving universal access to quality education**

*[Comment: This section on education could be framed as the contribution of education to poverty eradication and sustainable development, which are key challenges for LDCs. See for reference: [UNESCO building human capacities in least developed countries to promote poverty eradication and sustainable development - UNESCO Digital Library](#)]*

**Para 39.** Lack of economic opportunities along with poor basic facilities and infrastructure, such as the lack of computers and access to safe drinking water or electricity, along with insufficient trained teachers *[Comment: This is true for all levels of education. Improving teacher quality should be targeted beginning from pre-primary levels]* and the limited or lack of adequate learning and teaching materials, seriously affect the quality of education in LDCs.

**Para 40.** The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on schooling is a generational catastrophe. School closures

learning and wellbeing. Millions of children and youth are falling behind in their learning, which will have long-term impacts. More than a year and a half into the COVID-19 crisis, almost all students in LDCs are affected by full school closures, [and without access to schools, learners have not benefitted from school meals and other vital school health services.](#) Unable to access remote learning, these students, [in particular girls,](#) are at an increased risk of never returning to school [or of being behind if they do return, of gender-based violence, or of being forced into child marriage or child labor and young girls experiencing early pregnancies.](#) [They are equally at risk of enrolment by violent groups.](#)

General comments on **Para 41:**

- (i) *'Achieve universal access to education' cannot ensured be for ALL levels of education, as universal access to higher education is not feasible;*
- (ii) *UNESCO suggests that commitment towards the achievement of all SDG 4 targets be included: a) Universal, free, equitable primary and secondary education; b) Early childhood care and education and pre-primary education; c) TVET and lifelong learning; d) ICT skills, literacy, numeracy; e) Quality teachers at all levels of education, etc.*
- (iii) *(iii) to build back better after the pandemic, there is the need to enhance efforts to ensure all students return to school, in particular those at-risk of not returning, vulnerable, marginalized, and those who were out-of-school before the pandemic. There is also the need to support students' mental health and wellbeing that could have been negatively impacted due to school closures, which in turn will affect learning success. This is missing in the targets and should be included for building resilience in the face of future shocks.*
- (iv) *(iv) A specific commitment on reforming of the national teacher education system, including increasing financing for initial teacher education and not relying solely on donor-funded in-service or CPD provision would be important for achieving the defined targets.*

- (v) (v) – also in relation to **para 47**: UNESCO is of the opinion that the ‘creation of an online University for LDCs’ is an interesting initiative, but would suggest that a careful assessment of the appropriateness, relevance, and feasibility from equity, inclusion and quality perspectives be made. Issues of legitimacy and accreditation would also need to be taken into account. It also should be noted that ‘one online university’ for ‘all LDCs’ may not solve the problem(s) of both access and quality of tertiary/Higher Education in LDCs. The priority should probably be on supporting the strengthening of national universities in LDCs, especially in STEM fields. Perhaps a virtual network of LDC universities for research collaboration, exchange, sharing of resources, researchers, etc. would be the needed support?

**Para 41. Target:** Achieve universal access to education [see comment (i) above]: eliminate the gender gap in enrolment and **completion and increase– improve** the quality of education **at all levels** for all in LDCs;

Substantially expand globally the scholarships for students of LDCs in the higher education institutions of developed and developing countries,

**Develop policies for alternative and flexible learning pathways for enrolment in tertiary learning,**

Achieve 100 per cent access to internet, electricity and gender sensitive, **school meals and other vital school health services, including safe and clean** sanitation facilities in all primary, secondary and tertiary schools in LDCs by 2030

Establish an online university for LDCs [see comment (v) above].

**Para 42.** We commit to supporting LDCs in strengthening national education systems, including through better curricula [Comment: Curricula would also need to be enhanced for improving teaching/learning of global citizenship and sustainable development skills/knowledge] that respond to the dynamic nature of education and training, **local contexts, including country-specific challenges and local cultural contents,** financing, teacher development, retention and deployment, especially in rural areas and improvement in basic infrastructure and providing adequate supplies.

**Para 43.** We also commit to supporting LDCs in increasing enrolment and decreasing dropout rates through measures such as abolishing school fees and providing school meals **and other school health services.** We commit to eliminating gender disparities in education and ensuring equal access to **and completion in** all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situation.

**Para 44.** We commit to ensuring 100 per cent access to internet, electricity and gender sensitive, **school health services, including safe and clean** sanitation facilities in all academic institutions in LDCs and providing ICT-based [Comment: Or ‘ICT-supported’? Learning systems cannot totally be replaced by ICTs] lifelong and dynamic learning systems and human capital development by 2030.

**Para 45.** We commit to supporting the LDCs to access digital equipment, including low-cost laptops or other devices, as well as educational radio and television programmes and the distribution of equipment such as radios and textbooks to the poorest and marginalized



**Para 48.** Women and girls continue to face barriers such as lack of access to education, particularly at secondary and tertiary levels, [where they may face high levels of early and unintended pregnancy, and lack of access to education, commodities and facilities to enable them to enjoy menstrual health.](#) They are also more vulnerable to harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage; and gender-based violence.

**Para 49. Targets:**

for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, [cultural](#) and public life

- a. [cultural and creative industries, skills development, entrepreneurship and decent jobs; increase women teachers in under-represented domains \(inter alia, increase male teachers in underrepresented domains\);](#)
- b. Eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.
- c. Achieve access to sexual and reproductive health and education for all women and girls.

**Para 50.** We commit to establishing policies and programmes to expand

and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic, [cultural](#) and public life, including through institutional reforms.

**Para 51.** We commit to eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including [within and outside school, as well as](#) trafficking, sexual and other types of exploitation as well as all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

**Para 56. Target:** Ensure universal health coverage, including [the availability of good quality school health and nutrition, as well as](#) financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality, and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all at an affordable cost

Eliminate preventable maternal, infant and child deaths and provide access to quality health services at an affordable cost.

Ensure birth registration to all newborns in LDCs

**Para 60.** In 2020, 66.9 per cent of the population was below 30 years old. By 2030 one in five of the youth in the world will be born in the LDCs. In 2019, more than one in five of [were not in employment, education or training \(NEET\), almost unchanged since 2005.](#) Since young women were already twice as likely to be jobless and not in education nor training than young men, and as women have been disproportionately pushed into inactivity during the pandemic, the COVID-19 crisis is likely to worsen the NEET gender gap among youth. [Notably, more investment could be placed in the cultural and creative sectors, which represents to date 30 million jobs worldwide and employ more people aged 15-29 than any other sector.](#)

**Para 61. Targets:** Ensure, by 2030, that all youth achieve literacy and numeracy

Ensure access to lifelong digital learning opportunities for skills development,

including those skills needed for the cultural and creative sectors.

Increased youth participation in consultation and decision making processes as well as opportunities for skills development through cooperation mechanisms as provided by north-south and south-south cooperation.

Access to decent employment opportunities, knowledge and skills for all youth in the LDCs,

Promote entrepreneurial training to youth including through financial and technical assistance covering fast growing domains such as the cultural and creative industries that have the highest employability rates for youth

**Para 62. Targets:** Ensure, by 2030, that all youth achieve literacy and numeracy [*Comment: In light of the rapid expansion of advanced technology and changing ways of learning and work, literacy and numeracy must be seen from a lifelong perspective. Literacy and numeracy are not stand-alone skills to be learnt within a set timeframe but a continuum of proficiency levels that require sustained learning and updating already acquired skills. It is proposed that a specific ‘target’ for LDCs, with a clear definition/understanding about the expected achievements in terms of literacy and numeracy be defined.*]

Ensure access to lifelong digital learning opportunities for skills development

Increased youth participation in decision making process as well as opportunities for skills development through cooperation mechanisms as provided by north-south and south-south cooperation.

Access to decent employment opportunities, knowledge and skills for all youth in the LDCs

Promote entrepreneurial training to youth including through financial and technical assistance.

**Para 63.** We will adopt an inclusive results-based and employment-generating approach to development planning and implementation in accordance with national priorities and legislation. We commit to ensuring digital fluency, life-long-learning opportunities, appropriate training including vocational training, creativity and entrepreneurship skills, and best opportunities for full employment and decent work for all people, especially youth in the LDCs. We commit to supporting the LDCs to reform and strengthen education systems to allow for the development of skills and talents that are consistent with the demands of the national and global job markets, which include preparing young people for frontier technologies and the new digital age.

**Para 70.** We reaffirm our commitment to provide financial and technical support to LDCs to strengthen government housing agencies, including at the local level and improve access to land, as per national legislation, affordable housing and basic services, and upgraded slums, and sustainable transport and communication systems for all taking into account the special needs for reconstruction of LDCs devastated by natural and man-made disasters and conflict and introducing/strengthening a culture of prevention (DRR).





respect for justice and human rights on which such coexistence depends. Heritage and creativity, as expressions of identity and repositories of memory and knowledge, are an essential source of support for communities in crisis – whether in times of conflict, disaster or emergency. Promoting respect for cultural diversity is fundamental to preventing violent extremism, while the significance of culture in the lives of communities makes its continuity essential for recovery and resilience in the wake of disasters. As a visible expression of common ground between communities, culture can also foster reconciliation and social cohesion in post-conflict and post-disaster situations.

**Para 91.** We will build peaceful, just and inclusive societies that provide equal access to information, justice and that are based on respect for human rights, cultural diversity and pluralism, including the right to development, on effective rule of law and good governance at all levels and on transparent, effective and accountable institutions.

**91 BIS.** In this respect, we commit to pay particular attention to the role of transformative, relevant and quality education in creating the conditions for long-lasting peace and sustainable development.

### **Science, Culture, Technology, and Innovation for development and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and building resilience against emerging challenges**

**Para 107.** We acknowledge that STI and culture offer an opportunity for LDCs to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, build back better and resilient to future systemic shocks and crises and emerging challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the pressing need for LDCs to elevate the application of science, culture, technology, and innovation at both policy and Operational levels.

**Para 109.** We commit to bridging the STI and culture divide and provide financial and technical support and technology transfer to LDCs including through south-south and triangular cooperation to ensure that all LDCs can

capacity-building, and digital transformation, including a responsible and ethical use of ICTs and the opportunities offered by digitalization, to prevent these technological assets from becoming factors of social instability.

## **Leveraging culture to build economic resilience and foster inclusion**

**Para 117 BIS.**

of scientific knowledge and innovative technologies.

**157 BIS.** We acknowledge that the share of total global exports of cultural goods from LDCs did not grow during the past decades. Both in 2005 and 2014, they only accounted for a 0.5% share of total global exports of cultural goods. The marginalization of LDCs in the trade of goods depends on many factors intrinsic to international trade. The potential of the cultural and creative sector to enhance LDCs participation in and benefit from new opportunities for dynamic growth in world trade remains largely untapped.

### **Special and Differential treatment**

**Para 195.** We call for the full implementation of the principle of special and differential treatment for developing countries, in particular LDCs, in accordance with World Trade Organization agreements, as well as for preferential treatment for artists and other cultural professionals and practitioners, as well as cultural goods and services from developing countries, in particular LDCs, in the spirit of the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. We welcome the establishment of the monitoring mechanism to analyze and review all aspects of the implementation of special and differential treatment provisions, as agreed in Bali, with a view to strengthening them and making them more precise, effective and operational as well as facilitating integration of developing and least-developed World Trade Organization members into the multilateral trading system.

**195 BIS. Target:** Implement the principle of special and differential treatment for least developed countries, in accordance with World Trade Organization agreement and the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

**Para 200.** We will grant preferential tariffs to imports cultural goods and services from LDCs in order to reduce their trade costs, allowing cultural products to enter the markets in developed economies at competitive costs; increase Aid for Trade support for LDCs, in order to improve their technical, financial and administrative capacity to export cultural goods and services as well as their capacity to diversify exports strategies to include creative goods and services,

**Para 204.** We are deeply concerned that the limited fiscal space and resilience capacity in LDCs seriously constrains their ability to tackle the pandemic and foster sustainable recovery. The investments in climate change adaptation and disaster risk management in LDCs have fallen far short of meeting the needs. We are also concerned that climate change impacts are becoming more acute. Food insecurity, water scarcity, land degradation, melting of glaciers, ocean acidification, coastal erosion, damage to infrastructure and assets, pressures on pastures, displacement of populations, threats to cultural heritage, disruption of indigenous and traditional lifestyles and knowledge systems, and threats to livelihoods are severely disrupting economic and socio-cultural development. Changes in water resources are disrupting hydroelectric generation and putting industrial production and basic services at increased risk.

**204.BIS.** We are concerned that the unprecedented crisis arising from the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 has had, and continues to have, major impacts on World Heritage properties globally and thus on local communities, especially from the loss of revenue due to

