

Regional Workshop on Graduation for Least Developed Countries in Asia

30 April-2 May 2019, Bangkok, Thailand

Objectives

Graduation from the LDC category is one of the overarching goals of the Istanbul Programme of Action for LDCs for the Decade 2011-2020. Currently, half of the LDCs that are in the graduation process are from Asia. Assisting graduating LDCs has been a shared objective of the international community.

The Workshop aims to improve the knowledge and understanding of the participants of the LDC graduation criteria and processes, its likely impact on the economy especially in the area of trade, and identify ways to address the challenges that would arise from graduation. It will provide an opportunity for the participants to examine the likely impact on their participation in the WTO, as well as preferential trade. It also intends to identify options and strategies for the graduating LDCs to smoothly integrate into global economy following graduation.

DAY ONE: TUESDAY, 30 APRIL 2019

09:30 - 10:00 Opening Session

- Statement by Ms. Mia Mikic, Director, Trade, Investment and Innovation Division, ESCAP
- Statement by Mr. Shishir Priyadarshi, Director, Development Division, WTO

10:00 – 11:00 Session 1: Graduation criteria and process

This session will discuss LDC criteria, the UN resolutions relating to graduation, the role of the Committee for Development Policy, the procedures followed for graduation and the mechanism to both monitor progress and assist LDCs in the post-graduation phase.

- Mr. Shishir Priyadarshi, Director, Development Division, WTO

11:00 – 11:15 Coffee Break

11:15 – 12:45 Session 2: LDC Graduation and matters related to WTO Agreements

This session will review the likely impact of graduation on the participation of graduating LDCs in the WTO (schedule of concessions and commitments, budgetary contributions, access to technical assistance, notification requirements, etc.), and implications for special and differential (S&D) treatment under WTO Agreements. It will also examine the proposals made by the LDC Group in the WTO in the area of graduation.

- Rainer Lanz, Economic Affairs Officer, Development Division, WTO

12:45 – 14:00 Lunch Break

14:00 – 15:30 Session 3: LDC Graduation and Trade in Goods

This session will assess the multilateral and regional implications of graduation on goods trade. It will provide a review of non-reciprocal LDC preference schemes by major developed country trading partners of LDCs, and the likely loss of preferences under those schemes (WTO resource person). The options available to maintain/expand market access opportunities for exports to major preference-granting markets will also be discussed.

In addition, the session will examine the likely impact on LDCs following graduation vis-à-vis their participation in regional trade, especially in the context of loss of LDC-specific provisions/flexibilities in certain regional trade agreements (ESCAP resource person).

- Rainer Lanz, Economic Affairs Officer, Development Division, WTO
- Ms. Mia Mikic, Director, Trade, Investment and Innovation Division, ESCAP

15:30 – 15:45 Coffee Break

15:45 – 17:15 Session 4: LDC Graduation and Services Trade

This session will review the implications for graduating LDCs in services trade. It will take stock of the implementation of the LDC Services Waiver and potential challenges as a result of graduation from LDC status (WTO resource person). The session will furthermore discuss developments and opportunities in services trade for graduating LDCs (ESCAP resource person).

- Mr. Rainer Lanz, Economic Affairs Officer, Development Division, WTO
- Ms. Witada Anukoonwattaka, Economic Affairs Officer, Trade, Investment and Innovation Division, ESCAP

DAY TWO: WEDNESDAY, 1 MAY 2019

09:30 – 11:00 Session 5: Graduation challenges and international support measures

This session will provide an overview of the challenges that LDCs face in the run-up to graduation and during the transition period after graduation. It will also give an overview of the international support measures available for LDCs that help ensure a smooth transition.

- Mr. Roland Mollerus, Chief, Secretariat of the Committee for Development Policy (CDP), Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), United Nations

11:00 – 11:15 Coffee Break

11:15 – 12:45 Session 6: Graduation – looking ahead

This session will discuss the main elements of a national strategy for the pre- and post-graduation phase, including the importance of inter-Ministerial coordination and political buy-in during the run up to graduation, as well as trade-related support and options for the period after graduation. It will also touch upon the way forward towards the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference in Kazakhstan in June 2020.

- Mr. Shishir Priyadarshi, Director, Development Division, WTO

12:45 – 14:00 Lunch Break

14:00 – 15:00 Session 7: Support by the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) for LDC graduation

This session will discuss the assistance provided by the EIF to help graduating LDCs during the process of graduation. It will also discuss how the EIF can provide countries with support for a smooth transition after they have graduated.

- Mr. Ratnakar Adhikari, Executive Director, Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) Executive Secretariat

15:00 – 15:30 Session 8: Dialogue with the Chairperson of WTO Sub-Committee on LDCs

This session will discuss systemic issues of interest for LDCs in the multilateral trading system, including graduation. It will also discuss the role that bilateral partners can play in supporting the integration of graduating LDCs into the global economy.

- H.E. Mrs. Monique T.G. Van Daalen, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the WTO, Chair of the WTO Sub-Committee on LDCs

15:30 – 15:45 *Coffee Break*

15:45 – 17:15 Session 9: Preparations by governments for graduation - I

This session will discuss how governments are preparing to address the likely challenges that could arise from graduation and use trade as an instrument for achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs). Participating governments will be invited to present their strategies and steps that they are taking to integrate smoothly into global economy following graduation (e.g. what are the challenges identified, what sectors/areas would be affected, what kind of remedies are being considered, what WTO disciplines or other trade rules that could be of importance to graduating LDCs, etc).

- Bangladesh
- Bhutan
- Nepal

DAY THREE: THURSDAY, 2 MAY 2019

09:30 – 11:00 Session 10: Preparations by governments for graduation - II

This session will continue to hear the views/perspectives from the participating governments on their preparations to address the challenges of graduation, and measures to smoothly integrate into global economy and achieve the SDGs.

- Lao PDR
- Myanmar
- Timor Leste

11:00 – 11:15 *Coffee Break*

11:15 – 12:45 Session 11: Support by UNESCAP for LDC graduation

This session will discuss the support provided by UNESCAP to help graduating LDCs in Asia to address the challenges of graduation and to further integrate into the global economy.

- Mr. Oliver Paddison, Chief, Country with Special Needs Section, Macroeconomic Policy and Financing for Development Division, ESCAP

12:45 – 14:00 Lunch Break

14:00 – 15:15 Conclusion and Assessment

This session will make an overall assessment of the graduation scenario, and discuss the likely technical assistance and capacity building needs of graduating governments. The participants will also be asked to fill out the evaluation forms.

- Ms. Mia Mikic, Director, Trade, Investment and Innovation Division, ESCAP

- Mr. Shishir Priyadarshi, Director, Development Division, WTO
