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## Half of world's poorest countries can escape poverty by 2020 – UN



29 March 2011 – Half the world's 48 least developed countries (LDCs) can “graduate” out of their impoverished status within 10 years if they benefit from better targeted development aid, duty- and quota-free access for exports and doubled farm productivity and school enrolment, according to a United Nations report released today.

This is considered a bold objective, given that altogether there have been 51 LDCs since the category was created by the UN in 1970, and only three have graduated since then – Botswana in 1994, Cape Verde in 2007, and Maldives earlier this year.

“This is the time for global solidarity to achieve progress even in the poorest countries of the world, which will go a long way in advancing global prosperity and security,” says the report by the [Group of Eminent Persons](#) appointed by [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon to look into development problems facing the world's poorest countries.

Issued ahead of the a conference on LDCs to be held in Istanbul from 9 to 13 May, which will seek to promote a 10-year programme for food security, decent work, disaster risk reduction, climate resilience and clean energy growth in the LDCs, The Report of Eminent Persons 2011 stresses that these countries can break out of a decades-long poverty trap, depending on determined national action and international support.

The Eminent Persons have taken up the theme that has emerged from intergovernmental negotiations for the next 10-year LDC plan of action aiming to graduate half of the current members of the grouping by 2020.

The report shows upward progress in category after category of economic and human well-being indicators by developed and dynamic developing countries, while LDC trends are close to flat-lining. Pointing to the high incidence of conflicts in countries with extreme poverty and weak institutions, it says “increasing marginalization of the LDCs is creating a future that we, as a global community, cannot afford.”

Measures advocated by the panel include adequate, prioritized and better targeted development assistance; duty- and quota-free access for LDC exports; doubling farm productivity and school enrolment; and beefing up the developmental and democratic capacities of LDC governments.

The Panel promotes an innovative scheme for cooperation with neighbouring countries in six sub-regions where LDCs are located, and links the LDCs themselves in geographically oriented self-help groupings. They include 33 in sub-Saharan Africa and outlying islands, 14 in South Asia and Oceania, and one (Haiti) in the Caribbean.

The drive for better global integration by the least developed countries is not starting from a standstill, the report notes. Since the previous LDC conference in Brussels in 2001, almost all have experienced strong per capita economic growth, and official development assistance (ODA) has risen sharply.

Also since 2001, LDC governments have progressed in terms of adopting democratic constitutions, increasing women’s role in government, and instituting economic reforms and new legal frameworks.

While dependence on primary commodities remains a problem, the LDCs’ significant share of the world’s strategic minerals, oil, arable land and eco-resources gives them an inside track on attracting trade and investment and diversifying economies, the study says.

The Panel is chaired by Alpha Oumar Konaré, former President of Mali and former Chairman of the African Union (AU) Commission, and James Wolfensohn, former President of the World Bank, and includes Kemal Dervis, now the Director of Global Economy and Development at the Brookings Institution and a former Administrator of the UN Development Programme ([UNDP](#)).

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