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World's poorest countries better placed for transition to green economy – UN report



Agriculture and community-based forestry are key areas for the transition towards a Green Economy in least developed states

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The world's least developed countries, which have low-carbon profiles and rich natural assets, are better placed than their industrialized to make their economies more environmentally sustainable because they are less dependent on fossil fuel-based technologies, according to a United Nations report [unveiled](#) today.

Released to coincide with today's opening of the Fourth UN Conference on Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in Turkey, the report notes that richer countries face substantial costs to reduce their emissions of the hazardous greenhouse gases, while the world's poorest nations can avoid those constraints by maintaining and expanding sustainable economic activities they are already utilizing.

The report, prepared by the UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)), the UN Conference on Trade and Development ([UNCTAD](#)) and the UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS), points out that low-carbon, labour-intensive agriculture and community-based forestry are sustainable practices that have existed for decades in LDCs and are crucial in the "greening" of those sectors.

The report, entitled [*Why a Green Economy Matters for the Least Developed Countries*](#), shows that new opportunities offered by a green economy will help LDCs meet their Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the internationally agreed poverty reduction and social development targets that have a 2015 deadline.

Structural constraints, including dependence on fragile agriculture, limited access to energy and low economic diversification, which have previously prevented LDCs from significantly reducing poverty and achieving higher rates of development, resulted from investments and policies that undervalued the importance of the economic sectors most relevant to the livelihoods of the poor, according to the report.

“Refocusing policies and investments to target sectors and areas including renewable energy, agriculture, forestry, tourism and enhanced ecosystem services can lead to the economic empowerment of low income populations, be more conducive to inclusive growth and jobs and make a significant contribution to achieving the Millennium Development Goals in the poorest countries,” says a foreword to the report, written jointly by Achim Steiner, the UNEP Executive Director of UNEP; Supachai Panitchpakdi, the UNCTAD Secretary-General; and Cheick Sidi Diarra, the UN High Representative for OHRLLS.

“The shift to a global green economy can put LDCs in an opportune position if the right enabling policies are put in place nationally and internationally – ones that accelerate their development rather than constraining it, ones that value, invest and re-invest in natural assets and low-carbon industries alongside human well-being and social equity,” said Mr. Steiner.

Dr. Supachai added: “There are at least four key elements that need to be addressed for LDCs’ successful transition to a green economy. First, identifying new sources of funding that can be directly applied to transitional efforts; second, creating an enabling environment that is conducive to private investment in green economy markets; third, taking advantage of trade to create global markets for LDCs’ green goods and services exports; and fourth, designing new and effective mechanisms to transfer green technologies to LDCs.”

The report highlights many examples of progress being achieved in a range of economic sectors, from energy to agriculture, through government, private sector and civil society initiatives.

In a related development, the heads of the UN agencies, programmes and funds jointly called for the scaling up of efforts by LDCs and their development partners to accelerate sustained, inclusive and equitable growth and development.

As the Istanbul conference got under way, the UN system’s Chief Executives Board stressed the need for an “ambitious, focused, actionable and result-oriented Programme of Action supported by the entire international community, and building on the commendable efforts to address the long-standing challenges faced by LDCs.”

They said the LDCs have themselves expressed their growing needs in a broad range of areas including; ensuring universal access to essential services; enhancing social protection systems; advancing human rights and the rule of law; prioritizing human and social development, particularly through the achievement of MDGs; strengthening education and vocational training;

empowering women and achieving gender equality; transforming the agricultural sector; ensuring food and nutrition security; reducing disparities and promoting equity; enhancing energy security; mitigating the impact of crises and building resilience; and dealing with the consequences of climate change.

The said the UN system organizations will step up efforts to support building productive capacity in LDCs through more intensive and better targeted programmes and resources.

“We also encourage donors and other development partners to increase LDC access to facilities and funds dedicated to productive-capacity building, such as the global initiative on Aid for Trade.”

Meanwhile, a new report says that developments in the global pharmaceutical industry provide an unprecedented opportunity for LDCs to attract investment in the pharmaceutical sector.

The report, *Investment in Pharmaceutical Production in the Least Developed Countries – A Guide for Policymakers and Investment Promotion Agencies*, notes large research and development-based pharmaceutical trans-national corporations (TNCs) in developed countries are facing the expiration of patents over a series of major drugs and lack new medicines in the pipeline to replace these medications.

Under pressure to meet shareholder expectations, these TNCs are partnering more and more with profitable generic manufacturers in developing countries as part of a survival strategy, according to the report.

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