

A Brief on the Doha Programme of Action

1. Introduction

The Doha Programme of Action (DPoA) stands as a visionary ten-year initiative (2022-2031) aimed at empowering the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). It represents a well-crafted and collectively endorsed agenda, bolstered by the support and commitment of the developed nations.

The inception of the DPoA occurred during the first segment of the Fifth UN Conference on the LDCs (LDC5 Conference) on March 17, 2022, in New York. This landmark event marked the continuation of the LDC Conference series that commenced in 1981. Subsequently, the second phase of the LDC5 Conference unfolded in Doha from 5 to 9 March 2023, bringing together global leaders, civil society, private enterprises, and the youth to collaborate on devising comprehensive plans and fostering partnerships. A high-level delegation from Bangladesh led by the Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina participated in the event. The overarching goal was to ensure the fulfillment of the DPoA's ambitious promises over the subsequent decade.

2. The Background of LDCs and the UN Conference on LDCs

Despite accounting for only 13% of the world's population, LDCs bear the burden of approximately 40% of global poverty. These nations contribute a meager 1.3% to the global GDP and represent less than 1% of the total global trade and foreign direct investment (FDI). LDCs suffer from low productivity levels and inadequate investments in crucial areas such as health, education, and technology. Compounding their challenges, these countries are exceptionally vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.

Recognizing the heightened vulnerability of the LDCs, the United Nations (UN) commenced a focused effort in the late 1960s to address their unique needs. This led to the organization of the inaugural United Nations Conference on the LDCs in Paris in 1981, where a comprehensive program of action specifically tailored for LDCs was adopted. Subsequently, four additional decade-long programs—the Paris Program of Action, Brussels Program of Action, Istanbul Program of Action, and Doha Program of Action—were organized in subsequent conferences,

namely LDCII in 1990, LDCIII in 2001, LDCIV in 2011, and LDCV in 2022, respectively. These programs aimed to address the multifaceted challenges faced by the LDCs and facilitate their sustainable development.

3. Bangladesh's Progress towards LDC Graduation

After enduring a devastating independence war in 1971, Bangladesh was left ravaged and in a state of distress, leading to its inclusion in the Least Developed Country (LDC) category in 1975. However, in the 2018 and 2021 triennial reviews conducted by the UN CDP (Committee for Development Policy), Bangladesh achieved a significant milestone by fulfilling all three graduation criteria. This accomplishment is a remarkable international success story in Bangladesh's history of economic progress and presents a tremendous opportunity for the country to align policy support with a focused development agenda, reinforcing its commitment to achieving global objectives such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

Building upon this achievement, the UN General Assembly endorsed the UN CDP's recommendation for Bangladesh's graduation in November 2026, allowing for a five-year preparatory period. Notably, Bangladesh holds the distinction of being the first country to meet all three criteria (GNI Per Capita, Human Asset Index, and Economic Vulnerability Index) for graduation in two consecutive triennial reviews conducted by the CDP. To ensure a smooth and successful transition, the government has placed a high priority on developing an effective Smooth Transition Strategy (STS).

To support this endeavor, a high-level National Committee on Graduation, led by the Principal Secretary to the Honorable Prime Minister, has been established, along with seven thematic Sub-Committees offering their expertise and assistance. Embracing an inclusive approach, Bangladesh has engaged all key stakeholders, including the private sector, development partners, practitioners, civil society organizations, and academia, in these processes. These comprehensive measures aim to secure a Smart Graduation for Bangladesh, enabling a smooth and sustainable graduation from the LDC category while maintaining the momentum of progress.

4. Bangladesh's Participation in LDC5 Conference

The second part of the 5th United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC5) was held in Doha, Qatar from 04 to 09 March 2023. After two pandemic-induced

postponements, more than 5,000 participants including 47 Heads of State and Government from the LDCs came together in Doha, Qatar for the Fifth UN Conference on LDCs. A high-level delegation from Bangladesh led by the Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina participated in the event. In addition to the government delegation, representatives from the private sector, CSOs, youth organizations, media, and development partners participated in the event. The final text of the Doha Program of Action (DPoA) was adopted at this Conference.



Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina speaking during the Opening Plenary Meeting of the LDC5 Conference

Lauding Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visionary leadership during the Conference, world leaders greatly hailed the recent socio-economic progress of Bangladesh. They highly appreciated the development initiatives taken by her government for the betterment of Bangladesh's people and expressed their expectations that Bangladesh would continue its progress under the leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Throughout the conference, Bangladesh played a prominent role. Hon'ble Prime Minister co-chaired the fourth high-level thematic roundtable on the theme "Enhancing the participation of LDCs in international trade and regional integration". The Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh urged to devise new and innovative support measures for the graduating and graduated LDCs and called upon the international community to gradually phase out the ISMs in the post-graduation phase. She called for cooperation from the international community amid the current geopolitical tension and global economic shock and working together to build a strong global partnership.



Secretary General of the United Nations Mr. António Guterres meets with Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina during the LDC5 Conference in Doha, Qatar

The delegation also hosted several side events. Principal Secretary to Hon'ble Prime Minister, Finance Secretary, and ERD Secretary participated in Round Table 3, 7, and 8 respectively. The Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh organized two side events. A joint side event titled "Sustainable and Smooth Transition for the Graduating Cohort of 2021" was organized by the governments of Bangladesh, Nepal, and Lao PDR. The event was attended by heads of country delegations, including the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh H. E. Sheikh Hasina. During the official deliberations, Bangladesh emphasized its impressive economic development trajectory and issued a call-to-action to the international community for continued support in areas such as trade, technology transfer, and development cooperation.

5. Reviews of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA)

The primary aim of the IPoA (2011-2020) was to reduce the number of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) by half. However, thus far, only four countries have successfully graduated, while 16 countries are currently progressing through different stages of graduation. Despite these efforts, the goals outlined in the IPoA, such as achieving a 7 percent economic growth rate and doubling the global trade share for LDC groups, have proven challenging to attain. As a result, a more ambitious DPoA has been adopted to address the ongoing challenges faced by LDCs and strive towards their sustainable development.

6. The objectives and key focus of the DPoA

The DPoA was adopted with a renewed and strengthened commitment from Development Partners, Developed Nations and LDCs. Its implementation places significant emphasis on accomplishing the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 and recovering from the devastating impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic quickly. The DPoA sets forth key priorities, including eradicating extreme poverty, reducing inequality, and harnessing the potential of technology and innovation.

One of the prominent objectives of the DPoA is to facilitate an additional 15 LDCs in meeting the graduation criteria by 2031. Furthermore, the DPoA encompasses crucial concepts for extending the existing International Support Measures (ISMs) for a more extended period and introduces new areas of assistance deemed essential for achieving Sustainable Graduation.

The program of action for the overall socio-economic development of LDCs has identified six key focus areas:

- I. Investing in people in least developed countries;
- II. Leveraging the power of science, technology, and innovation;
- III. Supporting structural transformation as a driver of prosperity;
- IV. Enhancing international trade of least developed countries and regional integration;
- V. Addressing climate change, recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and building resilience;
- VI. Mobilizing international solidarity and global partnerships.

Apart from the six focus areas, 38 action areas and 117 targets were defined in the DPoA.

7. Bangladesh's Initiative on DPoA

According to the decision of the Cabinet Meeting held on 10 October 2022, the Cabinet Division established a Coordination and Monitoring Committee comprising 52 members; led by the Honorable Cabinet Secretary. Besides, ERD has been entrusted by the Cabinet Division with overall coordination for implementation of the DPoA and formulation of action plans by taking input from various Ministries/Divisions of the Government.



ERD Secretary and Chief Guest of the workshop Ms. Sharifa Khan speaking during the workshop

Following this, from December 2022 to June 2023 ERD organized an inter-ministerial meeting and two workshops with the focal point officials of concerned Ministries/Divisions with an aim to gather feedback from the relevant ministries and divisions. Based on the significant discussions and recommendations arising from the workshop, the concerned ministries and divisions prepared their action plans and shared with ERD.



The Chair of the workshop Mr. Farid Aziz, Additional Secretary, ERD speaking during the event

According to the decision of the Cabinet meeting, ERD collected and combined the action plans of all the concerned Ministries/Divisions and prepared a draft national action plan and presented

it to the first meeting of the Coordination and Monitoring Committee on 21 May 2023. Subsequently, the draft National Action Plan was finalized by ERD based on the revisions and feedback sent by 51 Ministries/Divisions.



ERD presenting the draft National Action Plan at the Workshop

When the draft combined action plan was presented in the second meeting of the Coordination and Monitoring Committee held on 16 July 2023, it was recommended to be presented to the Cabinet Meeting with some amendments. Finally, the National Action Plan on DPoA was approved at the Cabinet Meeting held on 23 October 2023. A Technical Committee has been formed comprising members from concerned Ministries/Divisions led by Additional Secretary of ERD to assist the Coordination and Monitoring Committee in implementation of the National Action Plan on DPoA.

The ERD will undertake an annual review of the implementation of the DPoA. Besides, all Ministries/Divisions/Agencies having responsibilities under the DPoA may consider including DPoA-related issues in the agenda of their monthly coordination/review meetings.

8. Conclusion

Implementation of the targets contained in the DPoA will help Bangladesh achieve a smooth and sustainable graduation from the least developed country status in 2026. The implementation of the DPoA emphasizes achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 and reversing the damage caused by Covid-19. In addition, the DPoA prioritizes building resilience to future shocks, eradicating extreme poverty, strengthening the labor market, facilitating access to sustainable and innovative financing, reducing inequality among member states, harnessing

the power of science, technology and innovation, etc., which are related to the goals of Bangladesh's National Plan. As the National Action Plan for the implementation of DPoA has been prepared in line with the SDGs and Government's 8th Five Year Plan, the successful implementation of the National Action Plan will play a significant role in accelerating the country's achievement of the SDGs. In this regard, the DPoA has uncovered some new areas of assistance deemed necessary to achieve the SDGs. In addition, the DPoA contains certain commitments by Development Partners which have already emphasized on continuing some of the facilities for Graduated and Graduating countries like Bangladesh even after graduating from the least developed country status. In this regard, the DPoA emphasized on extending the International Support Measures (ISMs) for a longer period even after graduating from the least developed country status. Therefore, efficient follow-up and monitoring mechanisms adapted at the national, sub-regional, regional and global levels are crucial for the successful implementation of the Doha Programme of Action and ensuring its alignment with existing frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals. National-level arrangements are particularly important, given that the DPoA is owned and led by the least developed countries themselves.

Composition of the Coordination and Monitoring Committee

1	Cabinet Secretary, Cabinet Division	Chair
2	Principal Coordinator (SDG), Prime Minister's Office	Member
3	Secretary, ICT Division	Member
4	Secretary, Internal Resources Division	Member
5	Secretary, Ministry of Water Resources	Member
6	Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Member
7	Secretary, Ministry of Commerce	Member
8	Secretary, Energy and Mineral Resources Division	Member
9	Secretary, Ministry of Science and Technology	Member
10	Secretary, Ministry of Defence	Member
11	Secretary, Public Security Division	Member
12	Secretary, Finance Division	Member
13	Secretary, Ministry of Public Administration	Member
14	Secretary, Technical And Madrasah Education Division	Member
15	Secretary, Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment	Member
16	Secretary, Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat	Member
17	Secretary, Planning Division	Member
18	Secretary, Secondary and Higher Education Division	Member
19	Secretary, Power Division	Member
20	Secretary, Health Services Division	Member
21	Secretary, Ministry of Shipping	Member
22	Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism	Member
23	Secretary, Ministry of Land	Member
24	Secretary, Ministry of Industries	Member
25	Secretary, Economic Relations Division	Member
26	Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture	Member
27	Secretary, Rural Development and Co-operatives Division	Member
28	Secretary, Bridges Division	Member
29	Secretary, Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division	Member
30	Secretary, Ministry of Labour & Employment	Member
31	Secretary, Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock	Member
32	Secretary, Financial Institutions Division	Member
33	Secretary, Statistics and Informatics Division	Member
34	Secretary, Implementation Monitoring & Evaluation Division	Member
35	Secretary, Posts and Telecommunications Division	Member
36	Secretary, General Economics Division	Member
37	Secretary, Ministry of Railways	Member
38	Secretary, Road Transport and Highways Division	Member
39	Secretary, Medical Education and Family Welfare Division	Member
40	Secretary, Ministry of Youth and Sports	Member
41	Secretary, Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief	Member
42	Secretary, Coordination and Reform	Member
43	Secretary, Local Government Division	Member
44	Secretary, Ministry of Food	Member
45	Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change	Member
46	Secretary, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs	Member
47	Secretary, Ministry of Social Welfare	Member
48	Secretary, Security Services Division	Member
49	Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Public Works	Member
50	Secretary, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education	Member
51	Secretary, Prime Minister's Office	Member
52	Representative, Bangladesh Investment Development Authority	Member

Scope of Work of the Coordination and Monitoring Committee:

1. Formulate an action plan for the proper implementation of the activities of the Doha Programme of Action (DPoA) for the Least Developed Countries for the decade 2022-2031 and present it in the Cabinet meeting;
2. Proper distribution of work among various concerned ministries/divisions/agencies as per action plan;
3. Determine short, medium and long-term action plans and reviewing implementation progress to implement the objectives of the committee;
4. Perform any other duties assigned by the Government.

Composition of the Technical Committee

1	Additional Secretary and Wing Chief, DE Wing, ERD	Chair
2	Representative (Joint Secretary/Deputy Secretary), Cabinet Division	Member
3	Representative (Joint Secretary/Deputy Secretary), Finance Division	Member
4	Representative (Joint Secretary/Deputy Secretary), Health Services Division	Member
5	Representative (Joint Secretary/Deputy Secretary), Secondary and Higher Education Division	Member
6	Representative (Joint Secretary/Deputy Secretary), Ministry of Commerce	Member
7	Representative (Joint Secretary/Deputy Secretary), Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief	Member
8	Representative (Joint Secretary/Deputy Secretary), Ministry of Primary and Mass Education	Member
9	Representative (Joint Secretary/Deputy Secretary), Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Member
10	Representative (Joint Secretary/Deputy Secretary), Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change	Member
11	Representative (Joint Secretary/Deputy Secretary), Statistics and Informatics Division	Member
12	Representative (Joint Secretary/Deputy Secretary), GED, Planning Commission	Member
13	Representative (Joint Secretary/Deputy Secretary), ICT Division	Member
14	Joint Secretary (DE Wing), ERD	Member Secretary

Scope of Work of the Technical Committee:

1. The Technical Committee will determine the next course of action for the implementation of the Doha Action Plan in close coordination with the concerned Ministries/Divisions;
2. The technical committee will present recommendations/proposals to the core committee for formulating and updating short, medium and long-term action plans in Bangladesh according to the Doha Action Plan;
3. The Technical Committee shall inform the Coordination and Monitoring Committee of its activities and final decisions;
4. The Technical Committee shall meet every three months and may co-opt members as necessary.

