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برنامج الأغذية العالمي

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## Implementation of the Doha Programme of Action for the least developed countries

### Draft decision\*

The Board

- i) welcomes the conclusions of the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries of 17 March 2022 and the endorsement by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 76/258 of 1 April 2022 of the Doha Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries for the decade 2022–2031, hereinafter referred to as the Doha Programme of Action;
- ii) notes that, building on the Istanbul Programme of Action (2011–2020), WFP has maintained the strong support given to the least developed countries in terms of the strengthening of national capacities and social protection systems, the creation of assets and livelihoods through WFP activities, and a focus on sustainable development and contributions to peace through the implementation of its multi-dimensional mandate and investments in local partners and communities;
- iii) notes the strong alignment of WFP's strategic plan for 2022–2025 with the Doha Programme of Action's six key focus areas for action, especially with regard to eradicating poverty and building the capacity to "leave no one behind", leveraging innovation to fight against multidimensional vulnerabilities, addressing climate change and building resilience to future shocks, and harnessing the power of global and local partnerships;

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\* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the decisions and recommendations document issued at the end of the session.

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- iv) stresses the need for WFP to direct special attention to the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action in its support of the least developed countries and in accordance with its mandate; and
  - v) invites the Executive Director, building on prior efforts to implement the Istanbul Programme of Action, to further integrate and mainstream the Doha Programme of Action into WFP activities, especially through its country strategic plans.

## Overview

1. At the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in New York (17 March 2022) and Doha (5–9 March 2023), Member States agreed on the [Doha Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries \(A/CONF.219/2022/3\)](#) (DPoA). The final text of the DPoA was adopted during the first part of the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries on 17 March 2022 and endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly through resolution [A/RES/76/258](#) on 1 April 2022. The second part of the conference was held in Doha from 5 to 9 March 2023, when world leaders gathered with representatives of civil society, the private sector, young people and other actors to build plans and partnerships for delivering on the promise and ambition of the DPoA over the following decade.
2. The overarching objective of the DPoA is to help the least developed countries to address the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and the resulting negative socioeconomic impacts, return to a pathway towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), address climate change challenges, build resilience and make strides towards a sustainable and irreversible graduation from least developed country status. The DPoA calls for greater action and extraordinary measures from all countries, and strengthened international and multilateral cooperation to address the challenges affecting the least developed countries, based on the concept of human security and the commitment to ensuring that no one is left behind.
3. Highlighting the unprecedented challenges currently faced, the DPoA aims to imbue this agenda with a renewed urgency and energy. The lasting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and global instability threaten not only to reverse some of the progress made during the implementation of the DPoA (and the Istanbul Programme of Action), but also to exacerbate persistent challenges in the least developed countries. Global inequality has risen as a result of the pandemic and the risk of conflict and fragility has increased, in particular in relation to democratic governance and the rule of law. Owing to pre-existing conditions – chronic underinvestment in health systems, poorly functioning food systems, weak social protection systems, lack of institutional capacity, high levels of vulnerability to external shocks and employment that is predominantly in the informal sector – the pandemic and subsequent global political instability have had serious negative effects in all the priority areas of the Istanbul Programme of Action, which will be felt for years to come. As a result, progress towards the goals and targets set out in the Istanbul Programme of Action has fallen short in some instances, and progress towards the achievement of the SDGs in the least developed countries has been uneven and is not on track to achieve the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
4. The DPoA aims to address this new reality by putting forward a new generation of renewed and strengthened commitments between the least developed countries and their development partners, including those in the private sector, civil society and government at all levels.
5. The Programme of Action has six key focus areas for action:
  - i) investing in people in least developed countries: eradicating poverty and building capacity to leave no one behind;
  - ii) leveraging the power of science, technology and innovation to fight against multidimensional vulnerabilities and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals;
  - iii) supporting structural transformation as a driver of prosperity;

- iv) enhancing international trade of least developed countries and regional integration;
  - v) addressing climate change, environmental degradation, recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and building resilience against future shocks for risk-informed sustainable development; and
  - vi) mobilizing international solidarity, reinvigorated global partnerships and innovative tools and instruments for a march towards sustainable graduation.
6. The link between poverty and food insecurity is highlighted in the first key focus area for action (investing in people in the least developed countries), which has the aim of eradicating poverty and ending hunger and malnutrition in all its forms and dimensions by the end of the decade. To achieve this, the DPoA underlines the need to invest in people, with particular attention to the poor and most vulnerable. The DPoA lists specific targets for work in this key focus area: “achieve a sustainable increase in coverage of nationally appropriate comprehensive and universal social protection systems and measures, including floors, for all in the least developed countries”; “end hunger and malnutrition and ensure access by all people in least developed countries, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe and healthy diets through sustainable year-round food systems”; and “provide food and emergency assistance everywhere to those in need”. It also calls for a commitment to supporting the strengthening of food systems in the least developed countries through a holistic approach that also ensures that the least developed countries and their food systems are more resilient and sustainable in the face of climate change and biodiversity loss. This will include making safe, sufficient and nutritious food more available, affordable and accessible, and creating more sustainable food systems.
7. The second key focus area for action (leveraging the power of science, technology and innovation) emphasizes the critical role and catalysing effect that science, technology and innovation can have on the pursuit of the SDGs. It underscores the urgent need to accelerate investment in the development and scaling of innovative technological solutions to the most pressing problems that the least developed countries face. Notably it calls for the provision of enhanced funding for the development of innovative solutions – including in the areas of agriculture and food production, renewable energy and development, infrastructure development, disaster risk reduction, environmental protection and climate resilience – that are relevant to local circumstances, respond to the specific problems in the least developed countries and aim to benefit people living in vulnerable situations, leaving no one behind.
8. The third key focus area for action (supporting structural transformation as a driver of prosperity) recognizes that many least developed countries continue to face multiple structural challenges and constraints, including hunger and malnutrition. Longstanding issues are compounded by new and emerging challenges brought about by climate change, increased incidences of disasters and public health emergencies, conflict, fluctuating commodity prices and rising capital outflows. Without a structural transformation that prioritizes economic diversification and addresses institutional and capacity constraints, the least developed countries will remain vulnerable to various socioeconomic, health and environmental shocks. The DPoA reaffirms that the least developed countries, as the most vulnerable group of countries, need enhanced global support if they are to overcome the structural challenges and devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This key focus area for action recognizes that if least developed countries are to fully utilize their potential, it is necessary for them to achieve an inclusive and sustainable structural transformation capable of increasing productivity and growth and reducing disaster risks, including exposure and vulnerability to existing and future

external shocks. It draws particular attention to the agricultural sector and commits parties to the DPoA to “implementing science- and evidence-based and data-driven agricultural practices that increase resilience and sustainable productivity, help to maintain ecosystems, strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought flooding and other disasters, improve food security and reduce malnutrition in all its forms”. In particular, it notes the importance of improving access to agricultural research and sustainable innovation and practices, including agroecological and other innovative approaches and sustainable technologies that support adaptation to and, where possible, mitigation of the effects of climate change.

9. The fourth key focus area of action (enhancing international trade of least developed countries and regional integration) acknowledges the progress made in reforming agricultural trade but underscores the importance of ongoing discussions aimed at reducing the trade-distorting effects of certain forms of support for agriculture. It notes the need for relevant actors to engage constructively in those discussions, including on the development of permanent solutions to the issue of public stockholding for food security purposes. In addition, the DPoA asserts that relevant actors will “work to advance the discussions on export restrictions, including on foodstuff purchased by the World Food Programme”.
10. The least developed countries are especially vulnerable to, and disproportionately affected by, climate change, environmental degradation and extreme weather. Such shocks, combined with global instability, have amplified the high degree of vulnerability and risks of cascading crises in the least developed countries. In recognition of this, the fifth key focus area for action commits parties to the DPoA to “reducing the vulnerability of the least developed countries to economic, environmental shocks and natural hazards, especially those related to climate change, and to enhancing their ability to meet these and other challenges through enhanced adaptive capacity and resilience”. Building adaptive capacity and resilience, including at the individual and community levels, lies at the core of the DPoA, which further notes that “adaptation and resilience in food systems, including in the sectors of agriculture, manufacturing, social protection services and livestock, are of prime importance for least developed countries and have major implications for food security, nutrition, livelihoods, especially of the most vulnerable in society, and employment”. This key focus area calls on parties to the DPoA to “support and reinforce, as appropriate, the existing comprehensive multi-hazard early warning system and comprehensive multi-hazard crisis mitigation and resilience-building measures for least developed countries” and to “ensure adequate domestic and international support to strengthen inclusive social protection systems in the least developed countries, to address current poverty and vulnerability and future shocks”.
11. The sixth and final key focus area for action (mobilizing international solidarity and reinvigorating global partnerships) focuses on mobilizing sufficient resources to achieve sustainable development in the least developed countries through global partnerships and innovative solutions. It is a key component of efforts to unlock action in the other key focus areas, which are hampered by insufficient funding to support their financing arrangements. The DPoA also notes that South–South and triangular cooperation is vital to the least developed countries, particularly with regard to technical assistance and the sharing of best practices for their development.

## Looking back: WFP and the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action

12. Despite the significant disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, global instability and the global food crisis, WFP made significant progress in implementing the Istanbul Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020. The Executive Boards of WFP, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Office for Project Services, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women met in 2012 to discuss the Istanbul Programme of Action and a [background paper](#) was prepared outlining the collaborative actions of the United Nations that are aligned with the goals of the programme of action and based on lessons learned. At the meeting, it was agreed that efforts would focus on helping governments to foster balanced, inclusive and sustainable economic growth that is responsive to human development needs; and strengthening the ability of the least developed countries to deal with external shocks. WFP’s programming and approaches were aligned with these central goals throughout the decade, as reflected in the organization’s operations and strategic planning. In that regard, WFP worked to develop its approach to and activities for resilience, with the strategic plan for 2017–2021 noting WFP’s aim of making a “potent contribution to a world seeking not only to end hunger and develop sustainably, but also to do so in ways that leave no one behind, strengthening capacities and building resilience along the way”. WFP actively sought to promote links between humanitarian and development assistance and to enable effective resilience building by ensuring that crisis response supported recovery and long-term development efforts. WFP also stressed the importance of focusing on the most vulnerable people and communities, including in the least developed countries, where WFP worked to support partners by promoting livelihood and resilience building with the aim of achieving food security and nutrition, climate change adaptation, risk management and strengthened sustainability and resilience in food systems. WFP’s programmes related to social protection were notable and were scaled up to meet drastically increasing humanitarian needs following the COVID-19 pandemic.
13. WFP strengthened its policy and normative framework in accordance with the objectives and values of the Istanbul Programme of Action, including by adopting policies for its role in peacebuilding in transition settings (2013), climate change (2017, currently undergoing an update), social protection and safety nets (2012), school feeding (2013), building resilience for food security and nutrition (2015, currently undergoing an update), South-South and triangular cooperation (2015), protection and accountability (2020), gender (2022), the environment (2017) and country strategic plans (2016). This work has been reinforced by WFP’s commitment to “leaving no one behind” as expressed in the United Nations Secretary-General’s Agenda for Humanity – which sums up the outcomes of the World Humanitarian Summit of 2016 – its commitment to the “new way of working” to meet and reduce human need and suffering, and the common commitment to reforming humanitarian financing and implementing the localization agenda expressed in the Grand Bargain of 2016.
14. WFP has learned from its efforts to implement the Istanbul Programme of Action, which has informed the WFP strategic plan for 2022–2025 and is factored into the development of WFP’s country strategic plans.

## Looking ahead: WFP and the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action

15. WFP made significant progress in implementing the Istanbul Programme of Action (2011) and has given strong support to the least developed countries in terms of strengthening national capacities and social protection systems and creating assets and livelihoods through its activities, with a focus on sustainable development and contributions to peace through the implementation of its multidimensional mandate and investments in local partners and communities.
16. WFP now aims to build on its previous work and enhance its support for the least developed countries under its strategic plan for 2022–2025 and its normative framework, which are aligned with, and reinforce the objectives of, the DPoA and its six key focus areas for action. WFP aims to integrate and mainstream the objectives and actions detailed in the DPoA throughout its operations, especially in the development of its country strategic plans. The optimal mix of activities for the particular setting will be defined in each country strategic plan in consultation with the relevant government and in accordance with national priorities, cooperation frameworks and humanitarian response plans, as appropriate. In its activities, WFP will leverage knowledge from local actors and strengthen the leadership skills of those actors and their capacity to make assistance more localized and sustainable.
17. WFP is working diligently to address the first key area for action (investing in people in the least developed countries), which is well reflected in its strategic plan and portfolio of activities. In response to the global food crisis and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, WFP has scaled up its assistance to meet the dramatic rise in acute food insecurity and malnutrition. Its strategic plan states that WFP will help to address vulnerability, poverty, food insecurity, malnutrition and inequality by supporting social protection programmes in rural and urban settings and the redistribution of resources that help people to meet their essential needs. WFP will draw on its strong field and operational experience, analytical capabilities and food security and nutrition knowledge to complement the work of governments and other partners, including UNICEF's expertise in issues that affect children, families and essential services and the World Bank's capability in social protection systems reform and policy development. Such engagement often entails working with national governments to build on existing social protection systems, improving national capacities for the design and implementation of social protection programmes and providing technical support and guidance to national actors. Support for social protection initiatives has been a key component of WFP's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the global food crisis. By channelling emergency assistance through national social protection systems, WFP can also strengthen institutions and link beneficiaries to durable social safety nets.
18. Furthermore, WFP is investing in local people and communities through its commitment to the localization agenda. In line with the Grand Bargain localization workstream, and in accordance with its own mandate, WFP is committed to investing in the long-term institutional capacity of local actors, promoting more equal partnerships and ensuring better integration with local coordination mechanisms. Throughout its programme portfolio, WFP will continue to prioritize partnerships with national and local organizations, including for women and young people, and to strengthen the long-term sustainability of those organizations. Finally, WFP is investing in local people and communities through its school feeding programmes. In countries where operational support is needed, WFP and its partners will implement well designed, nutrition-sensitive school feeding programmes for children and adolescents so as to support school attendance and retention in school and to help address the triple burden of malnutrition – undernutrition, overnutrition and

micronutrient deficiencies. Where possible, WFP will promote the sourcing of school meals from local production, including from smallholder farmers.

19. WFP's strategic plan and portfolio of activities also demonstrate its commitment to the DPoA's second key focus area for action by utilizing technology and innovation to assist the least developed countries and support digital inclusion. As stated in its strategic plan, WFP will put people at the centre of its approach to technology. It will continue to build on its tradition of embracing technology, as demonstrated by its progress in introducing digitalization in areas of expertise such as logistics, food security monitoring, cash-based transfers and retail management. WFP will solidify its commitment to becoming a digitally enabled and data-driven organization, with investments in new technology and data that support the realization of the vision set out in its strategic plan. WFP will strengthen national capacities by mainstreaming innovative products and services into the systems and processes of national governments. It will also provide innovation services to the wider United Nations system and external partners, driving progress holistically towards the SDGs. By offering a platform of innovation services and knowledge, WFP will accelerate impact-driven ventures around the world and contribute to the strengthening of the innovation ecosystem across the United Nations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), foundations and private sector organizations. WFP has a longstanding culture of innovation and the conditions in place to scale up innovations that will help the people and communities left furthest behind. The piloting, implementation and scaling up of new ideas lie at the heart of WFP's innovation work and the organization's award-winning Innovation Accelerator will continue to support WFP staff, entrepreneurs, business start-ups and NGOs with access to funding, mentorship, hands-on support and other innovation-related matters. WFP will continue to build innovation capacity, internally and at the local level, through innovation hubs in regional bureaux and country offices, while mainstreaming innovative products into government systems.
20. WFP is also committed to tackling the root causes of hunger and the related underlying vulnerabilities and to transforming food systems throughout its activities. Action to address the third key focus area for action is embedded throughout WFP's programmes and approaches. Specifically, working closely with national counterparts and other partners, WFP's risk-informed and integrated programmes contribute to the improvement and adaptation of the livelihoods of the most vulnerable people and communities in rural and urban areas. With its partners, WFP will support food-insecure communities in protecting, restoring, creating and enhancing the key assets and basic infrastructure that support their livelihoods, food security and nutrition. Such assets can decrease vulnerability to climate hazards and help people better withstand the adverse effects of disasters through, for example, land rehabilitation and the creation of water storage and irrigation infrastructure, flood protection walls and storm water canals. Finally, on request and in partnership with other actors, WFP will provide safe and accessible infrastructure such as warehouses, bridges and logistics bases in emergencies, focusing on how engineering projects can support the infrastructure needed to deliver to "the last mile".

21. With regard to the fourth key focus area for action, WFP's strategic plan commits it to taking a number of steps to support the enhancement of international trade for least developed countries and regional integration. WFP will partner with and support governments, the private sector and NGOs in identifying market opportunities for smallholders and implementing complementary programming and capacity strengthening interventions along the value chain, particularly in the areas of aggregation, post-harvest handling, international food safety and quality standards and market information. WFP will leverage its advantages in supply chains and local procurement to complement the strengths of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in enhancing national agricultural policies and expertise in food production, and the International Fund for Agricultural Development's role in financing. When relevant to its operations, and in alignment with its mandate, WFP will constructively engage in discussions related to export restrictions, including on the foodstuffs that it purchases.
22. Addressing climate change and building resilience to future shocks, as expressed in the fifth key focus area for action, is a core component of WFP's work and general approach. WFP is making significant efforts to address, and build resilience to, climate shocks, especially in the least developed countries, as climate change is one of the key drivers of hunger and malnutrition and cannot be separated from the structural issues that affect today's food systems. WFP's climate change adaptation programmes help build resilience in the face of climate crises and variability in the entire food system through activities that encourage the use of drought-resilient varieties, crop diversification, intercropping, agroforestry, the reduction of post-harvest losses and the adoption of improved processing methods, and by providing smallholders with access to climate information for making informed decisions. These programmes include disaster preparedness and contingency planning, access to early warning systems, forecast-based financing, the rehabilitation of ecosystems and infrastructure, support for local food systems, and locally led disaster risk reduction. More broadly, WFP's engagement in resilience building aims to enhance the ability of vulnerable people to absorb, adapt to and transform in the face of shocks and stressors. WFP supports resilience building by integrating and "layering" its activities with the plans and actions of governments and other partners. WFP systematically works with host governments (many of them in least developed countries), other United Nations entities and other development partners to contribute to resilience building and, ultimately, to end humanitarian need. Such programmes have already shown significant benefits, especially the "Scaling up resilience in the Sahel" programme, which reached 3 million people in 2,750 villages in the five Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger). The programme is organized into packages of between three and five interventions and is based on participatory watershed planning that triggers a variety of land rehabilitation activities aimed at restoring natural resources (soil and water), supporting agriculture and improving broken food systems. These programmes are layered with school meals and malnutrition prevention programmes and the provision of support for smallholder farmers.

23. WFP is taking steps to reach the targets outlined in the sixth key focus area for action of the DPoA. As stated in WFP's strategic plan, with many low- and middle-income countries facing rising debt burdens exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, WFP will scale up the use of debt swaps as a tool for mobilizing new resources for essential programmes, allowing host governments to reduce sovereign debt so that they can devote resources to their own social safety nets and national development while strengthening strategic partnerships with creditors and debtors. To that end, WFP will aim to further develop its offer on debt swaps to include agreement modalities and implementation protocols that can be used by debt swap partners and will explore opportunities to involve other key stakeholders such as multilateral development banks. WFP will also explore innovative financing opportunities for nutrition initiatives with a view to stimulating private sector investment in the first 1,000 days of life. WFP will continue to engage with governments at the national and subnational levels, aligning its work with their priorities and tailoring its capacity and approaches so as to support government action for more inclusive, equitable and sustainable outcomes. WFP will also invest in South-South cooperation that leverages the expertise and resources of the Global South in finding solutions to hunger and malnutrition. Increasing its engagement as a broker of South-South and triangular cooperation through its centres of excellence, regional bureaux and headquarters, WFP will facilitate further cooperation, driven by the needs and priorities of the Global South, across three levels: driving change at the policy level, expanding the technical skills and capacities of national experts, and bringing local innovation and experimentation to scale.

**Acronyms**

COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
DPoA	Doha Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries
NGO	non-governmental organization
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund