



COURSE ON KEY ISSUES ON THE INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC AGENDA

Short courses for Permanent Missions in Geneva
Organised by the Division on Technology and Logistics-Technology, Innovation and
Knowledge Development Branch
Policy Capacity Building Section / P166 courses

Where is the LDC group heading in the future?

Thursday, 11 December 2025
Delivered by the Division Africa, Least Development Countries, and Special Programmes
UNCTAD

PROGRAMME

Geneva, Palais des Nations		Room XVI
10:00 - 10:15	Welcome address, Mr. Angel Gonzalez, Head, Technology, Innovation and Knowledge Development Branch, UNCTAD. Moderator, Ms. Randa Jamal, Economic Affairs Officer, Policy Capacity Building Section/P166, Technology, Innovation, and Knowledge Development Branch-DTL, UNCTAD	
10:15 - 11:15	Session 1 – Should LDCs graduate later rather than sooner? This first session will examine the status quo of the least developed countries (LDCs) graduation process and the increasing complexities that influence it today. Graduation from LDC status is the process through which sustained development of some LDCs leads them to lose access to the international support measures reserved for LDCs in the fields of trade, finance, technology, etc. While the international community continues to emphasize the importance of speeding up graduation from LDC status, the path toward this goal has become more challenging. Recently, shifts in the global economic and geopolitical environment have increased vulnerability and uncertainty for many LDCs. As a result, some countries nearing graduation have requested a postponement, citing the need for more time and support to strengthen resilience. Since at present there are no clear rules or a standardized response system, development partners have handled these requests on a case-by-case basis. This is increasingly being questioned and there are at present calls to develop clearer rules for the process of graduation. This session will explore the evolving debates around graduation and deferral of graduation, the consequences of current ad hoc methods, and the need for more coherent and fair frameworks. It will also highlight UNCTAD's role in supporting LDCs through the graduation process, to help ensure that the progress achieved in development is not reversed. Presented by Mr. Rolf Traeger, Chief, LDC Section, Division Africa, Least Development Countries, and Special Programmes UNCTAD Q&A	
11:30 - 13:00	Session 2 – How will the LDC group look in the future? The second session will focus on the outlook for the LDC group, especially considering the ongoing wave of graduations. As more countries exit the category, the composition of the LDC group will evolve, and so will its development challenges. This session will examine what the LDC group might look like in the near to medium term, as countries with relatively stronger indicators graduate and those with deeper structural vulnerabilities remain. It will discuss how remaining LDCs may face	

	<p>distinct issues, including rising inequality, limited productive capacities, and exposure to climate and external shocks, calling for the rethink of international support strategies. The session will also discuss how the international community can respond to this changing landscape through adapted policies, programmes, and initiatives tailored to the future profile of the LDC group. In doing so, it will provide a forward-looking perspective on how both LDCs and their development partners can position themselves more strategically in global policymaking spaces, fostering a more inclusive and resilient development framework.</p> <p>Presented by Mr. Stefan Csordas, Economic Affairs Officer, LDC Section, Division Africa, Least Development Countries, and Special Programmes UNCTAD</p> <p>Q&A</p>
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Where is the LDC group heading in the future?

The international community has placed strong emphasis on accelerating the process of graduation from the LDC category, i.e. the process through which countries that are LDCs eventually stop receiving special LDC treatment from its development partners thanks to their steady development. The international community has repeatedly set targets for the number of LDCs that graduate in the near future. However, the international economic and geopolitical context has become increasingly challenging for LDCs, and therefore the path towards eventually achieving graduation has become more difficult for LDCs to tread. This has led several countries that could potentially graduate to ask for deferral (postponement) of their graduation. Development partners have reacted on an ad hoc basis, as there are no clear rules of how to process these requests and react to them.

This increasingly challenging context for LDCs and lack of clear rules on how to react to reluctance to graduation have led to two parallel types of questioning on the side of the international community concerning LDCs. First, how should the process of graduation and requests for deferral of graduation be dealt with by the development partners of the LDCs? Second, what will the LDC group look like after the current wave of graduation takes place? In other words, how will the main development challenges of the remaining LDCs change and how should the international community respond to them?

At the end of this course, delegates will have gained knowledge of:

- Provide participants with updated information on the present situation of the graduation process and on existing proposals to reform the process.
- Share analysis on the likely future development challenges of the LDC group.
- Show how UNCTAD can help LDCs to better tread their path towards graduation.
- Provide bases for the future positioning of countries (both LDCs and their development partners) on policies, programmes and initiatives specifically targeted for the LDCs.
- Latest discussions and policymaking initiatives on the graduation process
- The likely future shape of the LDC group
- The outlook for the international treatment of the LDCs group over the medium term