

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Arab Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011 to 2020

Productive Capacity progress and challenges in Mauritania, Sudan and Yemen¹



Beirut, 2017

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Abstract:

Three member states of ESCWA (Mauritania, Sudan and Yemen) are designated as “Least Developed Countries”, a category that acknowledges the structural challenges that prevent countries from achieving sustainable development and enhanced prosperity. Despite shared features such as commodity dependence, vulnerability to external shocks and low rates of capital formation, each country faces specific challenges to building productive capacity for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Sudan and Yemen are also, although to different degrees, affected by conflict. While Sudan is in a post-conflict phase after the civil war and violent events that lead to the separation of South Sudan, Yemen is currently suffering from a civil war initiated in 2015. The impact of armed conflict compounds existing challenges in the creation of sustainable economic and social models that can materialize the Sustainable Development Goals envisaged by the international community. Taking the Istanbul Programme of Action’s objectives as a basis, this technical note assesses the progress of the three ESCWA member state LDCs towards building productive capacity, which is essential to placing them on the path towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Insufficient progress has been made in this regard; to reinitiate the path towards further prosperity, much more effort must be made in conflict prevention as well as good governance.

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1. Introduction

The Least Developed Countries (LDCs) remain the most vulnerable countries in the world, with large segments of their population living in extreme poverty and limited opportunities to improve their situation. Their infrastructure is inadequate to support the structural transformation that their economies demand in order to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda, and they are highly vulnerable to external shocks. In order to support the development of this critical group of countries, LDCs are subject to special modalities and grant elements of Official Development Assistance (ODA), preferential market access, export duty free quotas, technical assistance and other general support measures under the UN system.

Acknowledging the structural vulnerabilities of the LDCs, the international community adopted the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) for the decade 2011-2021, a plan to coordinate international efforts to support the LDCs. This framework was complemented in 2015 with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, which has a broader scope in addressing developed and developing countries alike. The five first years of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda will coincide with the last five years of implementation of the IPoA, offering opportunities for synergies and coordination. For instance, both frameworks acknowledge that strengthening productive capacities is crucial to building a broad base for economic stability and self-sufficiency, so that populations can achieve social progress and be resilient to external shocks. In pursuing this goal, structural transformation is necessary to address the development challenges facing the LDCs.

Homogeneous analyses of the Arab region tend to portray it as a group of natural resource rich middle- and high-income countries, ignoring the fact that six Arab countries - Comoros, Djibouti, Mauritania, Sudan, Somalia and Yemen - are LDCs.² The objective of this work is to provide a brief overview of the main progress and challenges in the area of productive capacity in the LDCs that are member states of ESCWA: Mauritania, Sudan and Yemen. The analysis is based on the articulation of productive capacity in the IPoA, while pointing to complementarities with the 2030 Agenda that offer directions for future research.

The Sustainable Development Goals are built on the principle of letting no one behind. Progress towards the 2030 Agenda in the Arab region overall thus requires successful implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the LDCs of the region. Despite the commitments of the international community, the ESCWA LDC member states continue to face structural challenges in their development processes. These challenges are associated with disadvantages in their initial endowments and geographic features, including costly access to international markets, insufficient human, natural or financial resources, and vulnerability to disasters. In the case of Sudan and Yemen, these disadvantages are aggravated by the devastating impacts of conflict and violence. Improving the productive capacity of the three ESCWA LDCs is central to placing them on a path to sustained growth and development.

After this introduction, Section 1 provides a brief review of the definition of the LDCs and how they are designated. In Section 2, there is a discussion on the importance of strengthening productive capacity of the LDCs and how this is acknowledged in the IPoA and the 2030 Agenda. Based on the key indicators acknowledged in the IPoA pillar for productive capacity, Section 3 analyses the evolution of productive capacity in each of the three countries for the period 2010 – 2016. Lastly, Section 4 draws the main findings and conclusions.

² This work covers only the LDCs that are ESCWA member states: Mauritania, The Sudan and Yemen. This group will henceforth be referred to as the ESCWA LDCs.

2. What are the LDCs?

The category of Least Developed Country (LDC) was established in 1971 to articulate international support measures for developing countries that face severe structural impediments to growth. Since then, the Committee for Development Policy (CDP) has identified and made recommendations on which countries should be added to or removed from the category.

Forty-seven countries³ are currently designated as LDCs, entitling them to aid, preferential market access and special technical assistance, among other concessions. The list of LDCs is reviewed every three years by CDP in its report to ECOSOC, where it may recommend countries for addition to, or graduation from, the list of LDCs. Equatorial Guinea (2017) and Samoa (2014) were the last countries to graduate, while Vanuatu and Angola are scheduled to be taken off the list in 2020 and 2021, respectively. Thirteen other LDCs are expected to graduate between 2021 and 2024: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Djibouti, Kiribati, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Nepal, Sao Tome and Principe, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tuvalu, and Yemen (UNTACD, 2016). In the case of Yemen, its prospects for graduation are being seriously affected by the material and human losses resulting from the armed conflict initiated in 2015. The following three criteria are used by the CDP in the review of the list:

1) Per-capita income, based on a three-year average estimate of the gross national income (GNI) per capita, with a threshold of \$1,035 for possible cases of addition to the list, and a threshold of \$1,242 for cases of graduation from LDC status.

2) Human assets, involving a composite index (the Human Assets Index) based on indicators of (i) nutrition (percentage of undernourished population); (ii) health (child mortality ratio); (iii) school enrolment (gross secondary school enrolment ratio); and (iv) literacy (adult literacy ratio).

3) Economic vulnerability, involving a composite index based on indicators of (i) natural shocks, (ii) trade related shocks; (iii) physical exposure to shocks (share of population living in low-lying areas); (iv) economic exposure to shocks; (v) size; and (vi) remoteness.

Source: Quoted from UNCTAD (2017), p.5.

Different thresholds are used for identifying cases of addition to the list of LDCs, and cases of graduation from LDC status. A country qualifies to be added to the list if it meets the admission thresholds on all three criteria and does not have a population greater than 75 million. Qualification for addition to the list leads to LDC status only if the government of the relevant country accepts this status. A country will

³ As December 2017, the list of LDCs includes: Afghanistan, Angola, Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Kiribati, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Niger, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tuvalu, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Vanuatu, Yemen and Zambia.

qualify for graduation from LDC status if it has met graduation thresholds under at least two of the three criteria in at least two consecutive triennial reviews of the list.

3. Productive capacity and the international development frameworks for LDCs

Productive capacity refers to “the productive resources, entrepreneurial capabilities and production linkages which together determine the capacity of a country to produce goods and services and enable it to grow and develop” (UNCTAD, 2006). Strengthening productive capacity underpins the promotion of the dynamic structural transformation that the LDC economies need, and is highly linked to the eradication of poverty. Lack of productive capacity is therefore a major obstacle for LDCs to overcome their development challenges and graduate from the LDCs list (UN-OHRLLS, 2013). Multilateral organizations, as well as bilateral donors, acknowledge that limited productive capacities translate into weak export and economic potentials, as well as suboptimal productive employment generation and social development (UNCTAD 2006, UNDESA, 2006 and UNIDO 2013). Economic growth is part of the formula to achieve socio-economic development. However, economies can expand due to factors weakly related to competitiveness, such as natural resource discoveries, tariff preferences or other income sources, leading to economic growth without development with little improvement in productivity, institutions, employment or diversification. In other words, countries, including LDCs, can be subject to growth without the human drivers of growth (Salido and Bellhouse, 2016).

3.1 Productive Capacity and Structural Transformation

Enhancing productive capacity is essential to achieving structural transformation, defined as the change in the long-term composition and distribution of economic activities (UNIDO, 2013) is critical to poverty reduction. Traditionally, the concept is associated with shifts in sectors and industries away from labor-intensive and towards skill- and capital-intensive activities that contribute to raising a country’s income level (Kuznets, 1973). However, current structural change theory also includes inter- and intra-sectoral structural transformations as drivers to foster growth through increases in productivity and technological development. The capacity to constantly generate new dynamic activities and strengthening economic linkages within the economy is thus a component of structural transformation (UNDESA, 2006). These long-term shifts in the fundamental institutions of an economy explain the pathways of modern economic growth and development, and can only happen when the productive capacities of a country are boosted. There are, however, potential trade-offs between increasing productive capacity and achieving other Sustainable Development Goals, such those related to climate change, the protection of the environment, and the quality of jobs created. Also, structural change takes place under widely varying conditions, and therefore strategic industrial policymaking cannot be standardized. The relative attractiveness and strategic feasibility of individual industries must be carefully considered in the context of a country’s specific features.

An overarching challenge in advancing the LDCs’ development is their limited capacity for structural transformation. Changes in the sectoral composition of GDP, technological content of production and innovation in productivity have been much slower in most LDCs than in other developing countries, indicating obstacles to structural transformation. Consequently, the strengthening of productive capacity is at the forefront of international strategies towards the LDCs. It is the first priority area in the IPoA and is present across different goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. While the importance of productive capacity is increasingly reflected in development discourse, there is, however, less agreement on what policy actions are needed and which concrete policy measures play an important role (UN, 2017).

3.2 Istanbul Programme of Action: Pillars and goals

The IPoA establishes the international community’s strategy for the sustainable development of LDCs for the decade 2011-2021, with a strong focus on developing their productive capacities. The plan recognizes that LDCs represent an enormous resource potential for world economic growth and that addressing their development needs will contribute to creating peace, prosperity and sustainable development for all. The overarching goal of the IPoA is to overcome the structural challenges faced by the LDCs to achieve their development goals and eradicate poverty. Specifically, it aims to enable half of the LDCs to meet the criteria for graduation, which directly relates to the objective to realize at least 7% annual economic growth in the LDCs in a sustained, equitable and inclusive manner.

The focus of the IPoA is to reduce LDCs’ vulnerabilities to challenges such as economic shocks, inequality, food crisis or climate change. Throughout the IPoA, there is a strong focus on structural transformation through increasing productive capacity as a mean to generate full and productive economic structures that promote employment and decent work conditions. IPoA’s implementation principles stress the presence of a balanced role of the state and market considerations. This entails a qualitative shift in the development strategy, emphasizing the active participation of the state in the development process. Further implementation principles include an integrated approach, in which the development process in LDCs is viewed in a comprehensive and holistic manner. The IPoA articulates its priorities in eight interlinked pillars (see Table 1).

Table 1. Istanbul Programme of Action: Overarching goal and eight pillars

Overarching Goal: To overcome the structural challenges faced by the LDCs							
I Productive capacity	II Agriculture, food security and rural development	III Trade	IV Commodities	V Human and social development	VI Multiple crises and other emerging challenges	VII Mobilizing financial resources for development and capacity-building	VIII Good governance at all levels

Source: Author, based Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (2011)

The first pillar of the IPoA focuses on advancements in productive capacity as a means to achieve structural transformation. Infrastructure, energy, science, technology and innovation and private sector development are the main axes identified as catalysts to boost productive capacities. The goals of the IPoA for this first pillar are:

- a) *Increase significantly the value addition in natural resource-based industries paying special attention to employment generation;*
- b) *Diversify local productive and export capability with a focus on dynamic value added sectors in agriculture, manufacturing and services;*
- c) *Significantly increase access to telecommunication services and strive to provide 100 per cent access to the Internet by 2020;*
- d) *Strive to increase total primary energy supply per capita to the same level as other developing countries;*

e) Significantly increase the share of electricity generation through renewable energy sources by 2020;

f) Enhance capacities in energy production, trade and distribution with the aim of ensuring access to energy for all by 2030;

g) Ensure that the least developed countries have significant increase in combined rail and paved road mileage and sea and air networks by 2020.

Source: Quoted from Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (2011), p. 11.

The analysis in this work focuses on indicators of progress towards these goals.

3.3 IPoA and the 2030 Agenda: Two frameworks to advance productive capacity in the LDCs

The 2030 Agenda establishes the global framework in which poverty eradication, the fight against climate change and the need to mobilize resources to improve the lives of billions of people are interlinked. The multidimensional approach of the agenda covers the pillars of the IPoA, which provides LDCs and donors with two frameworks to nurture their strategies. The concurrent implementation of both frameworks offers complementarities to reinforce the progress of the LDCs. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda placed the promise of leaving no-one behind at the center of the world's efforts to address poverty, reduce inequality and build a future of prosperity. Fulfilling this driving principle requires addressing the challenges faced by the LDCs.

The SDGs cover a broader range of issues beyond the scope of the IPoA, providing to donors and the LDCs a wide-ranging context to interlink their actions. To exploit the complementarities between these two frameworks is it necessary to understand how to align the 251 actions included in the IPoA with the 17 Goals and 169 targets associated with the 2030 Agenda. Rather than viewing the IPoA and the 2030 Agenda as two separate, challenging agendas, policy makers should focus on the complementarity and synergies between them. If the SDGs are seen as the “what” that the international community aspires to achieve by 2030, the IPoA proposes priority actions, the “how”, to support LDCs in attaining many of the SDGs included in the 2030 Agenda. In this sense, the added value of the IPoA is that such actions are specifically designed to address the structural vulnerabilities of LDCs, providing a solid starting point for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for the group. In fact, the implementation the 2030 Agenda requires specific policy actions that are not defined in the SDGs.

At the operational level, the existence of the IPoA and the SDGs offer a set of goals, targets and actions that are shared among providers of ODA and recipients. Facilitating alignment around development policies between donors and recipients eases the identification of commonality of interest between donors and the national portfolios of the recipients. An additional complementarity that the 2030 Agenda brings to the development community in general, and the LDCs in particular, is the new global framework indicator to monitor the progress in the agenda. The new generation of data and indicators will reinforce how the IPoA is evaluated and add several layers of analysis around factors such as gender, climate, and social development.

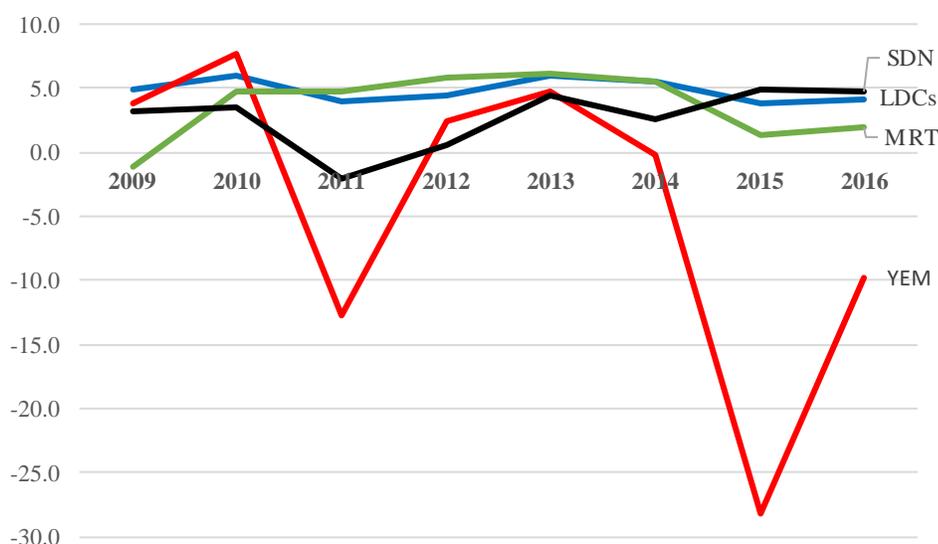
4. ESCWA LDC Member States: Evolution of productive capacity

Following the productive development pillar of the IPoA, this section provides an overview of the macro trends in the productive capacity of LDCs. The structure follows the indicators employed by the productive capacity pillar of the IPoA, therefore the indicators included are: added value by sector, trade concentration index, transport indicators, energy indicators and ICT indicators. For the purposes of giving a general situation analysis of the ESCWA LDCs in comparison to LDCs overall, the evolution of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth and the Gross National Income (GNI) is also included. As indicated above, productive capacity involves other areas such those related to human capital: education, health or nutrition, among others. Gender and age disparities are also essential when examining human capital. However, these aspects are outside the scope of this report as they form part of other IPoA pillars.

4.1 Evolution of the GDP and GNI

In 2016, average annual growth of GDP among LDCs overall was 4.1 per cent, slightly better than the 3.9 per cent recorded in 2015 (the lowest level of economic growth recorded for the group in the past decade). One of the forces that shaped the economic performance in LDCs was low commodity prices, which led to slow growth, fiscal imbalances, dwindling foreign reserves and currency depreciation. The ESCWA LDCs experienced an average economic contraction of 1 per cent in 2016 (see Figure 1). This figure is largely the result of continued contraction in Yemen, exacerbated by the ongoing armed conflict.

Figure 1. LDCs, Mauritania, Sudan and Yemen. GDP annual growth, 2009-2016.
(Percentage)



Source: World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2017)

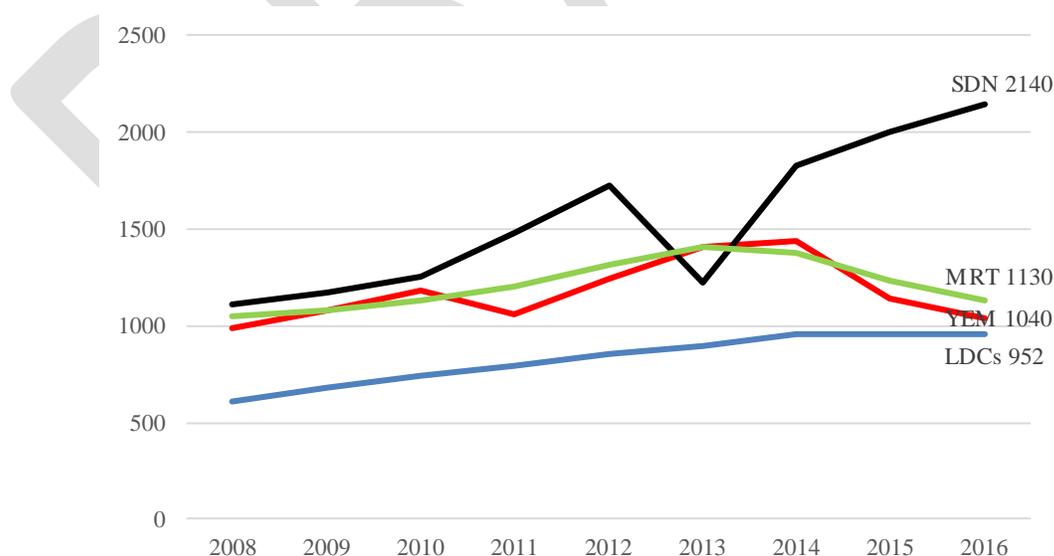
Country-level analysis of the ESCWA LDCs shows a mixed performance. Mauritania's growth rate was 2 per cent in 2016, compared to the 1.4 per cent registered in 2015. The performance of the economy is supported by growth in agriculture, fisheries and other non-mineral sectors and stronger domestic demand (ESCWA, 2017). Despite the increase, the country is still below the growth rates over 4 per cent registered during the period 2010-2014, indicating that the economy is still adjusting to the price decline in some of their main exports and the limited foreign direct investment inflows. Sudan registered an annual growth of

4.7 per cent, slightly lower than the 4.9 per cent registered in 2015 but better than the average of the LDCs. This positive outlook is, however, contingent upon containing some of the risks associated with a deteriorated balance-of-payments situation. Foreign exchange difficulties hinder domestic demand growth in Sudan, despite development of the oil and mining sectors (ESCWA, 2017). Yemen has been adversely affected by the decline in oil prices. Compounding the effect of commodity price shocks, Yemen is also subject to elevated domestic political uncertainties and the effects of armed conflict. The country registered a negative growth rate of -9.8 per cent in 2016. With no improvement in the security situation in sight and the productive sector badly hit by the fighting, Yemen is unlikely to resume oil and gas exports and the economy will likely continue to contract.

Growth in the LDCs is expected to rise from an estimated 4.8 per cent in 2017 to 5.4 per cent in 2018 and 5.5 per cent in 2019 (UNDESA, 2017). Predicted GDP growth rates for the ESCWA LDCs are 3.8 per cent for Mauritania and 4.2 per cent for Sudan. A 7.5 per cent contraction is forecast for Yemen (UNDESA, 2017). The acceleration is due mostly to more favorable external economic conditions and increased commodity prices, which support trade, financial flows and investment in natural resource projects and infrastructure. Yet this positive outlook is contingent upon containing some of the risks and uncertainties such as vulnerability to external and domestic shocks and sustained low commodity prices, in particular oil and metals.

The trend in GNI per capita (see Figure 2) is flat for the LDCs group, partly due to the adverse external conditions for commodities mentioned above. The ESCWA LDCs had been maintaining GNI per capita above the average for LDCs overall, but this advantage has been shrinking over the past several years for both Mauritania and Yemen. In the case of the ESCWA LDCs, Sudan maintained a positive trend, while GNI per capita has been declining in Mauritania and Yemen. The downward trend in both countries is explained by the contraction experienced their export baskets. In the case of Yemen, the impact of the conflict is also compounding these adverse external conditions.

Figure 2. LDCs, Mauritania, Sudan and Yemen. GNI per capita* evolution, 2009-2016.
(Current US Dollars)



Source: World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2017)
*Atlas method

If the projections hold, the growth rate in 2018 will be slightly above what was observed in 2011 but still below 7 per cent, the target set in the IPoA and SDGs. The economic slowdown and negative growth rate in the ESCWA LDCs pose a risk to the labor market and job prospects, and consequently the efforts towards eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development.

4.2 Structural transformation

Structural transformation in the LDCs has been slower than in other developing countries (UN, 2017). The average share of manufacturing in LDCs increased from 11.4 per cent in the period 2000-2010 to 12.4 per cent in the following quinquennium (see Table 2). The results for the ESCWA LDCs are mixed; Yemen followed the growth tendency of the LDCs group, with an increase in the share of manufacturing from 8.2 to 10.7 per cent while Mauritania showed a decrease of 2.7 per cent and registered 6.4 per cent. Data for Sudan is not available for the period 2011-2016, but the data registered for the period 2000-2010 shows a value added below the average of the LDCs group. In sum, all three ESCWA LDCs exhibit a value added by manufacturing below the average of the LDCs group.

Table 2. LDCs, Mauritania, Sudan and Yemen: Value-added sectoral average share of GDP (Percentage of GDP)

	Agriculture		Manufacturing		Services	
	2000-2010	2011-2016	2000-2010	2011-2016	2000-2010	2011-2016
LDCs	29.1	26.3	11.4	12.4	46.0	48.9
Mauritania	30.2	22.9	10.1	7.4	36.2	38.4
Sudan	33.1	37.7	6.9	N.A.	41.3	55.1
Yemen	12.5	9.9	8.2	10.7	42.5	42.1

Source: World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2017)

4.3 Connectivity: Air Transport, Liner Shipping Connectivity Index and Quality of Port Infrastructure

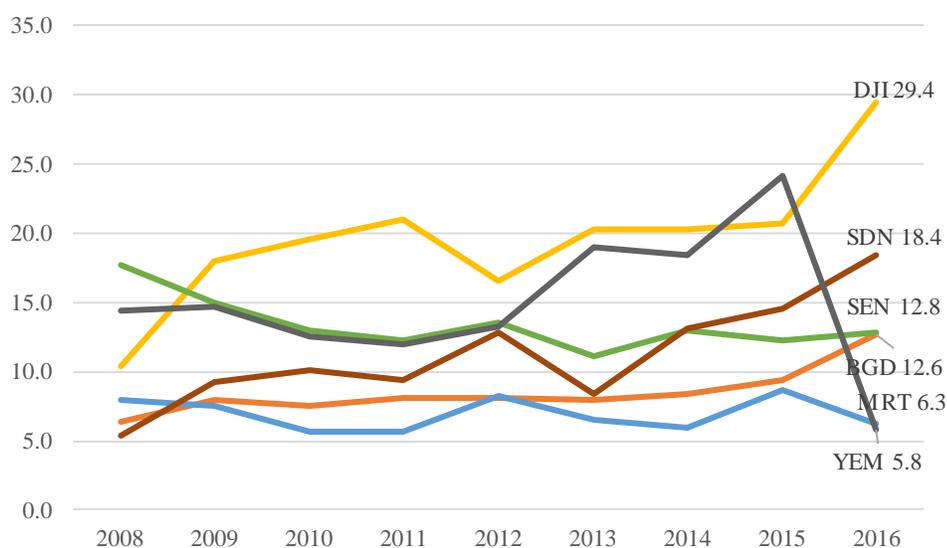
The LDCs' share of air freight in world transport is highly concentrated in two countries: Ethiopia and Bangladesh (85 per cent) and remains below 1 per cent globally (UN, 2017). Sudan registered 14.4 ton-km while Yemen and Mauritania had negligible air freight. Regarding the number of passengers carried, the LDCs trend has not changed for the period 2010-2016 (0.1 per cent growth). Mauritania, Sudan and Yemen registered results consistent with that trend.

Regarding the quality of maritime infrastructure, in 2015, the LDCs scored 2.9 on the World Economic Forum Quality of Port Infrastructure measure⁴, not far behind developing countries as a whole at 3.5 (UN,

⁴ The Quality of Port Infrastructure measures business executives' perception of their country's port facilities. Data are from the World Economic Forum's Executive Opinion Survey, conducted for 30 years in collaboration with 150 partner institutes. The 2009 round included more than 13,000 respondents from 133 countries. Sampling follows a dual stratification based on company size and the sector of activity. Data are collected online or through in-person interviews. Responses are aggregated using sector-weighted averaging. The data for the latest year are combined with the data for the previous year to create a two-year moving average. Scores range from 1 (port infrastructure considered extremely underdeveloped) to 7 (port infrastructure considered efficient by international standards).

2017). The Liner Shipping Connectivity Index⁵ shows different dynamics for the ESCWA LDCs (see Figure 3). Until 2015, Yemen was the best performer of the three, but it has experienced a severe drop due to the disruption and damage in infrastructure associated with the conflict. Sudan declined from an index score of 8.6 in 2015 to 8.2 in 2016, although this level is 31 per cent higher than that the one recorded in 2011.

Figure 3. Selected LDCs* and Mauritania, Sudan and Yemen: Liner Shipping Connectivity Index 2010-2016



World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2017)

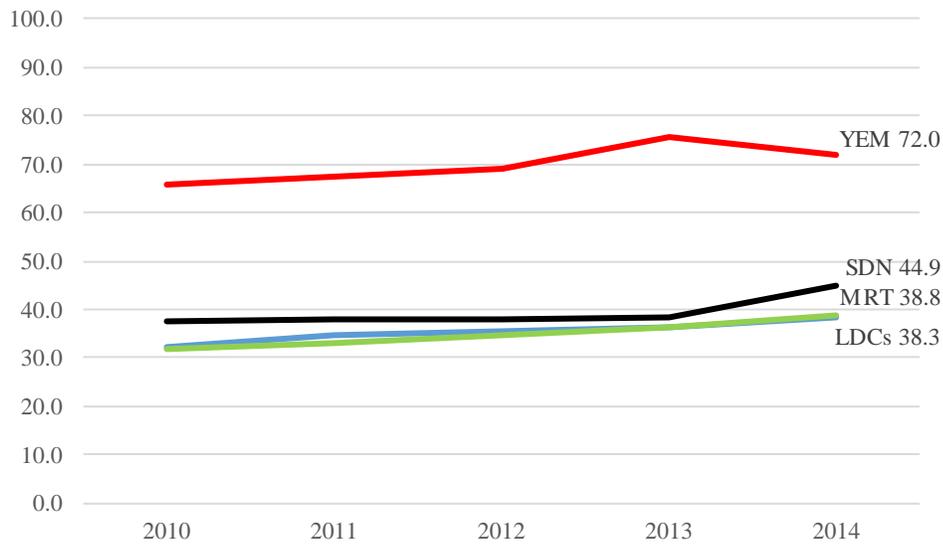
*The Liner Shipping Connectivity Index does not provide aggregate results for LDCs. Bangladesh, Djibouti and Senegal are included instead for the purposes of comparison.

4.4 Energy

Electricity is an essential technology that opens up new opportunities across all sectors. Innovation in electricity provision has the potential to be propagated throughout the entire economy, and is essential to other transforming technologies, such as Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) and technological development and innovation (UNCTAD, 2017). The percentage of the population in LDCs having access to electricity increased somewhat from 32.2 per cent in 2010 to 38.3 per cent in 2014 (see Figure 4). Among the ESCWA LDCs, the fastest progress was observed in Sudan. Yet the growth in access to electricity has been uneven, with Mauritania showing a similar percentage (38.8) of penetration as the LDCs group overall (38.3). Yemen and Sudan outperform the LDCs group overall, achieving 72 per cent and 44.9 per cent electricity penetration, respectively.

⁵ The Liner Shipping Connectivity Index captures how well countries are connected to global shipping networks. It is computed by UNCTAD based on five components of the maritime transport sector: number of ships, their container-carrying capacity, maximum vessel size, number of services, and number of companies that deploy container ships in a country's ports. For each component, a country's value is divided by the maximum value of each component in 2004, the five components are averaged for each country, and the average is divided by the maximum average for 2004 and multiplied by 100. The index generates a value of 100 for the country with the highest average index in 2004.

**Figure 4. LDCs, Mauritania, Sudan and Yemen: Access to electricity, 2010-2014
(Percentage of population)**



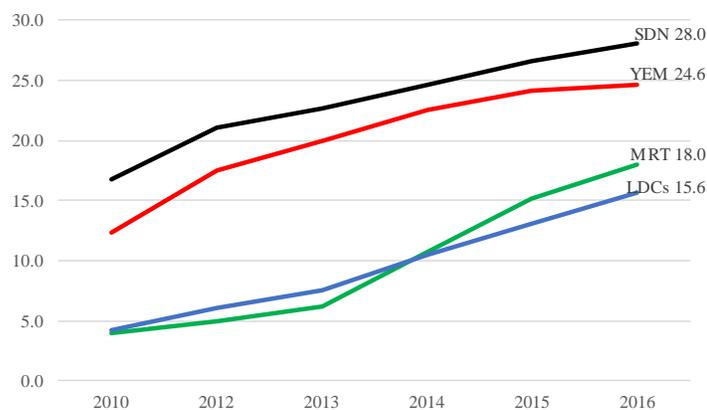
World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2017)

Limited urbanization, low rural population density and lack of supply capacity in LDCs are major challenges to universal access to electricity. The gap in access to electricity between rural and urban populations in the LDCs group remains vast. In 2014, 26 per cent of the rural population had access, compared with 68 per cent of the urban population. The ESCWA LDCs have a higher access level in urban areas than the average of the LDCs group. In Yemen, urban electricity access is nearly universal (97.4 per cent) although rural access is much lower (59.0 per cent). Sudan and Mauritania have urban-rural gaps higher than the LDCs group overall. The case of Mauritania is the widest, with 76.9 per cent access in the urban areas versus 2.3 per cent in rural areas. Sudan records 76.3 per cent access in the urban areas and 31.7 per cent in rural.

4.5 Internet and mobile cellular subscriptions

ICTs are catalyzers that transform and re-shape business, governments and the way communities interact. The transformative power of ICTs is widely acknowledged, and holds many promises to spur innovation, generate efficiencies, and improve welfare across societies. This potential is key to achieving the desired development of LDCs. The total Internet users per 100 people continued to increase in the LDCs (see Figure 5), reaching 15.6 per cent in 2016, up from 13.0 per cent in 2015 and triple the rate in 2010. ESCWA's LDCs are over the group average, with Sudan having more than 25 Internet users per 100 people and Yemen very close to the 25. Mauritania has 18 users per 100 people, still above the average of the LDCs group. The better-than-average performance of the ESCWA LDCs should not hide the fact that there are still three quarters of the population with no access to the Internet.

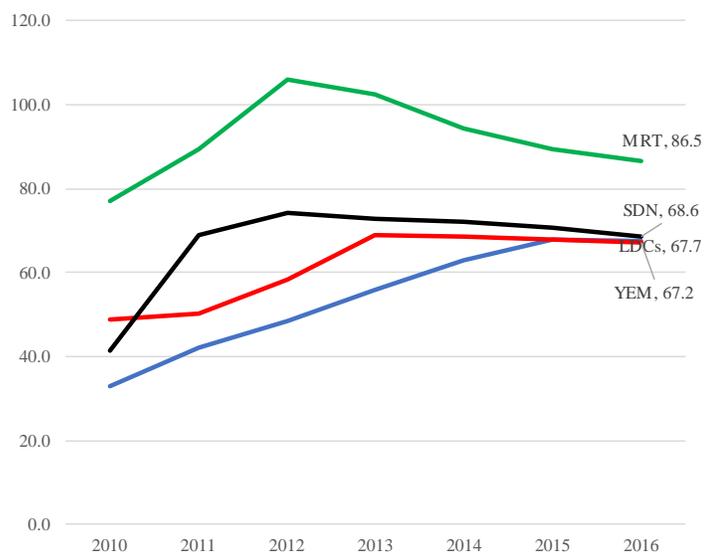
Figure 5. LDCs, Mauritania, Sudan and Yemen: Internet users. 2010-2016.
(Internet users per 100 population)



World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2017)

Mobile cellular subscriptions remained stable in the LDCs overall, registering 67.7 per 100 people in 2016 compared to 67.9 in 2015 (see Figure 6). Nonetheless, this is more than triple the rate in 2010. Mauritania is the LDC member of ESCWA with the highest mobile penetration rate (86.5 per 100 people), although this is a decline from its highest penetration rates above 100 per cent in 2012. Sudan and Yemen show rates similar to the LDCs group average and still have more than a quarter of their population without access to mobile telephones. Furthermore, rural-urban disparities remain, even in countries with high overall mobile access.

Figure 6. LDCs, Mauritania, Sudan and Yemen: Mobile cellular subscriptions 2010-2016.
(Cellular subscriptions per 100 people)



World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2017)

4.6 Trade

The share of world exports originating in LDCs increased to 0.93 per cent in 2016 from 0.90 per cent in 2015 (UN, 2017). This figure is well below the target of 2 per cent set by the IPoA. The exports of the LDCs are heavily concentrated in four countries: Angola (26 per cent of all LDC exports), Bangladesh (19 per cent), Myanmar (8 per cent) and Cambodia (7 per cent), represent 60 per cent of the total exports of the LDCs group (UN, 2017). The ESCWA LDCs' participation of the total LDC exports was 1.8 per cent. Mauritania was the top contributor, at 1.2 per cent while Yemen contributed 0.6 per cent. The drop in Yemen's exports is largely due to the disruption generated by the armed conflict. In previous years, Yemen represented around 4 per cent of the total exports of the LDCs group.

On the concentration of products exported, the LDCs scored 0.37 for the period 2010-2016 in the Concentration Index⁶ of Exports used by UNTACD (see Table 3), which indicates higher levels of concentration of exports than other developing economies. ESCWA LDCs recorded a concentration even larger than the LDCs average. The period 2014-2016 gives shows a tendency for deconcentration in the cases of Mauritania and Yemen.

Table 3. LDCs, Mauritania, Sudan, Yemen and other selected groups. Concentration Index of Exports

	2010-2016	2014-2016
Mauritania	0.42	0.39
Sudan	0.64	0.65
Yemen	0.55	0.45
LDCs	0.37	0.29
Developing Economies	0.12	0.10
Developing economies excluding LDCs and China	0.15	0.12

Source: UNCTADSTAT Database (2017)

4.7 Armed conflict and instability are a main obstacle for development: Brief situational analysis of Yemen

After almost three years of armed conflict, Yemen is in a precarious situation. Analysis of the current situation indicates no signs of progress towards a peace agreement that may allow an easing in the severity of the humanitarian crisis that is unfolding in the country. State institutions have limited or no capacity to respond to emerging crises. The more protracted the conflict, the greater the deterioration in the humanitarian conditions in Yemen, and the greater the deterioration of the state and its capacities to function in the service of its people, or to recover when a peace agreement is reached. Conflict, displacement, and

⁶ The concentration index, also named Herfindahl-Hirschmann Index (Product HHI), is a measure of the degree of product concentration. The normalized HHI is used in order to obtain values between 0 and 1. An index value closer to 1 indicates a country's exports or imports are highly concentrated on a few products. On the contrary, values closer to 0 reflect exports or imports are more homogeneously distributed among a series of products.

economic decline are pressuring the delivery of essential basic services and are accelerating the collapse of the institutions that provide them. The public budget deficit expanded significantly, leading to a discontinuation of basic social service facilities. This has long-term effects on development outcomes, as it destroys productive assets and social capital. Children and women are especially vulnerable in armed conflicts and suffer long-term consequences due to lack of education, poor health and sexual violence (UNOCHA, 2017).

The situation in Yemen is critical. The conflict has pushed the country into a downwards spiral, resulting in the world's largest humanitarian emergency. Humanitarian needs have increased across all sectors since the escalation of the conflict in 2015. Millions of Yemenis are at great risk of death by the threats of conflict, famine, cholera and economic decline. The most recent estimations (UNOCHA, 2017) indicate that 22.2 million people (76 per cent of the population) need humanitarian assistance, and 11.3 million of them are in acute need⁷ of assistance. The GDP cumulative losses for the period 2014-2017 are estimated at US\$32.5 billion, while inflation reached 20 per cent in 2017. Additionally, restrictions on imports, damaged port infrastructure, insurance and banking hurdles, security risks and high transport costs are key factors affecting imports and distribution of critical goods across Yemen. Damages to key maritime ports have further undermined the ability to import key commodities including food, fuel, and medical supplies at the scale required (UNOCHA, 2017).

As argued in the Arab Governance Report II (ESCWA, 2016), conflict is “development in reverse”, a negative event that can set back years of progress in all spheres of sustainable development. Supporting the success of the IPoA and the SDGs will be a tall order for Yemen unless inclusive political settlements and conflict resolution are integrated into its development agenda.

5. Conclusions

The LDCs continue to face structural challenges to overcoming their obstacles for socio-economic development. Despite the international support measures in place, the LDCs as a group still require dedicated support and assistance. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda creates synergies with the specific plan of action devised for LDCs (IPoA), providing a framework for this support. Particularly, the productive capacity pillar of the IPoA and the Sustainable Development Goals are mutually reinforcing. For the LDCs, the policy actions not specified in the 2030 Agenda, can be derived from the actions included in the IPoA. Conversely, the multidimensional approach of the 2030 Agenda adds new data and possibilities to work towards closing the gender gaps in employment opportunities, wages and distribution of unpaid care work in families, education, and to address the issue of youth unemployment, that are also outcomes of balanced growth in productive capacity.

The LDCs – including the ESCWA LDCs – have made insufficient progress towards meeting the key objectives of the IPoA, including eradication of poverty and structurally transforming their economies. The current pattern and degree of implementation of the IPoA seems not to be enough to meet the overarching goals set by the international community. The LDCs are far from meeting the target 7 per cent growth rate per annum (one of crucial targets in both the IPoA and SDGs). The goal of 2 per cent participation in international trade by LDCs is also not being met, and when looking at the diversification of exports, success is concentrated in a few countries. Structural transformation is not yielding fruits yet as the perspectives for GDP growth are highly dependent of the price of commodities and vulnerable to external

⁷ People who require immediate assistance to save and sustain their lives.

shocks such as climate events or global crisis. Current growth creates narrow benefits and is not robust, as it varies with commodities trends.

The results of the ESCWA LDCs performance is mixed. Yemen, which was on a trajectory to graduate from the LDC category in the period 2021-2024, is experiencing a devastating armed conflict that is putting the country on a downward trajectory, reversing progress in almost every single aspect of its indicators. As the conflict is still ongoing, it is difficult to evaluate the level of the damages and the priorities for reconstruction. Sudan has made significant progress after the end of the civil conflict in 2011, however the rate of progress is not fast enough to meet the goals of the IPoA. Mauritania has maintained a positive trend in line with the progress of the LDCs group, and is outperforming the group in terms of electricity and ICT access. Still, the rate of progress is too slow to meet the goals established in the IPoA. Table 4 summarizes the progress of the ESCWA LDCs against the goals of the productive capacity pillar of the IPoA.

Table 4. Main Results of ESCWA LDCs for the IPoA Productive Capacity Pillar

IPoA Productive Capacity Goal	Results for ESCWA LDCs
Increase significantly the value addition in natural resource-based industries paying special attention to employment generation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The contribution of added value by sector remains stable for the ESCWA LDCs. • There is no sign of integration of added value in the natural resources-based industries. Economic performance is linked to international trends of commodities prices
Diversify local productive and export capability with a focus on dynamic value added sectors in agriculture, manufacturing and services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The level of diversification of exports remains stable and with little variation in the ESCWA LDCs, progress achieved in this area is not significant yet. • Concentration of exports is higher than for the LDCs group and other developing countries overall.
Significantly increase access to telecommunication services and strive to provide 100 per cent access to the Internet by 2020.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ESCWA LDCs are above the LDC group average. Despite this fact, all the ESCWA LDCs have three quarters of the population with no access to the Internet. The goal of attaining 100 per cent access by 2020 seems highly unlikely to be achieved given the current levels of access.
Enhance capacities in energy production, trade and distribution with the aim of ensuring access to energy for all by 2030.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to electricity in the ESCWA LDCs is higher than in the LDCs group overall. Sudan is one of the fastest growers, however remains far from Yemen, which is the best performer. Sudan and Mauritania still have more than half their populations with no access to electricity. The gap between rural and urban is large in all the countries.
Ensure that the LDCs have significant increase in combined rail and paved road mileage and se and air networks by 2020.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure is still precarious. The participation in air networks of the ESCWA LDCs is minimal and has remained flat since 2010. The maritime connectivity in the ESCWA LDCs is low and the infrastructure is lagging behind in terms of quality as compared to other LDCs and developing countries.

Source: Author

An additional push is needed for the implementation of the last years of the IPoA. The approval of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda for financing development offer the normative framework to lead this push. In this regard, the specific circumstances of the ESCWA LDCs, such as the perception of being high-risk destinations for investments, aid dependence, and high vulnerability to shocks, limit their access to private investment and constrain domestic resource mobilisation. The monetary and fiscal environment for the ESCWA LDCs remains challenging as financial resources have shrunk due to low commodity export revenues and foreign direct investment has waned. Much more investment and regulatory reform are needed for the ESCWA LDCs to bridge their infrastructure gap and enable them to participate in global trade. The long-term effects of conflict on development outcomes includes the destruction of productive assets and social capital. Children are especially vulnerable in armed conflicts and suffer long-term consequences due to lack of education and poor health. LDCs and development partners therefore need to put more emphasis on conflict prevention. In Yemen in particular, conflict resolution and humanitarian assistance are key to put the country again on the track for social and economic progress.

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Annex 1
Productive capacity: IPoA goals and Targets and Associated SDG Indicators

<i>IPoA Goals and Targets</i>	<i>Associated SDG Indicator</i>
<p>(a) Increase significantly the value addition in natural resource-based industries paying special attention to employment generation;</p> <p>(b) Diversify local productive and export capability with a focus on dynamic value added sectors in agriculture, manufacturing and services;</p> <p>(c) Significantly increase access to telecommunication services and strive to provide 100 per cent access to the Internet by 2020;</p> <p>(d) Strive to increase total primary energy supply per capita to the same level as other developing countries;</p> <p>(e) Significantly increase the share of electricity generation through renewable energy sources by 2020;</p> <p>(f) Enhance capacities in energy production, trade and distribution with the aim of ensuring access to energy for all by 2030;</p> <p>(g) Ensure that the least developed countries have significant increase in combined rail and paved road mileage and sea and air networks by 2020.</p>	3.6.1 Death rate due to road traffic injuries
	3.9.1 Mortality rate attributed to household and ambient air pollution
	7.1.1 Proportion of population with access to electricity
	7.3.1 Energy intensity measured in terms of primary energy and GDP
	8.1.1 Annual growth rate of real GDP per capita
	8.2.1 Annual growth rate of real GDP per employed person
	8.3.1 Proportion of informal employment in non-agriculture employment, by sex
	8.5.1 Average hourly earnings of female and male employees, by occupation, age and persons with disabilities
	8.6.1 Proportion of youth (aged 15–24 years) not in education, employment or training
	9.1.1 Proportion of the rural population who live within 2 km of an all-season road
	9.1.2 Passenger and freight volumes, by mode of transport
	9.2.1 Manufacturing value added as a proportion of GDP and per capita
	9.2.2 Manufacturing employment as a proportion of total employment
	9.3.1 Proportion of small-scale industries in total industry value added
	9.3.2 Proportion of small-scale industries with a loan or line of credit
	9.5.1 Research and development expenditure as a proportion of GDP
	9.5.2 Researchers (in full-time equivalent) per million inhabitants
9.B.1 Proportion of medium and high-tech industry value added in total value added	
9.C.1 Proportion of population covered by a mobile network, by technology	
11.2.1 Proportion of population that has convenient access to public transport, by sex, age and persons with disabilities	

Source: Author, based Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (2011) and United Nations, General Assembly (2015)

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Statistical Annex

I. GDP growth (annual %)

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Mauritania	-0.4	2.0	0.7	6.0	5.7	9.0	18.9	2.8	1.1	-1.0	4.8	4.7	5.8	6.1	5.6	1.4	2.0
Sudan	6.3	6.5	6.4	7.7	3.9	7.5	10.1	11.5	7.8	3.2	3.5	-2.0	0.5	4.4	2.7	4.9	4.7
Yemen	6.2	3.8	3.9	3.7	4.0	5.6	3.2	3.3	3.6	3.9	7.7	-12.7	2.4	4.8	-0.2	-28.1	-9.8
Least developed countries	4.3	5.3	3.2	5.7	6.6	8.4	8.4	9.4	7.4	4.9	6.0	3.9	4.5	6.0	5.6	3.9	4.1
ESCWA LDCs	4.0	4.1	3.7	5.8	4.5	7.4	10.7	5.9	4.2	2.0	5.3	-3.3	2.9	5.1	2.7	-7.3	-1.0

World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2017)

II. GNI per capita, Atlas method (current US\$)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Mauritania	1050	1080	1130	1200	1310	1410	1380	1230	1130
Sudan	1110	1170	1250	1480	1720	1220	1830	2000	2140
Yemen	990	1080	1180	1060	1240	1410	1440	1140	1040
Least developed countries	612	684	741	789	856	897	958	952	952

World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2017)

III. Added Value Agriculture, value added (% of GDP)

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Mauritania	36.7	35.8	35.1	37.1	35.5	30.5	22.9	25.6	25.2	25.8	21.7	18.3	19.7	19.7	24.3	27.7	27.4
Sudan	42.2	42.9	41.9	38.3	34.6	31.5	29.8	26.7	25.8	26.3	24.6	25.4	40.6	41.7	39.9	39.3	39.0
Yemen	15.1	15.6	14.9	14.3	12.9	11.5	11.2	10.9	10.6	10.4	10.3	10.2	10.1	10.0	9.9	9.8	9.8
Least Developed Countries	29.9	29.8	32.1	30.8	29.4	29.5	28.5	27.6	27.6	27.6	26.9	26.2	27.8	27.0	26.1	25.5	25.0

World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2017)

IV. Manufacturing, value added (% of GDP)

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Mauritania	13.2	13.6	13.8	11.9	11.6	10.0	7.5	6.1	5.6	9.2	8.1	7.3	8.1	7.6	8.2	6.4	6.9
Sudan	8.6	8.0	8.2	7.5	7.4	6.9	6.1	6.2	5.6	6.0	5.9	6.3	..	..	..	..	..
Yemen	6.3	6.7	7.1	7.2	8.1	7.8	8.5	9.1	9.5	9.8	10.1	10.3	10.5	10.7	10.8	10.9	11.0
Least Developed Countries	9.5	10.2	11.6	11.5	11.7	11.4	11.7	11.9	11.9	12.0	11.7	11.9	12.5	12.4	12.5	12.6	..

World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2017)

V. Services, value added (% of GDP)

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Mauritania	35.3	35.9	38.6	38.7	37.2	36.3	30.5	34.8	35.4	38.9	36.7	33.3	36.2	35.1	39.2	43.7	42.6
Sudan	37.0	38.4	37.6	39.4	39.6	40.8	42.4	42.7	40.8	49.2	47.0	47.2	55.3	54.9	56.9	58.1	58.1
Yemen	39.7	43.4	44.4	44.7	44.7	41.5	41.7	41.8	41.9	41.9	42.0	42.0	42.1	42.1	42.1	42.1	42.2
Least Developed Countries	41.7	42.8	45.6	46.4	46.4	46.5	46.7	47.1	46.7	47.9	47.9	47.6	48.5	49.0	49.3	49.8	49.5

World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2017)

VI. Air transport, freight (million ton-km)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Mauritania	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	..	..	..
Sudan	46.8	41.8	14.6	22.7	23.5	12.4	11.9	13.2	14.4
Yemen	33.0	26.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	..	..	..
Least Developed Countries	539.1	628.9	851.5	970.9	1201.2	1399.5	1479.0	1518.9	1754.4

World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2017)

VII. Air transport, passengers carried

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Mauritania	153895	142355	524818	381076	325240	261696	271212	248159	280215
Sudan	617785	606558	580325	947031	777346	541644	501864	496178	292843
Yemen	1064878	1050486	1536556	1492073	1299707	1664220	1665552	1388000	828497
Least Developed Countries	11256036	11769610	18083757	21798106	22619179	25019675	25990551	26449662	27183401

World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2017)

VIII. Liner shipping connectivity index (maximum value in 2004 = 100)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Angola	10.2	11.3	10.7	11.3	14.0	13.8	19.3	19.6	29.7
Bangladesh	6.4	7.9	7.6	8.2	8.0	8.0	8.4	9.3	12.6
Congo, Dem. Rep.	3.4	3.8	5.2	3.7	4.1	4.0	4.1	4.3	4.1
Djibouti	10.4	18.0	19.6	21.0	16.6	20.3	20.2	20.8	29.4
Mauritania	7.9	7.5	5.6	5.6	8.2	6.5	6.0	8.6	6.3
Senegal	17.6	15.0	13.0	12.3	13.6	11.1	12.9	12.2	12.8
Sierra Leone	4.7	5.6	5.8	5.4	7.4	5.2	5.6	8.3	7.6
Sudan	5.4	9.3	10.1	9.3	12.8	8.4	13.1	14.6	18.4
Yemen, Rep.	14.4	14.6	12.5	11.9	13.2	19.0	18.5	24.2	5.8

World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2017)

IX. Quality of port infrastructure (1=extremely underdeveloped to 7=well developed and efficient by international standards)

Country Name	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Yemen	..	..	..	2.9	3	2.9	2.6	..	..	2.6
Sudan	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Mauritania	2.7	3.5	3.6	3.3	3.7	2.9	2.4	2.7	2.7	2.6
Least developed countries	3.2	3.4	3.5	3.4	3.5	3.2	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9
Arab World	4.2	4.4	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.4	4.2	4.4	4.4	4.3
Low income	3.4	3.5	3.7	3.5	3.5	3.4	3.1	3.0	3.0	3.0
Middle income	3.4	3.6	3.7	3.7	3.8	3.7	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.7

World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2017)

X. Access to electricity (% of population)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Mauritania	30.0	30.3	31.7	33.2	34.7	36.2	38.8
Sudan	36.9	29.0	37.5	37.8	38.1	38.5	44.9
Yemen	62.8	64.3	65.9	67.4	68.9	75.6	72.0
Least Developed Countries	30.1	31.0	32.2	34.6	35.3	36.4	38.3

World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2017)

XI. Access to electricity, rural (% of rural population)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Mauritania	2.4	2.5	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.9	2.3
Sudan	22.2	15.0	23.5	24.1	24.8	25.5	31.7
Yemen	49.4	50.9	52.5	54.1	55.8	65.2	59.0
Least Developed Countries	17.8	18.9	19.4	22.4	23.0	24.9	26.4

World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2017)

XII. Access to electricity, urban (% of urban population)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Mauritania	52.3	52.1	54.0	55.9	57.8	59.7	76.9
Sudan	66.7	58.0	65.8	65.4	64.9	64.3	76.3
Yemen	93.3	93.9	94.5	95.2	95.9	98.5	97.4
Least Developed Countries	62.8	62.3	65.7	65.1	65.9	66.0	67.6

World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2017)

XIII. Internet Users per 100 people

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Mauritania	1.9	2.3	4.0	4.5	5.0	6.2	10.7	15.2	18.0
Sudan	..	..	16.7	17.5	21.0	22.7	24.6	26.6	28.0
Yemen	6.9	10.0	12.4	14.9	17.4	20.0	22.6	24.1	24.6
Least Developed Countries	2.1	2.7	4.3	4.8	6.1	7.5	10.5	13.0	15.6

World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2017)

XIV. Mobile Cellular Subscriptions (Per 100 people)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Mauritania	61.1	62.1	76.9	89.5	106.0	102.5	94.2	89.3	86.5
Sudan	29.0	36.1	41.5	68.8	74.4	72.9	72.2	70.5	68.6
Yemen	29.7	37.4	48.7	50.1	58.3	69.0	68.5	68.0	67.2
Least Developed Countries	21.6	26.5	33.1	42.2	48.5	55.8	63.1	67.9	67.7

World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2017)

XV. Export Concentration Index*

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Mauritania	0.46	0.42	0.44	0.47	0.43	0.37	0.36
Sudan	–	–	0.56	0.67	0.64	0.66	0.65
Yemen	0.69	0.63	0.65	0.54	0.56	0.45	0.35
World	0.08	0.08	0.09	0.08	0.08	0.06	0.06
Developing economies	0.12	0.13	0.14	0.13	0.12	0.09	0.09
Developing economies: Africa	0.41	0.41	0.43	0.41	0.37	0.28	0.23
Developing economies: Eastern Africa	0.16	0.17	0.16	0.16	0.15	0.14	0.14
Developing economies: Middle Africa	0.81	0.82	0.83	0.82	0.80	0.75	0.73
Developing economies: Northern Africa	0.43	0.38	0.44	0.41	0.32	0.24	0.20
Developing economies: Southern Africa	0.12	0.14	0.13	0.13	0.12	0.13	0.13
Developing economies: Western Africa	0.59	0.61	0.59	0.59	0.56	0.47	0.41
Developing economies: Western Asia	0.45	0.49	0.47	0.46	0.44	0.33	0.31
Developing economies excluding LDCs	0.12	0.13	0.13	0.12	0.11	0.09	0.09
Developing economies excluding LDCs and China	0.15	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.15	0.11	0.11
LDCs (Least developed countries)	0.45	0.44	0.43	0.40	0.36	0.27	0.24
LDCs: Africa and Haiti	0.58	0.58	0.56	0.54	0.51	0.42	0.38
LDCs: Asia	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.25	0.26	0.27	0.27
LDCs: Islands	0.47	0.45	0.45	0.49	0.41	0.49	0.56
LDCs: Africa	0.58	0.58	0.56	0.55	0.51	0.42	0.39
LDCs: Islands and Haiti	0.36	0.33	0.33	0.34	0.32	0.37	0.37
GCC (The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf)	0.51	0.53	0.51	0.50	0.48	0.38	0.36

Source: UNCTADSTAT Database (2017)

*Concentration index, also named Herfindahl-Hirschmann Index (Product HHI), is a measure of the degree of product concentration. The following normalized HHI is used in order to obtain values between 0 and 1: An index value closer to 1 indicates a country's exports or imports are highly concentrated on a few products. On the contrary, values closer to 0 reflect exports or imports are more homogeneously distributed among a series of products