Consultancy Services for Research and Technical Production of report on ‘Emerging Opportunities and Risks of the LDCs Graduation in Africa in the context of the SDGs’

Location: Home Based
Additional Category: Least Developed Countries Graduation
Type of Contract: Individual Contract
Post Level: International Consultant
Language Required: English but a working knowledge of French would be an advantage.
Starting Date: 2 March 2020
Duration of the Contract: 6 Weeks (2 March 2020 to 10 April 2020)
Expected Duration of Assignment: 15-20 working days between the contract duration

Background
The Least Developed Countries (LDCs) group was established in 1971 to generate momentum for accelerated graduation from the binding constraints that characterize this group. A country is classified as a Least Developed Country if it meets the following three criteria:

i) Income Level Index – adjustable criterion based on GNI per capita averaged over three years. As of 2015 a country must have GNI per capita of less than US $1,035 to be included in the category, and over $1,242 to graduate from it.

ii) Human Capital Asset Index – based on indicators of nutrition, health, education and adult literacy) and;

iii) Economic Vulnerability Index – based on instability of agricultural production, instability of exports of goods and services, economic importance of non-traditional activities, merchandise export concentration, handicap of economic smallness, and the percentage of population displaced by natural disasters.

A country is considered eligible for graduation from the LDC category if it meets at least two of the three criteria used for LDC classification, or if its GNI per capita is at least twice as high as the income graduation threshold. An LDC must be found eligible after two consecutive triennial reviews to graduate from the group.

Between 1971 and 2017, only five countries have graduated from this group (Botswana, Cabo Verde, Maldives, Samoa, and Equatorial Guinea). To this end, UN Member States adopted the Istanbul Declaration and Programme of Action (IPoA) for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020, in May 2011. In the declaration, member states affirmed their commitment to collectively assist LDCs so that at least half of the countries in this group will become eligible to
meet the graduation criteria by 2020.\textsuperscript{1} As of March 2015, ten more countries\textsuperscript{2} had been suggested for graduation - meeting the threshold; Equatorial Guinea graduated in 2017.

The Least Developed Countries (LDCs) category is a group of low-income countries that are confronted with severe structural impediments to sustainable development. According to the United Nations, LDCs exhibit the lowest indicators of socioeconomic development, with the lowest Human Development Index ratings of all countries in the world. They are also highly vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks. Notwithstanding efforts taken by many countries to transition from this group, only very few of them have really graduated.

Policymakers and analysts have been raising some pertinent questions on why LDC graduation is so tricky and hard to accomplish, asking:

- What are the processes involved in the graduation?
- What are emerging opportunities for LDC graduation?
- How have LDCs benefitted from LDCs incentives?
- What are the specific challenges associated with loss of LDC benefits after graduation?
- What are the perennial and emerging risks that make graduation quite difficult?
- How can these risks be mitigated?
- What are the specific roles of various stakeholders in accelerating the graduation process?

The objective of this consultancy is to provide practical answers to these questions and to suggest concrete actions that would help accelerate LDCs graduation in Africa. Addressing these bottlenecks is key to accelerating progress on the SDGs in these countries, to be specific, and across Africa in general.

**Project Description**

The Report on ‘Emerging Opportunities and Risks of the LDCs Graduation in Africa in the context of the SDGs’ will provide intellectually independent, empirically grounded analysis of opportunities, risks and challenges facing African LDCs, including the implication of these risks in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The report will propose pragmatic recommendations, policies, and strategic actions on plausible ways to overcome risks and accelerate the graduation process for African LDCs. The specific objectives of the report are to:

1. Examine the process involved in LDCs graduation with a view to determining opportunities to revise this process;
2. Review existing opportunities for LDC graduation in Africa;
3. Examine the incentive structures and determine the extent to which these countries benefited from these incentives;
4. Understand the challenges current LD face towards graduation and examine key factors holding them back from the graduation process;
5. Examine the risks countries on the graduation threshold face; and

\textsuperscript{1} Presently there are 47 LDCs.
\textsuperscript{2} Angola, Bhutan, Equatorial Guinea, Kiribati, Nepal, Sao Tome and Principe, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.
(vi) Provide practical suggestions on how such risks could be substantially minimized or eliminated - and opportunities maximized - for both non-graduating and graduating countries.

UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa (RBA) is at the technical production stage of the report, using comprehensive research and analysis from a pre-existing (zero) draft report which benefitted from desk research, country surveys from a select number of countries, and broad consultations with representatives of African LDCs on the subject. The service of a technical writer is needed to support the final technical production and drafting of the report from 2 March 2020 to 27 March 2020 and will be expected to carry out the following tasks:

- Prepare a consolidated draft report to the complete ‘Emerging Opportunities and Risks of the LDCs Graduation in Africa in the context of the SDGs’ using the technical inputs from the (zero) draft report, country survey reports, and any other available reports on the subject to produce a more streamlined, coherent and policy-oriented report
- Revise the final report to ensure the report responds well to the guidance provided by the UNDP RBA Chief Economist who will act as a task manager.
- Collaborate with the editor, designer and translators to produce a print-ready draft report
- Create key messages and policy notes as tools to aid in report dissemination, advocacy and policy dialogue.

**Timelines**
The consultant will work for 15-20 days spread out from 2 March 2020 through 27 March 2020. It is noted that due to the nature of the project, there will be periods of time when no actual writing or research will occur because the writer will be waiting for either text clearances from UNDP RBA and/or layouts from the designer.

**Duties and Responsibilities**
The consultant will work closely with the RBA Chief Economist on the task. The consultant will be available to support the technical production of specific sections of the report.

**Deliverables**
Annotated Outline: 2 March 2020  
First draft report: 20 March 2020  
Second draft Report: 3 April 2020  
Final Report: 10 April 2020

**Competencies:**

**Corporate Competencies**
- Demonstrated commitment to UNDP’s mission, vision and values including working in a culturally diverse environment;
- Displays cultural, gender, religion, race, nationality and age sensitivity and adaptability;
- Demonstrates ability to function in a team environment and shares knowledge and experience.

**Functional Competencies**
• Excellent verbal and writing skills with strong academic and policy experience;
• Cognate experience in research and analysis related to LDC graduation issues, African structural development issues and sustainable human development in Africa and developing countries;
• Outstanding analytical and writing skills. Ability to present coherent and convincing positions both in writing and orally. There must be evidence of similar works done in the past on issues related to economic development, sustainable human development, structural transformation and LDC graduation issues;
• Demonstrable experience in consolidating complex information into a coherent narrative, including transforming unfinished products into high quality structured reports;
• Ability to innovate and take initiative to move complex processes forward to achieve articulated results, work at varying levels and on different initiatives simultaneously (personal organization and ability for multi-tasking).
• The consultant must also possess an ability to work under pressure and to accommodate change;
• Demonstrable networking capability, interpersonal skills and strong ability to work within a team.

Required Skills and Experience:

Education:
• Advanced University degree in development economics, international development, applied economics, sustainable human development or equivalent qualifications. A PhD in any of these areas would be an added advantage.

Experience:
• Minimum of fifteen years of work experience in development economics with a particular focus on: i) Economic Structural Transformation; (ii) LDC graduation issues; (iii) economic vulnerabilities; (iv) human development (v) Sustainable Development issues.
• Substantial experience in writing substantive reports on development issues in Africa, including transforming unfinished diagnostic products into high quality, coherent analytical reports for large organisations including the UNDP and the UN Development System.
• Understanding of the UN and UNDP's mandates and demonstrated familiarity with its Programme areas of work in Least Developing Countries and inclusive structural transformation.

Language and IT Skills:
• Excellent written and oral English communications skills. Fluency in any of other UN Languages would be an added advantage; and
• Fully literate in terms of software and e-networking.

Payment Modality
• 15% of contract sum upon submission of an Annotated Outline;
• 50% of contract sum upon satisfactory submission of Revised Report; and
• 35% of contract sum upon submission of Final Report.

EVALUATION:
Individual consultants will be evaluated based on cumulative analysis of technical and financial criteria using the following methodology:
* Technical Criteria weight: 70%
* Financial Criteria weight: 30%
Only candidates obtaining a minimum of 70 points on the technical competency will be considered for the Financial Evaluation.

Criteria for evaluation of candidates:
- Relevant academic background and experience working with African LDCs.
- Quality of previous publications, including demonstrated strong writing and editing skills.
- Experience in transforming unfinished knowledge products into highly analytical and coherent reports on complex development issues.
- Understanding of the UN and UNDP’s mandate and demonstrated familiarity with its Programme areas of work in Least Developing Countries and inclusive structural transformation.

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