



# The 2024 triennial review of the list of least developed countries \*

## Summary

The Committee conducted its triennial review of the list of least developed countries. It recommended Cambodia, Djibouti and Senegal for graduation and found that those countries require a five-year preparatory period. It deferred its decision on a possible recommendation for graduation of the Comoros and Myanmar to the 2027 triennial review. In that review, it will also consider whether Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania, which met the graduation criteria for the first time in 2024, can be recommended for graduation.

## Recommendations

The Committee recommends that Cambodia, Djibouti and Senegal graduate from the list of least developed countries. In line with General Assembly resolutions 59/209 and 67/221, the Committee advises the Economic and Social Council to reiterate the importance for development and trading partners to support graduating countries with concrete measures to facilitate a smooth transition. The Committee finds that all three countries require an extended preparatory period of five years to effectively prepare for graduation.

The Committee found that Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania fulfilled the criteria for graduation for the first time. These countries will be considered for graduation at the next triennial review in 2027.

The Committee deferred decisions on a possible recommendation for the graduation of the Comoros and Myanmar to the 2027 triennial review. Timor-Leste and Zambia no longer meet the graduation criteria and are thus not eligible for graduation.

## A. Introduction

The identification of least developed countries – defined as low-income countries suffering from severe structural impediments to sustainable development – is based on three criteria: per capita gross national income; the human assets index; and the economic and environmental vulnerability index.

Graduation from least developed country status follows the procedures specified in General Assembly resolution 59/209 and the guidelines adopted by the Committee in 2007 and endorsed by the Council.

The latest refinements of the criteria for identifying least developed countries and the application procedures, including thresholds, were adopted in 2023. In preparation for the triennial review, a preliminary review of the list of least developed countries was conducted by an expert group in January 2024. The Committee also consulted country representatives on their views regarding graduation and considered graduation assessments, based on vulnerability profiles prepared by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, impact assessments prepared by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and the set of supplementary graduation indicators.

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\* Excerpt from Committee for Development Policy, Report on the twenty-sixth session, See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2024, Supplement No. 13 (E/2024/33)

## B. Criteria in the 2024 triennial review

The table below shows the criteria values of least developed countries in the 2024 triennial review. Data for all Member States in developing regions is available on the Committee's website.<sup>1</sup>

Table 2

Criteria values for all least developed countries in the 2024 triennial review

Gross national income (GNI) per capita 2020-2022 average		Human assets index (HAI)		Economic and environmental vulnerability index (EVI)	
Burundi	298	South Sudan	19.3	Eritrea	56.4
Yemen	350	Chad	21.5	Djibouti	54.7
South Sudan	395	Niger	25.5	South Sudan	54.5
Afghanistan	437	Central African Republic	29.4	Somalia	54.4
Central African Republic	473	Somalia	31.8	Niger	54.2
Liberia	473	Afghanistan	37.5	Kiribati	53.6
Madagascar	487	Burundi	45.5	Mauritania	52.9
Mozambique	491	Mozambique	45.8	Tuvalu	50.8
Sierra Leone	497	Guinea	46.4	Chad	50.2
Democratic Republic of the Congo	547	Mali	46.7	Solomon Islands	49.6
Somalia	573	Benin	48.6	Mali	49.0
Niger	589	Guinea-Bissau	49.2	Lesotho	47.8
Malawi	606	Liberia	50.6	Burkina Faso	46.9
Eritrea	609	Angola	55.2	Afghanistan	46.8
Sudan	619	Sierra Leone	55.3	Sudan	46.4
Gambia	750	Ethiopia	58.1	Liberia	45.9
Guinea-Bissau	764	Madagascar	58.6	Gambia	45.5
Burkina Faso	835	Democratic Republic of the Congo	59.5	Malawi	43.2
Mali	838	Burkina Faso	59.9	Senegal	42.3
Rwanda	843	Malawi	60.5	Yemen	41.3
Uganda	909	Lesotho	60.7	Timor-Leste	41.3
Chad	922	Togo	61.1	Mozambique	41.0
Togo	942	Sudan	62.0	Sao Tome and Principe	40.0
Ethiopia	1,008	Eritrea	62.0	Zambia	39.8
Guinea	1,037	Yemen	62.5	Haiti	39.1
United Republic of Tanzania	1,093	Mauritania	64.5	Sierra Leone	38.7
Zambia	1,113	Haiti	64.8	Angola	38.5
Lesotho	1,184	Timor-Leste	65.6	Burundi	37.3
Nepal	1,300	Uganda	66.3	Comoros	37.0
Benin	1,316	Senegal	66.7	Ethiopia	36.9
Myanmar	1,381	Rwanda	66.8	Democratic Republic of the Congo	34.6
Haiti	1,536	Djibouti	66.9	Central African Republic	34.2
Senegal	1,558	United Republic of Tanzania	68.1	Benin	34.2
Cambodia	1,590	Comoros	68.7	Guinea-Bissau	34.0
Comoros	1,603	Gambia	69.0	Madagascar	32.3
Mauritania	1,797	Zambia	71.4	Myanmar	30.2
Angola	2,027	Lao People's Democratic Republic	74.8	Lao People's Democratic Republic	29.8
Sao Tome and Principe	2,271	Nepal	76.3	Nepal	29.7
Solomon Islands	2,281	Myanmar	76.3	United Republic of Tanzania	29.5
Timor-Leste	2,314	Bangladesh	77.5	Guinea	29.2
Lao People's Democratic Republic	2,503	Cambodia	77.8	Togo	29.1
Bangladesh	2,684	Solomon Islands	79.4	Rwanda	28.2
Kiribati	2,916	Kiribati	84.6	Uganda	28.2
Djibouti	3,238	Sao Tome and Principe	91.4	Cambodia	24.1
Tuvalu	6,830	Tuvalu	92.9	Bangladesh	21.9

..... Graduation thresholds

GNI: \$1,306 or above; HAI: 66 or above; EVI: 32 or below

----- Income-only graduation exception threshold

GNI: \$3,912 or above

<sup>1</sup> See [www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/least-developed-country-category/ldc-data-retrieval.html](http://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/least-developed-country-category/ldc-data-retrieval.html).

## C. Eligibility for inclusion and graduation

### 1. Countries considered for inclusion

No country met all three criteria for inclusion in the list of least developed countries.

### 2. Countries considered for graduation

The Committee notes that 15 least developed countries are meeting the graduation eligibility criteria, one less than in 2021. Of these, five countries were already graduating, two had been previously recommended for graduation, five met the graduation criteria for the second consecutive time and were considered for a possible recommendation, and three were meeting the criteria for the first time. Three countries that had met the criteria in 2021 no longer met them, while one country graduated in 2023. The lack of progress at the aggregate level underscores the difficult global environment that least developed countries are facing in their pursuit of graduation.

#### Cambodia

The Committee recommends Cambodia for graduation, noting that it meets all three criteria for graduation for the second consecutive time and with significant margins. The Committee welcomes the Government's strong commitment to graduation. It considered the Government's request for an extended preparatory period of five years to ensure a smooth transition. The Committee found the request justifiable and credible. Cambodia has utilized international support measures effectively, in particular preferential market access and intellectual property arrangements, which has contributed to high female participation in the labour market. It therefore needs to implement exceptionally extensive measures to prepare for graduation. Cambodia must advance both product and market diversification and develop productive capacity that is resilient to geopolitical and geoeconomic shifts, to ensure that the country can compete without least developed country-specific international support measures.

Cambodia needs to increase its fiscal space to become more resilient to economic, health and environmental shocks. Cambodia also needs to focus on seizing the opportunities emerging from the energy transition and strengthen its science, technology and innovation capabilities (including human capital and women's participation), which are essential if the country is to maintain the structural transformation drive by moving up the value chain and productivity and technological development ladders, while making full use of existing policy space provided by international agreements. In these efforts, as well as in its efforts to build climate resilience, Cambodia requires continued support from its development and trading partners.

#### Djibouti

The Committee recommends Djibouti for graduation. Djibouti meets the graduation criteria for the second consecutive time. It meets the income criterion by a wide margin and the human assets index by a small margin. The Government's strong commitment can contribute to a smooth transition out of the category, with continued support from its development partners. The Committee considered the Government's request for an extended preparatory period of five years and finds the request justifiable and credible. Djibouti requires an extended period to implement measures to address its exceptionally high vulnerability, as reflected by the fact that it has the second highest economic and environmental vulnerability index score of all least developed countries and as underscored by recent regional events. That period would provide Djibouti with the time to increase its competitiveness and overcome fragilities by reducing the cost of electricity, improving the quality and affordability of Internet services, diversifying the economy beyond port-related services and increasing public investment in social sectors.

#### Senegal

The Committee recommends Senegal for graduation. Senegal meets the income criterion and, by a small margin, the human assets index, for the second consecutive time. The Committee found the Government's request for an extended period of five years justifiable. That period will enable the country to prepare effectively for its graduation, with the support of its development and trading partners, by aligning the preparations with its development planning processes, engaging all stakeholders meaningfully, and further improving its human assets index score.

The Committee welcomes the strong commitment of the Government to graduate and the decision to integrate graduation into the country's national development plan. A successful and smooth transition requires strengthening strategies for diversification, industrialization and scientific and technological development. This includes revising legislative frameworks to make full use of the policy space provided by international agreements and the regional Bangui agreement on intellectual

property rights. A smooth transition also requires enhancing the country's education system to ensure greater rates of completion, as well as addressing urban-rural inequalities, including by improving connectivity and basic infrastructure in rural areas.

## Comoros

The Committee deferred a decision on the graduation of the Comoros to the 2027 triennial review. While the country meets the income and human assets index criteria for the second consecutive time and is eligible for graduation, multiple global crises have underscored the high vulnerability of the Comoros to external economic and environmental shocks. Accordingly, the ability of the Comoros to sustain the progress achieved to date is uncertain, as also confirmed by the Government. The Committee welcomes the serious and determined efforts by the Government to identify and address key vulnerabilities and highlights the need for increased support from development partners.

## Myanmar

The Committee deferred a decision on the graduation of Myanmar. While the country meets all three criteria, as in the previous two triennial reviews, the available data do not reflect the severe negative impacts on the country's development triggered by the military takeover in 2021. Since then, there has been a significant deterioration in the country's socioeconomic situation. The Committee also notes discrepancies between international data sources on the level of income. The Committee had already deferred a decision on Myanmar in 2021 because of concerns about the sustainability of development progress owing to the takeover, which had occurred just prior to that triennial review. Evidence suggests that the progress achieved in the years prior to the military takeover has been reversed and that socioeconomic conditions are likely to continue to deteriorate.

## Timor-Leste

Timor-Leste is no longer eligible for graduation as it now only meets the income criterion. The Committee previously deferred a decision on a recommendation owing to concerns about the sustainability of the country's development progress. The Committee welcomes the constructive and fruitful dialogue with the Government. It appreciates the determined efforts by the Government to address the long-standing problem of extraordinarily high stunting rates and encourages the Government and its partners to urgently implement the necessary measures to address the multidimensional drivers of child undernutrition. The Committee also shares the concerns of the Government regarding the sustainability of the current economic model and the reliance on the Petroleum Fund for State revenue. Economic diversification and the development of a vibrant private sector are essential for the country to embark on a path towards sustainable graduation.

## Zambia

Zambia is no longer eligible for graduation as it now meets only one criterion, the human assets index, owing to a decline in income since the previous triennial review. The Committee welcomes the constructive and fruitful dialogue with the Government. The strong commitment of the Government to graduate and the preparatory activities that have already been undertaken will no doubt contribute to a smooth graduation process once the country becomes eligible again in a future review. Overcoming the macroeconomic instability is the main immediate priority and requires support from the country's development partners as well as private creditors for resolving the debt restructuring. In the longer term, reducing the excessive dependence on copper exports is essential not only for economic diversification but also for ensuring macroeconomic stability.

## 3. Other countries

Three countries met the eligibility criteria for the first time: Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. All three have met the economic and environmental vulnerability index criterion and, with relatively low margins, the human assets index criterion, while failing to meet the income criterion. In line with the established procedures, the Committee will consider those countries for eligibility and a possible recommendation for graduation from the least developed country category at the 2027 triennial review.

Kiribati and Tuvalu continue to be eligible for graduation, surpassing the income and human assets index thresholds by wide margins, while continuing to show a very high degree of vulnerability in the economic and environmental vulnerability index. The Committee recalled that it has already recommended Tuvalu (in 2012) and Kiribati (in 2018) for graduation, but that the Council has repeatedly deferred its consideration of those recommendations. The Committee welcomes the consultations that it has had with both countries since the previous review on the question of graduation. It reiterates that graduation must not be seen as a signal that those countries no longer need special treatment. The extreme and permanent vulnerability of those

countries to climate change requires specific, sustained and easily accessible financial and technical support that is outside the scope of specific support measures for least developed countries. The Committee believes that keeping countries in the least developed country category for a prolonged period, when they no longer share the essential characteristics of the group, creates inconsistency and poses negative risks for the credibility of the category.