

The UN Resident Coordinator system in Nepal



Supporting Nepal on the road to LDC graduation

The Resident Coordinator system has been a key interlocutor for the Government as the country prepares for the critical transition from the category of Least Developed Countries, ensuring effective, coherent support by the United Nations and other development partners.

Nepal has been considered a Least Developed Country (LDC) since the 1970s. At the time, the average annual per capita income was US\$70, and more than 60 per cent of the population lived in hunger and abject poverty. Fifty years on, the situation in the country is very different. In 2021, Nepal qualified to graduate from the category of 'Least Developed Countries', having met for the third time key thresholds assessing the country's health, education, and economy's exposure to natural shocks.

Reaching these milestones has not been easy, especially for a country that has endured a decade-long armed conflict (1996-2006) and its aftermath, with compounding impacts of a relentless stream of natural disasters and climate-related crises posing setbacks to hard-fought development gains. Against this backdrop, the support of the UN and development partners needs to be fully aligned to Nepal's needs and priorities as it prepares for LDC graduation. In April 2023, Nepal took over as Chair of the Group of Least Developed Countries for three years, leading by example the path towards sustainable development.

The UN Resident Coordinator is playing a vital role in this process, ensuring that UN entities in-country rally around this common agenda and mobilizing UN expertise at regional and global levels. The UN Resident Coordinator, through the Economist in her Office, has been working closely with the National Planning Commission (NPC) to advise and provide technical assistance drawing on the expertise of regional and global agencies such as the United Nations Economic

and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), the International Trade Centre (ITC), and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), in addition to country offices of the International Labour Organization (ILO), UN Women and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to formulate a 'Smooth Transition Strategy' linked to the country's next five-year plan (2024/25 - 2028/29). This strategy focuses on accelerating socio-economic transformation, including through increased foreign direct investment, diversifying export, enhancing competitiveness and productivity, expanding the revenue base, accessing development finance - particularly climate finance - and catalyzing private investment.

High-level political engagement is at the core of the UN Resident Coordinator's support to Nepal. Working jointly with the UN Resident Coordinators in two other graduating LDCs, Bangladesh and Lao People's Democratic Republic, and supported by the Development Coordination Office's (DCO) regional team, the UN Resident Coordinator in Nepal facilitated the identification of the assistance required to formulate and implement their transition strategies, codified in a joint statement by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh and the Deputy Prime Ministers of Nepal and Bangladesh, calling for international development partners to align their support with national priorities. The three Resident Coordinator Offices have subsequently led peer exchanges and learning of best practices across their countries, which have helped strengthen the smooth transition process.



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Nepal has made significant strides in reducing levels of poverty and hunger and improving roads and infrastructure in rural parts of the country, including in Sastari District (above).

The effectiveness of the UN Resident Coordinator's contribution to this process has foundations in many of the elements of the Secretary-General's reforms of the UN development system launched in 2019.

The UN Resident Coordinator's **designation as the senior-most representative of the Secretary-General for development at the country level** ensures access to the highest levels of government, and her **dedicated and independent role for UN development coordination** facilitates a more coherent engagement from across the 20 entities that make up the UN country team in Nepal.

Today, all UN Resident Coordinators are supported by **core capacities for macroeconomic analysis, strategic planning, partnerships, communications, and data** to knit the UN's offer together.

The Economist in the UN Resident Coordinator's Office has played a particularly critical role in leading an 'SDG Acceleration Visioning Exercise' to rally UN entities around the LDC graduation and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

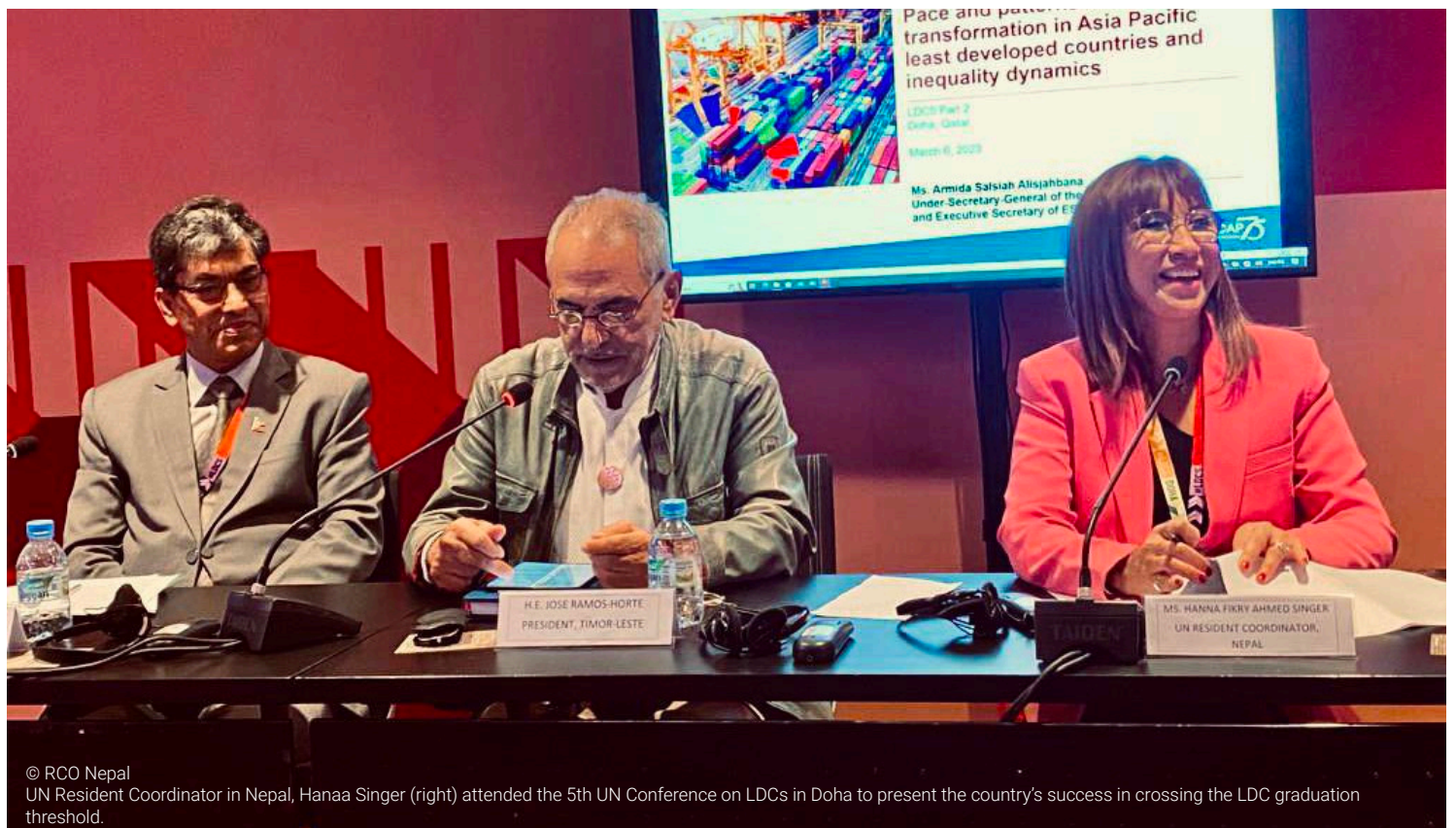
Together with UN colleagues, the Economist has worked to identify critical areas to accelerate SDGs in-country in line with national priorities for the upcoming two years until Nepal's graduation, consolidate and synthesize their analytical work, and transfer coherent UN technical assistance to the Government, particularly for climate change adaptation and biodiversity, decent jobs, social protection, gender equality and financing for development.

The Economist has also been leading the UN's support to the Government of Nepal in its peer exchange with the Governments of Bangladesh and Lao People's Democratic Republic, facilitated further by "communities of practice" managed by DCO across the 130 Resident Coordinator Offices servicing 162 countries and territories.

It should also be noted that DCO hosts the secretariat of the **Joint SDG Fund**, which provides an important incentive for collaboration across UN entities by supporting joint programming under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator. In Nepal, such resources have supported the development of a public finance tool to link development plans with budgeting exercises, which have promoted financial discipline at central as well as local levels in the pursuit of sustainable development efforts.

Only seven countries have graduated so far from their status of Least Developed Country. Strengthened UN leadership at the country level through the UN Resident Coordinator system to mobilize expertise, foster regional cooperation, build partnerships, facilitate learning, and unlock resources will serve to accelerate national efforts across other Least Developed Countries.

The experience in Nepal will also serve to build opportunities and promote regional learning across the category of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), a group to which Nepal also belongs, and which will agree on a new Programme of Action in June 2024.



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UN Resident Coordinator in Nepal, Hanaa Singer (right) attended the 5th UN Conference on LDCs in Doha to present the country's success in crossing the LDC graduation threshold.