

Fourth UN LDC Future Forum

Transforming LDCs by Empowering the Youth Population through Education, Innovation, and Inclusive Growth

19-21 May 2026, Helsinki, Finland

Monday, 18 May	
Venue: Solo Sokos Hotel Pier 4, Katajanokanlaituri 4	
Time	Session
17:00 – 18:00	Registration
18:00 – 20:00	<p>Welcome cocktail reception</p> <p>Speakers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Jukka Salovaara, Permanent State Secretary of MFA • Ms. Rabab Fatima, Under-Secretary General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) <p>Artist/musical program: Ida Elina</p> <p>Photo Exhibition – <i>in partnership with Canon Europe</i>: A curated exhibition showcasing images from LDCs, including Niger, Ethiopia, Nepal, Uganda and Tanzania, captured by Finnish photojournalist and Canon Ambassador Meeri Koutaniemi. It also highlights Canon’s Young People Programme and its work across Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Finland.</p>

Tuesday, 19 May

Venue: Solo Sokos Hotel Pier 4, Katajanokanlaituri 4

8:30 – 9:00	Registration and coffee/tea
9:00 – 9:30	<p>High-level opening session</p> <p>Moderator: Mr. Juha Savolainen, Director General, Department of Development Policy, MFA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Ms. Elina Valtonen, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland • Ms. Rabab Fatima, Under-Secretary General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) • H.E. Mr. Lok Bahadur Thapa, Permanent Representative of Nepal to United Nations, Chair of the LDC group
9:30 – 10:00	<p>Scene setter: From Potential to Participation: Empowering Youth to Build the Future of LDCs</p> <p>Mr. Melvyn Lubega, Tech Entrepreneur and Investor</p>
10:00 – 10:15	Group photo
10:15 – 10:45	Coffee Break
10:45 – 12:00	<p>High-level Panel discussion on Bridging the Skills Gap: Aligning Educational Systems with Future Labour Markets</p> <p><i>This session will focus on addressing the skills gap by aligning educational systems and vocational training with the demands of future economies, to ensure young people are prepared for emerging opportunities.</i></p> <p>Co-chair/s: H.E. Dr. Chola Milambo, Permanent Representative of Zambia to the United Nations, New York and H.E. Ms. Elina Kalkku, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations</p>

	<p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Mr. Anders Adlercreutz, Minister for Education of Finland • H.E. Mr. Ismael Nabe, Minister of Planning, International Cooperation and Development, Guinea • H.E. Mr. Américo Muchanga, Minister of Communications and Digital Transformation, Mozambique • Hon. Thomas Momo Parker, Deputy Minister for Planning and Research Development, Ministry of Education, Liberia • H.E. Mr. Put Samith, Under-Secretary of State of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of Cambodia • Ms. Prudence Kaoma, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance and National Planning, Zambia <p><i>Interactive discussion</i></p>
<p>12:00 – 13:00</p>	<p>Lunch</p>
<p>13:00 – 13:30</p>	<p>Transport to field visits</p>
<p>13:30 – 17:00</p>	<p>Visits</p> <p><i>Participants will have the opportunity to visit Finnish educational institutions from early childhood education and basic education through to vocational and technical education and training and higher education. The visits will provide insight into the Finnish education system and teacher education across different levels of education, as well as opportunities to interact with students and observe classroom situations.</i></p>

Wednesday, 20 May

Venue: Solo Sokos Hotel Pier 4, Katajanokanlaituri 4

8:30 – 9:00	Morning coffee, possibility for networking
09:00 – 09:30	<p>De-brief of the field visits</p> <p>Moderator: Ms. Lauratuulia Lehtinen, Deputy Director General, Development Policy Department, MFA Finland</p> <p>Representatives of each visit group share their experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Mr. Saidou Zongo, Permanent Representative of Burkina Faso to the United Nations, New York • H.E. Mr. Dionisio da Costa Babo Soares, Permanent Representative of Timor Leste to the United Nations, New York • Ms. Josephine Moote, Chargé d’Affaires of Kiribati to the United Nations, New York • Ms. Mamarama Matela, Deputy Permanent Representative of Lesotho to the United Nations, New York
09:30 – 09:45	<p>Special Address:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">H.E. Mr. Ville Tavio, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development of Finland</p>
09:45 – 11:30	<p>Panel discussion: Advancing the Digital Learning Revolution in LDCs</p> <p><i>This session will focus on advancing the digital learning revolution by expanding online universities and e-learning platforms that improve access to quality STEM education for marginalized youth, including girls and rural populations.</i></p> <p>Co-chairs: H.E. Mr. Lamin B. Dibba, Permanent Representative of the Gambia to the United Nations, New York and H.E. Mr. Thongphane Savanphet, Permanent Representative of Lao PDR to the United Nations, New York</p> <p>Keynote speaker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Mr. Américo Muchanga, Minister of Communications and Digital Transformation, Mozambique

	<p>Special presentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Roland Mollerus, Director, UN-OHRLLS – Special presentation on online university for LDCs <p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Kitty van der Heijden, Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships, UNICEF • Mr. Deodat Maharaj, Managing Director of the UN Technology Bank for Least Developed Countries • Ms. Somachi Chris-Asoluka, Chief Executive Officer, Tony Elumelu Foundation • Mr. Shai Reshef, Founder and President of University of the People • Mr. Henri Muurimaa, Co-founder and CEO, Eduten <p><i>Interactive discussion</i></p>
<p>11:30 – 11:45</p>	<p>Coffee break</p>
<p>11:45 – 13:00</p>	<p>Panel discussion on Promoting inclusive growth: unleashing the potential of youth, gender equality and marginalized groups</p> <p><i>This session will focus on promoting inclusive growth models to guarantee equitable participation of all youth, with special emphasis on gender equality and engagement of marginalized groups, utilizing proven approaches to overcome systemic barriers</i></p> <p>Co-Chairs: H.E. Mr. Mouctar Abakar, Permanent Representative of Chad to the United Nations, New York and H.E. Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Permanent Representation of Finland in Geneva</p> <p>Keynote speaker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hon. Thomas Momo Parker, Deputy Minister for Planning and Research Development, Ministry of Education, Liberia

	<p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Mr. Francisco José da Cruz, Permanent Representative of Angola to the United Nations, New York • Ms. Taotao Lagafaoa Manuao, Youth Manager, Youth Department, Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, Tuvalu • Mr. Stephen Opio, Chief Technical Advisor (Ethiopia & Sudan), PROSPECTS Programme, ILO Country Office for Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan • Mr. Cevor Tikerpuu, United Nations Youth delegate of Finland • Ms. Martha Belayneh, Country Coordinator, Abilis, Ethiopia <p><i>Interactive discussion</i></p>
<p>13:00 – 13:45</p>	<p>Lunch</p>
<p>13:45 – 14:15</p>	<p>Beyond Digital as Usual: Learning Innovation in LDCs</p> <p><i>Facilitated by Unicef Innovation hubs</i></p> <p>Presentation by Mr. Frank van Cappelle, UNICEF Global Lead, Digital Education</p> <p><i>The session will examine how to move from standalone and fragmented digital learning to integrated digital transformation, drawing on practical insights from UNICEF-led country initiatives. It will engage participants in identifying the critical shifts needed, in policy, investment, and partnership, to accelerate inclusive impact and drive real, lasting change in LDC education systems.</i></p>
<p>14:15 – 15:30</p>	<p>Fireside chat on Building vibrant youth innovation ecosystems</p> <p><i>This moderated fireside chat will focus on how to build vibrant youth innovation ecosystems through the creation of entrepreneurship programmes, start-ups, and technology hubs, which empower young people to scale solutions and foster meaningful employment.</i></p> <p>Moderator: Ms. Ragnheiður Elín Árnadóttir, OECD Development Centre</p>

	<p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Prudence Kaoma, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance and National Planning, Zambia • Mr. Patindé Yannick Arnaud KOUSSOUBE - Director General for the Promotion of Employment - Ministry of Sports, Youth and Employment, Burkina Faso • Mr. Xoan Fernandez Garcia, Global Innovation Adviser, UNDP • Mr. Santtu Vaalamo, Chief Growth Officer, Slush • Mr. Jonathan Chang Saeturn, Marketing Officer at Satcha Handicraft Center - TUI Colourful Cultures Siem Reap project, Cambodia <p><i>Interactive discussion</i></p>
<p>15:30 – 16:00</p>	<p>Coffee break</p>
<p>16:00 – 16:30</p>	<p>Captivate Session</p> <p><i>As part of the Future Forum, a call for papers was issued to solicit new and innovative ideas offering cutting-edge research as a complement to the main thematic and plenary sessions. The present session will showcase the top two researchers selected from this call for papers, who will present their findings in a TED-talk style session:</i></p> <p>Moderator: Ms. Meeri Koutaniemi, Finnish photojournalist and Canon Ambassador</p> <p>Researcher: Mr. Yasser Boina, Comoros, “Impact of digital development on the labor market in Senegal”</p> <p>Researcher: Mr. Neque Alcino António João Francisco, Mozambique “Youth Innovation Ecosystems in Conflict-Affected Least Developed Countries: Lessons from Northern Mozambique”</p>

16:30 – 17:00	<p>Closing session</p> <p>Moderator: H.E. Mr. Pasi Hellman, Under-Secretary of State, Development Policy, MFA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Mr. Lok Bahadur Thapa, Permanent Representative of Nepal to United Nations, Chair of the LDC group • Ms. Rabab Fatima, Under-Secretary General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) <p>Closing remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Mr. Alexander Stubb, President of the Republic of Finland
18:30	<i>Departure to the conference dinner by bus (from Hotel Pier 4)</i>
19:00	<p>Conference Dinner</p> <p>Host: Mr. Jukka Salovaara, Permanent State Secretary of MFA</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Cevor Tikerpuu, United Nations Youth delegate of Finland • Ms. Liliane Uwase, Founder & Executive Director of Bright, Rwanda

Thursday, 21 May

Venue: Solo Sokos Hotel Pier 4, Katajanokanlaituri 4

8:30 – 9:00	Morning coffee, possibility for networking
9:00 – 10:00	<p>From Insight to Impact: Bridging Research and Policy in LDCs</p> <p><i>As LDCs navigate rapid technological, economic, and demographic change, the ability to translate high-quality research into effective, inclusive, and future-ready policy is increasingly essential. Evidence-based policymaking plays a pivotal role in advancing Priority 1 of the Doha Programme of Action: Investing in People in Least Developed Countries, and is central to progress on youth empowerment, education reform, digital transformation, TVET modernization, and inclusive growth.</i></p> <p><i>This moderated discussion will focus on how can LDCs strengthen the bridges between research, legislation, and evidence-based policy design and actionable programmes; especially in rapidly evolving areas such as digital learning, youth skills, and inclusive growth. The session bridges the technical insights presented throughout the Forum with the policymaking processes needed to turn evidence into scaled impact for young people in LDCs.</i></p> <p>Moderator: Ms. Mia Seppo, Leadership and Development Consultant</p> <p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Abebe Shimeles, Honorary Professor at University of Cape Town and Senior Economic Advisor to the Minister of Finance of Ethiopia • Mr. Tarafder Md. Akther Jamil, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Education of Bangladesh • Ms. Rebecca Adda-Dontoh, UN Resident Coordinator in Malawi
10:00 – 10:30	Coffee break
10:30 – 12:00	<p>Roundtable on Building Sustainable TVET Systems in an Age of Disruption</p> <p><i>This interactive session explores the critical role of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in preparing young people for employment in an</i></p>

	<p><i>increasingly digital and rapidly evolving world of work. As labour markets transform through technological change, TVET systems must adapt to equip youth with relevant technical, digital, and entrepreneurial skills.</i></p> <p><i>Bringing together insights from UNU-WIDER, UNESCO, youth representatives, and leading researchers, the discussion will highlight innovative approaches to strengthening TVET systems, aligning skills development with labour market needs, and expanding pathways to decent and inclusive employment. Particular attention will be given to how digital technologies, industry partnerships, and international cooperation can make TVET more responsive, accessible, and future-ready.</i></p> <p><i>The session aims to spark dialogue on practical solutions that strengthen TVET and support young people’s successful transition from education and training into meaningful work in the digital economy.</i></p> <p>Moderator: Mr. Mattia Olivari, Programme Specialist, UNESCO</p> <p>Presentations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Borhene Chakroun, Director of the Division for Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems, UNESCO • Dr. Edward Samuel Jones, Senior Research Fellow, UNU-WIDER <p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Jussi Hinkkanen, CEO, FUZU - AI, Digital Skills, and the Future of Technical Training • Ms. Liliane Uwase, Founder & Executive Director of Bright, Rwanda • Mr. Nishant Anurag, WIPO Academy • Ms. Mervi Jansson, CEO, Omnia Education Partnerships Ltd
<p>12:00 – 12:45</p>	<p>Monitoring DPOA Implementation for the Midterm Review: tracking Progress, partnerships and policy pathways for transformation</p> <p><i>This session focuses on the upcoming High-level Midterm Review of the Doha Programme of Action, taking place in Doha, Qatar in March 2027. The</i></p>

	<p><i>discussion will focus on monitoring progress on the DPOA implementation, on data for tracking progress on structural transformation, vulnerability assessments, and policies and partnerships for productive transformation.</i></p> <p>Moderator: Mr. Lars Becker, Sustainable Development and Climate / Senior Adviser, Office of the President of the General Assembly (OPGA) New York</p> <p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Abdul Alim, LDC Team Lead, UN-OHRLLS • Ms. Idmane Moussa Ali, Special Advisor to the Minister, Ministry of Economy and Finance of Djibouti • Ms. Tiina Satuli, First Counsellor, Deputy Head of Sustainable Development and Partnerships, Delegation of the European Union to the UN • Mr. Matthieu Boussichas, Program Manager, Ferdi • Ms. Miniva Chibuye, Head - LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau
<p>12:45 – 13:00</p>	<p>Key Takeaways of Day 3 and the Way towards the Mid-term Review of the DPOA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Patricia Justino, Director, UNU-WIDER • Ms. Annalisa Primi, Head of Economic Transformation and Development Division - OECD Development Center • Mr. Roland Mollerus, Director, OHRLLS
<p>13:00 – 14:00</p>	<p>Lunch</p>

