

Least developed countries (LDCs) are low-income countries facing severe structural impediments to sustainable development. Being highly vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks and having low levels of human assets, they are granted with exclusive access to certain international support measures, in particular in the areas of development assistance and trade.

Currently, the United Nations classifies 46 countries in the world as LDCs, of which 32 are African. The [list](#), which is reviewed every three years by the Committee for Development (CDP), a subsidiary body of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, has been lastly reviewed in 2021, with 4 African countries (Comoros, Djibouti, Senegal and Zambia) that have been found for the first time to have met some of the criteria for being canceled from the list of Less Developed Countries. The criteria and the thresholds for inclusion into the LDC category are basically three: 1) an income criterion (gross national income per capita superior to 1,222 USD calculated according to the World Bank [Atlas method](#)); 2) a human assets index, made up of a health sub-index and an education sub-index; 3) an economic and environmental vulnerability index, consisting of two sub-indices: an economic vulnerability sub-index and an environmental vulnerability sub-index.

According to the UNCTAD report “[The least developed countries in the post-COVID world: Learning from 50 years of experience](#)” (2021), Djibouti met the first criterion, while Comoros, Senegal and Zambia met the graduation thresholds for two of the three criteria, namely income and human assets. To graduate from the LDC category, a country must meet the established graduation thresholds of at least two of the criteria for two consecutive triennial reviews. Which is the case of Comoros, Senegal and Zambia, but not of Djibouti. Accordingly, the first 3 countries will be reviewed again in 2024 and, if they will meet the criteria for a second time, they will be recommended for graduation from LCDs.