Vanuatu Ministry of Tourism, Trade, Industry, Commerce and Ni-Vanuatu Business (MTTICNVB)

Contents

1. Introduction

Vanuatu was recommended for graduation from the least developed country (LDC) category at the 2012 triennial review of the UN Committee for Development Policy (CDP), having several

Whilst graduation can be seen positively, it also means the loss of benefits associated with membership of the LDC group, limited though they are. These international support measures consist of trade preferences, official development assistance and other items such as travel grants for UN meetings, scholarships and reduced budgetary contributions to UN entities.[2] The draft Vanuatu smooth transition strategy and the UN impact assessment (CDP 2012) make clear that the impact of losing these benefits will be minimal. The implications are mostly well analysed and various national stakeholders are beginning to understand them.[3] The government is developing a strategy, of which the current study is a part, to try and mitigate the challenges. The main issue for the government will be to communicate the impact of graduation and mitigate any impacts, turning the situation to the national advantage. Vanuatu will remain vulnerable for many years, and associated policy measures to tackle this vulnerability will be important. It will be crucial to prepare properly in order to achieve a smooth transition through and beyond graduation. Maximising the positive sentiment surrounding graduation – particularly among investors – will necessitate strategic government initiatives and will not occur spontaneously.

This study, at the request of the Ministry of Tourism, Trade, Commerce, Industry, and Ni-Vanuatu Business (MTTICNVB), is an attempt to outline the Ministry's strategy for graduation, and is intended for input into the national graduation strategy developed by the Prime Minister's office, which in turn feeds into Vanuatu 2030: The People's Plan. The study aims to complement policies across the productive sectors, including the Agriculture Sector Policy (2015-2030), Livestock Policy (2015-2030), Fruits and Vegetables Strategy (2017-2027), National Coconut Strategy (2016-2025), Forest Policy (2013-2023), National Kava Strategy (2016-2025), National Cooperatives Policy (2017-2022), and Strategic Tourism Action Plan (2013-2018). Some analysis of LDC graduation has already been done, including UNDESA (2012), ESCAP (2019) and the National Graduation Strategy (2019), so this report does not attempt a comprehensive review of the cost and benefits of graduation; rather, in places, it updates earlier analysis using the latest data and refines the discussion in certain areas strictly related to trade, proposing measures concerning trade integration. The study first looks at the impact of graduation on trade, focusing on the possible impact of graduation on tariffs. The second section discusses the impact of integration into the global economy relating to Official Development Assistance (ODA), Aid for Trade (AFT), the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and investment promotion. The final section outlines some measures aimed at maximising the potential of graduation and mitigating its impact. The study was drafted at the behest of the MTTCINVB, but its recommendations go beyond solely this Ministry.

2. Impact on trade

2.1 Services

It is first worth considering any impact on services, Vanuatu's biggest export and the main source of economic growth in the last 15-20 years. The recently approved WTO services waiver allows members to grant special market access for services exports from LDCs. WTO members can in effect discriminate in favour of the services exports of LDCs. For example the waiver would allow a host country receiving the exports of an LDC in an industry such as insurance services to deviate from normal WTO rules allowing the LDC company to establish business premises, invest, sell across borders or hire workers under conditions for which other countries are ineligible. However since the services agreement has not yet been fully operationalized, and Vanuatu’s services exports and foreign investments are small, the loss of this preference will be very limited. Few LDCs have managed so far to make use of the waiver, even those with substantial services exports. The waiver is in any case less relevant to tourism.

2.2 Goods

The main expected impact of graduation on trade is via the loss of access to preferences for LDC exports. However the implications here, too, are expected to be minor. With its small and volatile export base, Vanuatu exports a variety of products to a number of different destinations year by year. Many of the main preference-granting countries and regions, such as the EU, are not major export destinations. In the cases where the tariff increases, the margin is mostly small. Goods exports are also very low by value, comprising only around 4% of GDP in 2018. For comparison, the proportion was 10% in the early 2000s. Any such minor impacts can in principle be mitigated through trade agreements or extensions of existing arrangements, as discussed later in this study.

Table 1: Main export products and applicable duties, 2018

Product	Value, US$ million	Proportion of total annual	Main destinations	Value, US$	Proportion of total	Applicable duty
[redacted]						

Generalised System of Preferences Plus (GSP+). Higher value-added fish products tend to incur a higher tariff. For example tariffs on dried or smoked fish (HS0305), currently exported from Solomon Islands (not currently in Sino-Van's plans), would rise from zero to 9.5% without an IEPA or GSP+. There are no plans to export fish to Thailand, a global tuna trading hub, although the LDC rate is zero and the general import tariff for relevant exports would be 3.5%.

An upturn in kava exports to Europe is another possibility in the event of relaxation of existing restrictions in that market. International kava prices have risen substantially in recent years and domestic supply is rising in response. Exports are at real historic highs even compared with the boom of the late 1990s, when exports peaked at VT 888 million in 1998. Without alternative arrangements, after the expected three-year extension of Everything But Arms (EBA) until 2023 the relevant EU tariff on kava would be 12.8%. The United Kingdom has suggested in a trade White Paper that in the event of leaving the EU it would continue existing concessions for LDCs as well as arrangements similar to the EU GSP and GSP+.

3.2 Official Development Assistance

In addition to trade preferences, developed nations have pledged to prioritise assistance to LDCs, to untie aid and to provide a fixed proportion of assistance to LDCs as grants rather than loans.

economic, social and cultural cooperation and thus graduation will not affect the support provided to Vanuatu.

As indicated in its reply to the CDP Secretariat both in 2008 and 2011, Japan has developed its own criteria for ODA allocation and Vanuatu's graduation will not immediately affect the development aid it extends to that country. In general, graduated countries would face higher interest rates on yen loans beyond the special rate applied to LDCs. Japan's aid to Vanuatu, however, has comprised only grants and technical cooperation. No loans have been extended.

The United States of America has officially stated that UN designations do not affect its ODA policies. The Government of the United States stated in its communication to UNDESA that graduation from LDC status would not impact Peace Corps programmes in Vanuatu. The Peace Corps agreement between the two countries was concluded in 1989 and currently over 80 volunteers are in the country.

In sum, the major donors are highly likely to maintain the overall framework for their aid policies towards the country. Graduation will have no impact on the overall aid policies of bilateral donors, largely because donors have their own criteria and priorities for aid provisions.

3.3 ODA trends

From 2008-17 Vanuatu's ODA receipts rose slightly less than the average for graduating LDCs, at 9.5% in total over the decade, reaching US$103.8 million in 2017, the latest year for which OECD data are available. ODA rose to US$160.4 million in 2015, the year of cyclone Pam, before declining. The biggest official donor in 2017 remained Australia, with US$45.4 million, followed by Japan on US$28.9 million, then New Zealand, the International Development Association of the World Bank (IDA) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). China is unofficially reported as having committed US$11.1 million in development assistance from 2016-17.[9]

For cross-reference it is also helpful to look at comparator countries. As shown in the following figure, most graduating countries experience an increase in ODA in the run-up to and after graduation. Samoa, which graduated in 2014, saw the biggest increase among recent graduates. The group of 12 countries identified for actual or potential graduation ('graduating countries' in the figure) saw a bigger increase in ODA over the decade than Vanuatu(tes)-35())]2a1.( )-4t-79(a)4(mong

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Data source: OECD

3.4 Aid for Trade

The main Aid for Trade instrument dedicated exclusively for LDCs is the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF), which, though very important, represents a relatively small share of Aid for Trade (AFT) flows to Vanuatu. The country would be eligible for support from the EIF for a period of up to five years after graduation unless alternative arrangements are made. Other AFT programme

Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures	Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) has a target of dedicating at least 40% of total project financing allocated to LDCs or Other Low-Income Countries (STDF Operational Rules)	reduced access to STDF.
	Lower co-financing requirement for technical assistance. Beneficiaries from LDCs and OLICs contribute at least 10% of the requested STDF contribution to a project, as opposed to 20% for lower-middle-income countries and 60% for upper-middle-income countries (STDF Operational Rules)	As above.
Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures	LDCs (and other countries with GNI per capita below $1,000 in constant 1990 dollars) are exempted from the prohibition of export subsidies (article 27.2 and Annex VII of the Agreement and paragraph 10.1 of the Doha Ministerial Decision on Implementation-Related Issues and Concerns (WT/MIN(01)/17))	No export subsidies. LDC extension expired end-2018.
Trade Facilitation Agreeement	Longer notification time frames: until 22 February 2020 for category B measures; until 22 February 2021 for indicative dates and definitive dates; by 22 August 2022 for category C measures (articles 15 and 16)	Category B extension expires by the time of graduation.
	Longer deadlines under the early warning mechanism, in case an LDC has difficulties in implementing categories B and C measures (article 17)	
	Longer time frame (4 years rather than 18 months) for new implementation dates for measures shifted from category B to category C before approval from the Trade Facilitation Committee is required (article 19)	
	Longer grace period from dispute settlement (until 22 February 2023 for category A measures, and 8 years from the date of implementation of category B or C measures (article 20)	
Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights	Exemption from applying all substantive TRIPS standards until 2021 (article 66.1, latest extension IP/C/64)	General TRIPS waiver for LDCs expires immediately after graduation. No impact unless extension negotiated.
	Exemption from providing protection for pharmaceutical patents, from providing the possibility of filing mailbox applications and from granting exclusive marketing rights until 2033 (IP/C/73 and	

Trade Policy Review Mechanism	LDCs may have a longer period between trade policy reviews than other countries (longer than the 6 years that apply to countries that are not among the 20 largest in terms of share of world trade) (Annex 3 of the Uruguay Round Agreements)	Limited impact.
Trade-Related Investment Measures	Annex F of the Declaration of the Sixth WTO Ministerial Conference allowed LDCs to maintain, on a temporary basis, existing measures that deviated from their obligations under the TRIMs Agreement. The provision applied to measures that were notified within a two-year period, which were then allowed to continue for another seven years. LDCs were also allowed to introduce new measures that deviated from their obligations under the TRIMs Agreement under certain conditions. All measures are to be phased out by year 2020.	No LDC has notified any TRIMS measure. S&D provision expires by the time Vanuatu graduates.

The term SEZ encompasses industrial parks, export processing zones, science and innovation parks, free ports and others. SEZs: (i) are in a geographically specific area, usually physically secured; (ii) have a single management or administration; (iii) offer benefits for companies in the zone; and (iv) have a separate, duty-free customs area and streamlined procedures.[11]

Zones have had enormous success in some contexts, most notably China, where the original four coastal SEZs were later expanded across the country and formed the basis of the country's industrial transformation. Yet in some regions, particularly sub-Saharan Africa, they have fallen short of their objectives or failed outright. Contextual adaption is extremely important. Although SEZs must be adapted to local circumstances, World Bank research suggests that five broad features stand out.[12]

A robust legal and regulation framework and strong institutions, including effective one-stop-shop services. It is important to avoid 'one-more-stop shops' which only add to the administrative burden. Some Ministries may have to be convinced to surrender power to the zone authority, which requires political leadership from above.

Strong government support as part of the national development strategy. Zones will not work unless government is committed to their success.

A prototype design for broader national reforms. Some countries which benefited from zones, particularly China, used them as a way of experimenting with policies on a small scale before broadening out lessons to the wider economy.

A strategic location with sound infrastructure. Zone positioning is crucial, and zones must be near transport infrastructure – in Vanuatu's cast ᴍ ŧ l %

The zone must be built into national development strategy or based on strong demand from business.

Infrastructure must be good enough. Power, gas, roads, ports, and telecom are the key constraints. Strong commitment from government and active participation of the private sector are crucial.

Zone management and operational know-how are critical. Zone developers, including the relevant government agencies, may not have experience in zone management and operations and may be unable to identify suitable partners for zone management and operations. Often this management expertise may be brought in from abroad. Managers must be given the power and authority to run the zone efficiently.

Government ownership and policy consistency must be strong. Strong, long-term government commitment is crucial for success.

Governments must live up to commitments to provide promised compensation for land acquisition and resettlement, so as to allow zones to develop over the long term.

Two priorities to complement the development of such a zone, and to be carried out by the Vanuatu Investment Promotion Agency (VIPA) are investor targeting (see box) and aftercare. Aftercare, or corporate development support, Qpol1smettlement, so

Experience shows that the strategic attraction of specific types of FDI is far from easy. South Africa made efforts to target FDI in specific sectors and to encourage domestic economic activities around these strategic firms. With the exception of a Motor Industry Development Programme, however, the results were modest. In some cases it has not been possible to attract the envisaged foreign investments while in others no substantial forward and backward linkages have been built.

Some countries develop an integrated strategy using investment promotion agencies that combine marketing and company targeting with aftercare and product development. Trade and Investment South Africa (TISA) seeks to establish linkages with larger foreign-based firms in order to find export markets for SMEs. TISA staff have a mandate to encourage TNCs that they deal with to source locally and work with the main national SME development agency to facilitate such opportunities.

Investor targeting involves:

1. Active identification of specific investment projects

The rationale for a proactive approach is that:

- Investment projects can be pursued that match the country’s needs and capabilities
- Targeting raises the understanding of business processes in IPAs and government
- The development of target sectors can benefit local companies and institutions
- It builds a business based partnership with potential and present TNCs

2. Carefully planned and managed investor search programmes

A distinctive feature is the process of identifying the sectors, companies, projects and benefits associated with a positive national partnership with international investors. It helps to plan targeting through the eyes and perceptions of international investors.

3. Investigation of specific corporate priorities

Targeting also involves devising and developing a project in relation to the known business priorities and processes of a specific company. It is not simply meeting with a company to suggest investing in Cape Verde, but rather a thoughtful contribution to the company’s business priorities for the region.

4. Confidential promotion to specific corporate executives

A fourth feature is to identify the specific corporate executive or group of executives with the remit and authority to accept projects for evaluation and to authorize investment. This does not involve a general promotion to corporate public relations executives, regional sales staff or engineers. Targeting programmes are usually confidential, invisible and only known about when successful projects are commissioned.

Source: UNCTAD

In addition, and to complement zoning, investor targeting and aftercare, Vanuatu should follow discussions at the WTO on investment facilitation, one of the new issues which may be added to the WTO agenda, and which will be discussed at MC12 in June 2020. Vanuatu may wish to form a position on investment facilitation in advance of MC12, whether or not the government supported bringing investment facilitation into the WTO agenda (and acknowledging the regional position, which is that a new investment facilitation agreement is not a priority and would lead to unnecessary complication)F1 12 the government

Investment facilitation is about helping countries to put into practice existing processes, and improving predictability, stability and transparency rather than primarily the attraction of new investment or changing the investment regime. The reduction of red tape and bureaucracy are major objectives. Discussions at the WTO, currently underway, focus on identifying and developing the elements that could form the basis of an Agreement, as well as outreach activities to engage more members in the development of such a framework. Elements under

Table 2: Summary of focus products in recent reports

NIDS

cent of EU tariff lines (in addition to products that are subject to zero MFN duties). Countries must ratify 27 conventions on human rights, labour rights, environmental protection and good governance as a condition for eligibility. Vanuatu has passed all except the following three:

Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948)
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965)
International Covenant on Economic and Social Cultural Rights (1966)

The EU continuously monitors GSP+ beneficiary countries' effective implementation of the 27 conventions, including exchanges of information, dialogue and visits. Various stakeholders are involved, including civil society. The European Commission publishes a report every two years outlining the progress made by beneficiary countries in implementing the conventions. Countries applying for GSP+ must not "have formulated reservations which are prohibited by these conventions" and must effectively implement the conventions. Once a country is granted GSP+, the EU checks that the beneficiary country abides by its commitments, conducting a continuous dialogue on compliance. That dialogue is based on a scorecard featuring information received from the beneficiary countries and international monitoring bodies and from other sources, including civil society, social partners, businesses, the European Parliament and the Council. The EU organises regular GSP+ monitoring visits to each beneficiary countries to meet all stakeholders. Beneficiaries are expected to demonstrate that they make serious efforts towards tackling the issues set out in the scorecard. The

Organizations within the UN system support countries through the process of graduation within their respective areas of work and mandates, and in coordination with each other through a task force on graduation and smooth transition. General Assembly Resolution 71/243 (21 December 2016) on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of the operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR) “requests the United Nations development system to provide assistance to graduating countries in the formulation and implementation of their national transition strategies and to consider country-specific support for graduated countries for a fixed period of time and in a predictable manner,” and ECOSOC Resolution 2017/29 “requests the entities of the United Nations development system to provide assistance to graduating countries in the formulation and implementation of their national transition strategies and to consider country-specific support for graduated countries for a fixed period of time and in a predictable manner”.

4.3 Continue to place emphasis on building productive capacity

As recognised in the TPFU and NSDP

of policy that gives way to a tangible and practical means of reaching out to a target group with a certain message. The underlying principle behind such a strategy is that communication is fluid, and has to be fashioned to meet certain circumstances as well as the sender's interests.

Communication should not happen haphazardly; it must be organized and built around specific goals – in this case to ensure that LDC graduation is understood by key stakeholders and, where relevant, the wider public, as a success story, with few disadvantages – but that those affected should be made fully aware of the implications. A good communications strategy allows the user to better control messages, improves planning, removes doubt, and involves a wide range of people.

The accurate communication of facts and analysis on LDC graduation in Vanuatu will be essential in order to avoid unnecessary public or private sector reaction. A very simple campaign would consist of a straightforward list of activities conducted in the run-up to, and after, December 2020.

If funds permit, a communications manager could be recruited by DSPPAC or the MTTCINVB for a period of six months to a year to lead and coordinate the following activities, which could form the basis of a terms of reference. National activities should be linked to those at the international level, discussed in the next sub-section. The communications campaign could first consider the identification of one or more spokespersons who can talk to the press and public about the issues. Target audiences could also be identified, such as Ministers, policymakers, ambassadors, the general public, UN agencies and donors and particular media outlets.

The following simple list should involve clear lines of responsibility and timelines:

Led by the NCC and DSSPAC, develop a simple positive slogan or message celebrating graduation and linked to the 40th independence anniversary in 2020. This item should be included in the agenda for the forthcoming independence celebration committee. Timeline: immediate/ ongoing.

Hold a national celebration event. Lessons can be learnt here from the example of Bangladesh, which held a country-wide celebration in early 2018 after the country met the criteria for the first time, led by the Prime Minister. Timeline: mid-2020.

Consider composing a series of short, simple briefs, with the main facts about graduation, translated to Bislama, for use and distribution online and in media and publicity activities. This could be done immediately for use throughout 2020.

The NCC/ MTTICNVB could brief members of parliament and hold a half-day briefing session for the Council 1(e)4(F1 12)gsn0.000008871 0 520.00919(ha)4ompos half

4.8 Build international support

An increased presence on the international stage can improve Vanuatu's standing and possibly even help boost private sector opportunities, raising inward investment. Although it may be

Economic volatility, such as during the 2008 global economic crisis, will continue to affect Vanuatu more than developed and other developing countries. The impact of systemic issues such as tax havens, carbon emissions, agricultural subsidies and immigration restrictions far outweigh existing international support or any measure of development cooperation that might eventuate in the foreseeable future. These priorities should be taken into account in international lobbying activities.

Most governments in the graduating LDCs are moving toward a more self-financed path, one which is less reliant on external assistance. Existing smooth transition measures, whilst welcome, mostly amount to a phasing out of support rather than positive new measures to assist countries in their next phase of development.

It would be rational, therefore, for graduating LDC governments such as Vanuatu first and foremost to navigate the post-graduation landscape via renewed engagement with multilateral economic institutions and mechanisms, particularly those which best facilitate the relationship with the global economy and which address systemic, global issues. A commitment by LDC and developed-country governments to building on and improving existing multilateral arrangements concerning the least-advantaged countries in trade, finance, tax, immigration, agriculture and the environment would best complement this renewed focus. In mitigating the impact of graduation it is also important to link issues such as trade policy, financing and ODA rather than to deal with these issues separately.

In support of these broader international aims, the Vanuatu Government would be well-advised to support and prioritise solidarity with like income per capita.[20] It is quite possible, if difficult to quantify, that the general perception of progress implied by graduation might improve the appearance of creditworthiness. In Vanuatu this is unlikely in the near term.

New potential support measures

As well as measures to mitigate the loss of LDC-people, particularly those living in new urban settlements without access to land, and those living outside Port Vila and Santo.

Some government ministries already struggle to spend new donor funds because they have a small number of administrative staff and limited infrastructure. Any new injection of donor assistance or leveraged private-sector funds risks only exacerbating this challenge. Research suggests that existing cash transfer schemes have been highly successful, reducing monetary poverty, raising school attendance, stimulating health service use and improving dietary diversity, reducing child labour and increasing women's decision-making power.[21] They also target the marginalised and lead to more equitable and just outcomes, forming a valuable social safety net for the vulnerable, who tend to form a larger share of the population in graduating LDCs, which themselves remain disproportionately vulnerable compared with other developing countries.[22] 130 low- and middle income countries implement at least one non-contributory unconditional cash transfer programme, either government or donor funded, or both. Cash transfer schemes operated by OECD donors such as the United Kingdom DfID have achieved important successes with poor populations in developing countries such as Bangladesh[23] and Kenya. The United Kingdom has committed to doubling its use of cash transfers in humanitarian assistance by 2025.[24]

Dedicated policymaking support for graduating and former LDCs: A sufficient critical mass of graduating countries exists to achieve synergies in policy analysis. Quality, relevant technical advice is already emerging from prominent think tanks and institutions in the global south. For most graduating LDCs, such as Vanuatu, good technical advice is critical, and many would benefit from increased cooperation with countries which have recently undergone or are currently undergoing similar experiences. For example Bangladesh's Centre for Policy Dialogue is an active and dynamic institution in a graduating LDC well inserted into the LDC debate and UN policy circles. Funding for south-south and current and former LDC thinktanks should be prioritised in order to build ownership over policy proposals and to tailor any recommendations to the national context. Advice should be targeted at different graduating and former LDC clusters, such as SIDS and LLDCs**.**

Geographic indications: The loss of tariff preferences may be compensated by increased support for geographic indications in export products of interest to graduating countries. Products such as kava may be of special interest here.

Disaster risk insurance: LDCs such as Vanuatu may wish to further pool risk either regionally or globally via a facility simple enough that it can be easily accessed by capacity-constrained countries. LDCs tend to be under-served by existing disaster-risk reduction programmes yet suffer the most from natural disasters.[25] Innovative solutions may be explored, such as parametric insurance, where insurance providers, rather than waiting for disasters, pay out when parameters such as temperature or rainfall reach a certain level. Premiums fall in cost because insurers are better able to model and predict outcomes. Climate data has moved so far away from

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historical averages that insurers are having to raise premiums to unsustainable levels in order to cover the possibility of extreme events. Insurers might also find it in their own interests to help finance mitigation measures such as flood defences, which reduce the costs of payout due to cyclones or hurricanes.

Applications for donor support: Many of the smaller, more capacity-constrained graduating and former LDCs struggle to meet the administrative requirements for multilateral support. A request may be made to simplify procedures for programmes such as the Global Environment Facility. The UNCTAD LDC report 2016 proposed an LDC finance facilitation mechanism**:** The proliferation of separate institutions and financing windows, together with limited progress towards donor coordination and harmonization, has given rise to an increasingly complex development finance architecture for LDCs. To improve their access to development (and, for example, climate) finance, this Report proposes the establishment of an LDC finance facilitation mechanism (FFM). The FFM could serve as a "one-stop shop", identifying appropriate funding agencies for the investments identified as prio

Table 3. Summary of proposed actions on graduation

Action	Timeframe	Responsible entities
4.1 Enact graduation-related recommendations in Trade Policy Framework		
a. Initiate formal discussions with Japan to seek zero duty transition period for beef		
b. Secure a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement with Japan (bilaterally or regionally)		
c. Confirm critical post-graduation obligations, and initiate formal discussions in relevant WTO bodies, including jointly with the LDC group, to seek		

4.5 Secure continued preferential market access China Japan Europe	2019 onwards	MoFA, Department of External Trade
4.6 Contribute to reporting to UN Committee for Development Policy (CDP)	Annually from Q1 2021	MTTICNVB, DSSPAC
4.7 Conduct national communications campaign Develop slogan or message Hold celebration event Compose short briefs on graduation Brief MPs		