

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

Trade and Development Board, fifty-ninth session
Geneva, 17–28 September 2012

Opening Plenary

General statements by regional groups
Speaker: Nigeria on behalf of the African Group

Tuesday, 18 September 2012

*Not checked against delivery **

* This statement is made available in the language and form in which it was received. The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of UNCTAD.

**Statement by the African Group
at the Plenary Session on 17 September
of the 59th Session of the Trade and Development Board
(17 to 28 September 2012, Geneva)
Delivered by H.E. Mr. Umunna Humphrey ORJIAKO
Ambassador of Nigeria
Permanent Mission of Nigeria to the United Nations in Geneva
on behalf of the Group**

*Mr. President,
Secretary-General of UNCTAD,
Excellencies,
Distinguish colleagues and participants,*

My colleague and coordinator of the African Group Ambassador Servansing is unable to attend this meeting because of other engagements outside Geneva hence I wish to make this statement on behalf of the African Group. The African Group wishes to associate itself with the statement made by the distinguished Representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

2. I would like to express our appreciation to Dr. Supachai Secretary-General of UNCTAD for his introductory statement.

3. The Group wishes to express its gratitude to the outgoing Bureau of the Trade Development Board, and especially to His Excellency Ambassador Maruping of the Kingdom of Lesotho. As President of the TDB, he brought his wealth of experience to assist resolve issues that emerged during negotiations for the UNCATD XIII Conference in Doha.

4. It is with great pleasure that the African Group congratulates the new President of the TDB H.E. Mr. Jüri Seilenthal, Ambassador of Estonia, on his election. We are confident Ambassador that under your wise and able guidance this 59th session of the TDB will achieve fruitful results. The African Group also takes this opportunity to extend our sincere congratulations to all other members of the Bureau on their election.

5. After the successful conclusion of UNCTAD XIII in Doha, we have now reached an important juncture of the TDB in moving forward. In this regard, the African Group wishes to give its full support for the Doha Mandate and call for its comprehensive implementation.

6. It would be important for UNCTAD to deliver concrete actions and results based on the correct identification of priorities and appropriate solutions in order to meaningfully and effectively contribute to the implementation as well as reviewing of the Millennium Development Goals in 2015.

Mr President,

7. African countries continue to face daunting development challenges, in terms of productive capacity, food and energy security; volatility in commodity prices; and climate change and other environmental problems. It is estimated that the international food price spikes of 2007-2008 and 2010-2011 kept or pushed more than 150 million people below the poverty line worldwide. In 2011 and the first half of 2012, the most dramatic situations in this regard were the famines in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel region of West Africa. Many of the concerned countries cannot afford the necessary additional social expenditure to tackle hunger and malnutrition unless they reduce spending for other purposes, including urgent infrastructure investments. This dilemma suggests the need for additional external assistance to overcome this distribution problem in the poorer countries.

9. Total external debt of the 33 African countries that belong to the LDCs have increased to an estimated \$113.5 billion over 2011. African LDCs have been relying more on domestic borrowing. This needs to be complemented by external financial flows because most African LDCs are still running current account deficits. Also, the fact that many countries have graduated from Low Income to Middle income status has also resulted in a situation in which all major forms of aid do not target countries where the majority of the poor live.

Mr. President,

10 The sustainable development of Africa will continue to depend to a large extent, to the FDI that African countries, especially the LDCs receive. FDI is essential if Africa wishes to reach targets set by the MDG's especially as regards to extreme poverty reduction.

11. We commend UNCTAD for its careful analysis of recent policy changes and the focus on relevant challenges for African governments in key sectors such as mining and agriculture, which in our continent, are a cornerstone for successful economic diversification. We ask the UNCTAD secretariat to explore ways, for example, through technical cooperation and other capacity building activities to

assist African countries in accelerating further improvement of their legal and institutional frameworks on investment to achieve the important objectives of sustainable development and inclusive growth.

12. The African Group reaffirms— as recognized by the Doha Mandate – that the demand for increased market access or entry should go together with improving the supply capacities of the African countries. This will position African States to benefit from the global economy through producing and trading competitive goods and services. Entrepreneurship is the engine for the creation of these capacities. The Group commends the positive results reached by UNCTAD in entrepreneurship policy and promotion through the Entrepreneurship Policy Framework (EPF) and the Empretec Programme.

Mr President,

13. African countries' participation in international trade is still at only around 3%, and African exports have relatively limited product and market diversification. We believe trade and trade policy have a key role to play in addressing Africa's many challenges and accessing trade playing a much more important role than it does at the moment; it will be difficult for Africa to fully realize its growth and development potentials. New approaches and new areas for trade should be identified, without neglecting products of continuing vital importance to African countries such as agricultural products. African exports should be boosted, including by addressing non-tariff measures and the negative impacts that they have on African exports, as well as through better integration into global supply chains, promotion of exports of services.

14. Such action should be supported and complemented by trade-related cooperation programmes of a North–South, South–South or triangular character, including within the frameworks of the Enhanced Integrated Framework for LDCs and of Aid for Trade.

15. The work of UNCTAD in the area of multilateral trading system, is today even more important than ever. UNCTAD's role in promoting intergovernmental dialogue should be reinforced. Also, accession to WTO is an integral part of the development strategies of the eight African countries aiming to benefit fully from the international trading system. We call on UNCTAD to continue providing technical assistance with a view to facilitating their accession process.

Mr President,

16. African countries are mobilizing their efforts to strengthen intra-African regional cooperation and integration. The African Union Summit in January 2012 in Addis Ababa adopted a “Decision on boosting intra-African trade and fast tracking the Continental Free Trade Area”. The long-term outcome of this initiative would be to bring new impetus to both intra-African trade expansion and African countries' integration into the regional and global economies.

17. We are pleased with the contribution of UNCTAD towards this initiative and encourage it to continue its efforts to assist in the implementation of the Action Plan and the establishment of the CFTA.

18. The African Group will make specific comments during our discussions in respect of the relevant agenda items and looks forward to constructive and fruitful discussions to ensure a successful conclusion of this session.

19. Thank you.