

GRULAC UNCTAD
G E N E V A

**Statement delivered by Barbados on behalf of the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC) on the occasion of the
64th Executive Session of the Trade and Development Board
Geneva, 6 February 2017**

Mr. President, H.E. Mr. Christopher Aparr (Uganda)
Mr. Joakim Reiter, Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD,
Mr. Paul Akiwumi, Director, Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries, and Special Programmes,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

It is an honour for Barbados to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC) at this the sixty-fourth Executive Session of the Trade and Development Board.

Mister President.

2. The Group wishes to take the opportunity to thank the Deputy Secretary-General for his opening remarks. Also we wish to extend our gratitude to you for the work that you have done thus far, for bringing us to this stage of our deliberations. GRULAC considers that the task before us for the coming months within the context of the post-Nairobi phase will be critical to the delivery of our joint commitment towards the revitalization of UNCTAD and the broader implementation of the Nairobi Maafikiano. We are confident that with your guidance in this august intergovernmental process, we will accomplish our goals.

3. We also take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to the new Director of the Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries, and Special Programmes. We look forward to closely collaborating with him in our future work.

Mister President.

4. GRULAC commends the UNCTAD Secretariat for the tremendous work they have done in the publication of the 2016 edition of the Least Developed Countries Report, the content of which will form the basis of our discussions over the next 3 days. The Group consider the analysis, data and recommendations in the Report to be very relevant and appropriate, given the global context confronting the world today.

5. The reality is that we now live in a world of stagnated world trade, uncertainty with respect to multilateralism and fears of increased protectionism. These present genuine threats to the global economy, to relationships and to partnerships. For many developing countries and in particular LDCs, these exogenous factors - given the fragile nature of their economies - can have debilitating implications on the development prospects and progress towards graduation from the LDC status.

6. Our discourse on the theme, “*The path to graduation and beyond: Making the most of the process*” is therefore a welcomed one, and one which we consider to be timely as we are mid-way between the adoption of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) and the target date for the accomplishment of the objectives set out in this Programme. The outcomes of the Report therefore reinforces the need for UNCTAD to continue its crucial role in analysing the trends in trade and trade policy; promoting multilateralism; and advancing its efforts aimed at reducing trade barriers globally.

7. In 1971, the international community had the foresight to disaggregate this vulnerable group based on clearly defined criteria. In this regard, we note with concern that since the development of these criteria denoting the LDC category of countries only four countries have graduated to the category of “other developing countries”. Meanwhile the number of countries joining this classification of LDCs, has doubled. It is even more disconcerting when one considers UNCTAD’s simulation referred to the Report, reveals that the goals for graduation as set out in the IPoA will likely not be met by the prescribed deadline. In fact, conceptually, only 10 LDCs will graduate by 2020 and 16 will graduate by 2025. This means that the development divide between those countries that remain in the LDC classification, and other developing countries will widen. In relation to our Group, Haiti will in accordance with these findings, remain an LDC beyond 2025.

8. UNCTAD’s niche in delivering tailored technical assistance and policy advice aimed at building productive capacities and diversification therefore remains indispensable to assisting these countries to develop their trade and development strategies.

9. We take note that clearly there is more to be done if LDCs are to achieve their development objectives. The adoption and implementation of forward-thinking, multifaceted domestic policy measures by graduating LDCs, will be necessary to counter the reductions in competitiveness. Further, the support of the international community with finance, investment and technical assistance must be part of a wider package to support these countries’ efforts to build up competitive productive capacity and trade supporting infrastructure.

10. It will also be necessary for LDCs to have the requisite policy space and additional targeted international cooperation to help them to achieve their sustainable development goals in line with the IPoA and the SDGs, if they are to achieve any semblance of sustainable development. The challenges faced by this group, some of which are experienced by GRULAC, should not be underestimated as these could also have a strong impact of the level of results achieved by these countries.

11. The Group therefore is in agreement that graduation from LDC status should not be viewed as an end in itself, but instead should be seen as the start of a journey towards sustained development. We recognise that a change in status will bring about lower levels of preferential access, reduced financing and official development assistance which contributes to a large portion of LDC revenues. GRULAC therefore concurs with the recommendation of what has been termed in the Report as “graduating with momentum” which conceptualises the notion that the adoption of strategies which are both short term and long term in nature will be key to growth and development in their re-classification as “other developing countries”.

12. Mister President, the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean wishes you a fruitful deliberation and look forward to substantive conversation on the issues which have been raised in the Report. We also look forward to adopting agreed conclusions which are meaningful to LDC progress towards graduation to non-LDC status; and can also contribute to the framework for Phase II of our collective work, that is, the revitalization of UNCTAD.

13. The members of GRULAC who are part of the Group of 77 and China associate ourselves with the statement delivered by the Group of 77 and China.

Mister President, I thank you.