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Opening Plenary item 1:

Speaker:
Iraq on behalf of the Asian Group

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Statement by Iraq on behalf of the Asian Group
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Mr. President.

1. At the outset, I wish to align this statement of the Asian Group with the statement of the distinguished chair of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. President.

2. This last session of the Trade and Development Board, fittingly, is on the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and affords us the opportunity to consider and reflect upon the LDC report. We are therefore well positioned to reflect on the important question of how to promote the development of the most vulnerable members of the community of nations and in so doing, position ourselves for the important discussions we will have next year in the context of the 50th anniversary of UNCTAD and the process to articulate the post-2015 development agenda.
3. We have already begun these reflections. A few weeks ago Member States started discussions in Geneva with the very useful dialogue organized by the Secretary-General that included the excellent and useful participation of Amina Mohammad. At that discussion, developing countries emphasized that the future development agenda should be ambitious, coherent, holistic, and inclusive.
4. We repeat those points here and in so doing, observe that perhaps the central question that we must ask at this session is: what can we take from this year's LDC report to the post-2015 development agenda? For the Asian Group, this is no idle question, as our region counts as its members a number of Least Developed Countries. More importantly, the Asian Group is also the region where the largest number of the world's poor and disadvantaged are to be found.

Mr. President.

5. The LDC report this year is an excellent example of UNCTAD's integrated and holistic approach to development. Indeed the message from the report is consistent with UNCTAD's narrative over the last half century - the only way to ensure sustained and sustainable development is through an integrated and holistic approach to development facilitated by a strong developmental state.
6. The report presents with alarming clarity the reality that the global economic and financial crisis continues to have an overall negative impact on the development prospects of developing countries, especially LDCs. Equally alarming is the overall reduction in official aid flows to LDCs - alarming in terms of the reduction of resources directed at the LDCs, and alarming as a reflection of the degree of political on the part of donors to deliver on their commitments.

7. These facts underscore that perhaps the single biggest challenge on the way to 2015 is the generation of political will to arrive at an ambitious global development agenda, as well as to deliver on the resources required for its accomplishment.
8. Thus far, it is clear that this will not be easy. The stark reality is that the global economic climate makes the generation of political will difficult. Yet that is the paradox of our times - the very conditions and challenges that many developing countries sought to overcome are now being faced by some developed countries. Perhaps this will inspire the empathy necessary to bridge many of the conceptual gaps that exist and unnecessarily prolong what some call the North-South divide.

Mr. President.

9. It is clear that without political will, we will not be able to move forward on the development agenda - this is reflected painfully clearly in other forums like the WTO. But we are in the UN, and one advantage that we bring to the table is that we can see that development is not only about trade. Indeed development is not just about economic losses and gains. Development is fundamentally about the future itself. Seen through this prism, it becomes easier to make the argument for an ambitious development agenda. In the bigger picture, all of humanity stands to benefit from development and global prosperity.
10. In particular, and in the context of this session, we single-out the LDCs. This year's LDC report makes clear that in the prevailing global economic climate, the economic performance of LDCs is hampered by external factors including the stagnation of trade and the reduction of financial flows - including investments and ODA. The report also makes clear that in the absence of an enabling global economic environment, the efforts of the LDCs themselves will be insufficient to generate the scope and quality of growth necessary to achieve graduation, let alone sustained development. This in turn contributes to global instability and consequently to insecurity. A key to long-term global security, therefore, lies in the sustainability of development.
11. The foundation for this long-term sustainability lies in the catalytic and facilitating role of the developmental state to kick start the transformations and investment necessary to place the domestic economy on a firm footing to achieve not only quality growth, but also to create quality jobs. This is easier said than done. This requires putting in place the infrastructure to allow business to flourish. And this must be translated into gains in productive capacity. In this regard, we appreciate the nuance in the LDCs report that the actual conditions that describe productive capacity vary from country to country, just as development needs and priorities differ.
12. And for productive capacity gains to be translated into long-term development gains, the basic needs of sustainability need to be addressed including the strategic direction of the economy to address changing national conditions, and consequently priorities. We therefore appreciate the point that a broader development strategy needs to carefully balance the need for a sound industrial policy with the needs of maintaining a healthy population including by addressing food security concerns. In other words, industrial and

agricultural policy need to be balanced, and they need to be continuously recalibrated as conditions evolve.

13. All of these efforts need to be with a view to the eventual graduation of LDCs. This means squarely addressing the post-graduation environment. It is true that measures are in place to soften the landing of LDCs once they graduate. But as of late, these measures do not seem much of an inducement for some countries to graduate. And indeed the lack of debate on graduation and post-graduation issues has sometimes caused unnecessary confusion in terms of the overall panorama of developing countries.
14. The LDCs report has made useful contributions over the years in terms of graduation and post-graduation issues. Yet it would be useful if the LDC report - perhaps in a special edition in the context of post 2015 - could also address these issues as a useful contribution towards a consolidated and coherent approach to development, and consequently a universal post-2015 development agenda. This is not to say that we are calling for a one-size fits all model that has universal applicability. Rather, what is needed is a framework that puts in place broad principles and approaches, that can then be tailored to address specific conditions.

Mr. President.

15. I wish to close by commending the UNCTAD secretariat for another excellent and thought provoking report. We underscore that as the focal point for LDCs in the UN system, we expect much from UNCTAD, and we expect that it will deliver. As I mentioned earlier, we would very much like to see the ALDC division engage on broader work on LDCs, including in terms of their graduation and post-graduation prospects and conditions. We believe that this would be an excellent contribution to the articulation of the post-2015 development agenda and a fitting celebration of 50 years of UNCTAD supporting our aspirations for a better world for our peoples.

Thank you Mr. President.