

**Statement by H.E. Ms. Beatriz Londoño Soto,  
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent Representative of Colombia  
on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Countries (GRULAC), at the  
Sixty-Sixth Executive Session of the Trade and Development Board**

**Item 2: The Least Developed Countries Report 2017: Transformational Energy Access**

*Monday, 5 February 2018*

Mr. President, His Excellency Ambassador Sek Wannamethee (Thailand),  
Secretary-General of UNCTAD, Mr. Mukhisa Kituyi,  
Director of the Division for Africa, LDCs and Special Programmes, Mr. Paul Akiwumi,  
Chief, LDC Section, Mr. Rolf Traeger,  
Ambassadors,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

1. It is an honour for Colombia to deliver this statement on behalf of the Latin America and the Caribbean Group (GRULAC) at this the sixty-sixth Executive Session of the Trade and Development Board.
2. The Group would like to thank the 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 intergovernmental process, we will accomplish our goals.
3. The members of GRULAC who are part of the Group of 77 and China wish to align themselves with the statement made by the distinguished President of the G77 and China, Ambassador Farukh Akhter AMIL.
4. The Group welcomes the latest edition of UNCTAD's *Least Developed Countries Report 2017: Transformational Energy Access* which provides a most valuable reflection on issues affecting Least Developed Country members. 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. Today's discussion of the 2017 Report is taking place at a critical juncture in the international development policy debate. The Report recognizes access to energy as an essential pillar for building productive capacities and fostering structural transformation in LDC economies. Sustainable and inclusive development in LDCs cannot be achieved solely by meeting household needs for energy: the energy needs of the economic/productive sector must be targeted as well, and this implies implementing energy policies that address the two-way relationship between energy use and economic transformation and the impact this can make in terms of poverty reduction is timely and important. Therefore, it provides a valuable contribution to our dialogue as we begin to consider effective means of pursuing the full implementation of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Timeliness and relevance of the Report's focus and its findings and observations underline the value and importance of UNCTAD's research and analysis pillar for all members. They also underscored the importance of fully integrating UNCTAD's work in the broader work of the UN in the accomplishment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

6. GRULAC highlights the critical importance of access to energy for productive uses in Haiti, a country where energy poverty has been commensurate with a general prevalence of economic poverty, environmental degradation, insufficient women empowerment and a range of adverse social outcomes. The Group notes with concern that access to electricity is well below 40 per cent in Haiti and that energy scarcity is characterized by significant rural-urban divide and adverse impacts on the environment and health due to excessive use of biomass sources. The over-reliance of Haiti on imported fossil fuels exposes its economy to oil price shocks and burdens the country with trade deficits. As the Report documents, poorly developed local primary energy markets in LDCs such as Haiti aggravate fiscal and current account deficits in LDCs, at a time when limited financial resources can be better invested in promoting economic transformation.

7. The example of Haiti demonstrates the importance of the report's conclusions for other developing countries similarly situated. This is especially crucial in assisting developing countries, especially LDCs, to diversify their energy mix, shift gradually towards renewable energy sources, adopt a mix of off-grid and grid solutions, pay attention to the upgrading of energy distribution and transmission networks and practice energy pricing policies that can ensure the sustainability of local utility companies.

8. GRULAC therefore concurs with the major policy recommendations of the UNCTAD Least Developed Countries Report 2017, especially its recommendations in the areas of finance and technology. Increased South-South and triangular cooperation is needed to accelerate the deployment of energy technologies, particularly renewable energy technologies in LDCs. Increased and sustainable aid flows from traditional donors and other sources of international public finance could provide seed money for the set-up of sustainable energy business models in LDCs.

9. GRULAC calls on the international community to devote proper attention to the operationalization of its commitments in favour of LDCs. This includes the operationalization of the LDC Technology Bank, in line with the objectives of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA). It also includes the concrete operationalization of Article 66.2 and Article 67 of TRIPS, calling on developed countries to assist LDCs in technology transfer so that they can establish a viable technological base.

10. As the international community heads towards the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable development in New York in July 2018, the UNCTAD Least Developed Countries Report 2017 provides a sound basis for the international community to reassess its priorities in the areas of trade, finance and technology, in relation to Sustainable Development Goals 7 on energy access and use.

11. In conclusion, the 2017 LDC Report is a timely reminder that *Transformational Energy Access* will be central to development in LDCs. We therefore hope that today's discussion will contribute to the effort to deliver valuable and viable outcomes as we move toward full implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals 7.

12. GRULAC would like to highlight the importance of UNCTAD's flagship reports and their contribution to the intergovernmental deliberations; and therefore, supports substantial agreed conclusions on the 2017 LDC Report that reflect the outcomes of the discussions during this meeting and provide guidance to the Secretariat on future work in favour of the LDCs.

I thank you.