Statement by
Her Excellency Mrs. Martha Lungu Mwitumwa
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Zambia
Chairperson of the Group of 77 and China
at the Sixty-Seventh Session of the Trade and Development Board

General statement

President of the Trade and Development Board Ambassador Federico Villegas,
Secretary-General of UNCTAD Ambassador Mukhisa Kituyi,
Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD Isabelle Durant,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

1. I have the honor to deliver this general statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. At the outset the Group wishes to commend the President of the Trade and Development Board on the way he led the first segment of this Sixty-Seventh Session of the Trade and Development Board, we look forward to the successful holding of the two remaining segments of this session of the Board.

2. The Group wishes to congratulate the signatories of the Host Country Agreement for the Fifteenth Session of the UNCTAD Conference, namely the UNCTAD Secretariat and Barbados, scheduled to take place in Barbados in April 2021. This landmark should serve to increase the momentum in preparing for UNCTAD 15, in particular as the global situation demands answers to the pressing questions of our time.

3. Indeed, UNCTAD 15 will mark one of the first international gatherings in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. This gathering will be an opportunity to find consensus on how to build back the economies in developing countries. We need to work hard and smart over the next few weeks to gain what would be lost during this unprecedented time. The Group of 77 and China would therefore like to offer its will to work with development partners to deliver an UNCTAD 15 outcome that is at the stature of the challenges the world faces today.

Mr. President,

4. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have devastating effects for most developing countries, eroding the progress made by most developing countries in the achievement and attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As we are all aware, developing countries had been facing development challenges even before the COVID-19 pandemic, which have significantly affected the productive capacities of the countries. These challenges range from unsustainable debt levels, an increasing and widening Digital Divide, increasing and visible effects of climate change, to unstable financial systems, growing economic polarization and inequalities, high unemployment rates and high levels of poverty. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to exacerbate many of these challenges while creating further systematic challenges thus leading to an increasingly complex situation that threatens to create long-lasting devastating effects. The urgency of the situation is most evident in the fiscal and monetary constraints currently faced by the developing countries, in particular as they struggle to face with the pandemic.
Mr. President,

5. The COVID-19 pandemic has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives globally and tremendously disrupted international trade and global value chains, causing shortages of basic goods and food, and subsequent price hikes, increasing uncertainties and unnecessary restrictions. Therefore, it is extremely important to enhance international cooperation, uphold multilateralism and refrain from unilateral actions that hamper the effort of tackling the pandemic worldwide and especially in the worst affected developing countries, particularly by restricting access to medical supplies. Hence, the call for the development community, including institutions such as UNCTAD and most particularly donor countries, to provide appropriate support to developing countries in an adequate, non-discriminatory and unrestricted manner and in a spirit of solidarity and multilateralism.

6. The Group of 77 and China appreciates the work UNCTAD continues to deliver assisting developing countries in their efforts to remain on track in the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Group assigns particular importance to the policy analysis and recommendations arising from the research and analysis pillar in new and emerging areas of work such as on the widening Digital Divide, trade facilitation, climate change, investment, commodities, illicit financial flows, among others.

Mr. President,

7. Furthermore, the Group of 77 and China would like to take the opportunity to express its concern on the decline in Official Development Assistance, at a time when it is more needed than ever to help tackle the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and its negative impact on the attainment of the SDGs.

8. The Group of 77 and China was very pleased with the discussion and many concrete ideas that emerged out of the first segment of this session. As we delve into more concrete areas in the second and third segments, most notably the World Investment Report and the Trade and Development Report, the Group calls for maintaining the high-level and constructive engagement that characterized the first segment. At the same time, the Group looks forward to the continuation of the dialogue on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic as an open-ended item beyond this session including in particular the UNCTAD-wide publication planned for the last quarter of 2020. It is our duty to harness the expertise of the UNCTAD secretariat and the critical mass of expertise of the diplomatic and expert community in Geneva to identify and offer viable options for our countries and the international community to overcome the pandemic.

Mr. President,

9. Before closing we would like to take the opportunity to formally express our serious concern about the liquidity problems facing the United Nations secretariat and thus UNCTAD. We have recently seen how these constraints have limited the services provided to member States by UNOG and we have been informed of many similar constraints that are restricting the capacity of UNCTAD to fully deliver on its programme of work. The Group of 77 and China would therefore like to urge all members of the United Nations to fulfill their financial obligations in a timely manner, in order to ensure that the United Nations continues to serve as the international forum that is required to help us all build a better world.

I thank you, Mr. President.