Asia Pacific Group
GENEVA

Statement by
Ambassador Khalil Hashmi
Permanent Representative of Pakistan
on behalf of Asia Pacific Group
at the Sixty-Seventh Session of the Trade and Development Board

Agenda item 8: Activities undertaken by UNCTAD in support of Africa

President of the Trade and Development Board Ambassador Federico Villegas,
Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD Isabelle Durant,
Director of the Division on Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes,
Mr. Paul Akiwumi,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

1. I am delivering this statement on behalf of Asia Pacific Group.

2. The Group associates itself with the statement delivered by the G-77 and China.

3. The Group commends the UNCTAD Secretariat, in particular the Division on Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programs, for presenting the report on the “Activities undertaken by UNCTAD in support of Africa”

4. Africa is a continent with its special needs and challenges. The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing vulnerabilities and challenges faced by the economies of Africa, as reflected in several UNCTAD reports. Mitigating the economic downturn and accelerating the pace of recovery requires coordinated efforts by the international community and international organizations.

5. The Group appreciates that UNCTAD undertook a range of activities to support member States in Africa in their efforts to transform their economies, creating jobs, reducing poverty, accelerating sustainable development and facilitating the region’s integration into the global economy.

6. UNCTAD’s assistance in the negotiation and implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area is commendable. The agreement presents important opportunities for the continent’s growth and integration.

7. The Group encourages UNCTAD to continue to provide its technical expertise to the African Union in drafting technical regulations on rules of origin including with regard to special economic zones.
8. It is positive to note that UNCTAD Regional Office is playing a key role in facilitating and coordinating technical assistance from UNCTAD to the African Union Commission and its member States.

9. In the area of technical assistance, the Asia Pacific Group is pleased to note that in 2019–20, 27 countries in Africa benefited from the support of the UNCTAD Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) programme and five additional countries in Africa adopted the ASYCUDA system for performance measurement, which provides live information and statistics to detect anomalies in customs operations and increase their efficiency.

10. The Group further welcomes UNCTAD technical assistance to African countries in the area of debt management, its reporting and analysis through the use of UNCTAD software named DMFAS. As of 2019, 29 African countries (UNCTAD) are benefitting from this software. The Group encourages UNCTAD to further improve this software and enhance the scope of this and other technical assistance programs.

11. The Group also welcomes the UNCTAD work in the area of International Investment Agreements. In 2019, several countries in Africa revised their international investment agreements, by amending and/or terminating outdated treaties. Drafting new model international investment agreements and engaging in negotiations on regional investment agreements is helping Governments to safeguard the right to regulate, while providing protection for and promoting and facilitating responsible investment. The Group calls on UNCTAD to continue its valuable assistance in this area and extend its scope to all interested member states across other regional groups.

12. The Group also appreciates that UNCTAD has deepened cooperation with other United Nations agencies and international organizations, to enhance the development of a coherent approach to trade and development assistance in Africa. The Group encourages UNCTAD to organize special sessions to promote targeted discussions and briefings to member States on the possible financial challenges that lay ahead for developing countries in the wake of Covid-19.

13. I thank you, Mr. President.