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**Opening Plenary
General Statements**

Speaker: Tanzania on behalf of the African Group

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**GENERAL STATEMENT MADE BY MODEST JONATHAN MERO
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA
ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP AT OPENING OF UNCTAD – TRADE
DEVELOPMENT BOARD
15 – 26TH SEPTEMBER 2014**

**Mr. President,
Dr. Mukhisa Kituyi, Secretary General UNCTAD
Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen.**

African Group aligns to the Statement made by Chad on behalf of G77 and China. At the outset I wish to express African Group appreciation of the leadership of the UNCTAD Secretary General and efforts of his entire team since his assumption of leadership of this Organization. I also wish to commend H.E. Ambassador Triyono Wibowo, the outgoing President of the Board for his great leadership and also welcoming the new President of the Board Her Excellency Ana Maria Mendez. African Group assures the New President of the Board full cooperation during her tenure.

Mr. President,

I will focus on the agenda items and my statement will entail what each item means for African Group:

Firstly, as for agenda item on tackling inequalities, one would wonder as to why we should place an emphasis on economic agenda. The answer is plain and simple: it is only through stable, dynamic and resilient economies that our people will create wealth and employment opportunities, security and increase prospects for better life for their children. In Africa, poverty is perverse and signs for its eradication are not encouraging.

This reflects the strong sense that we are at an historical juncture where we can, if governments and international community show the collective political will, chart a new, sustainable development course which will be very different from the path that has brought us to where we are today.

African Group value UNCTAD policy advice and believe that the expertise will continue to focus on growth which is far more inclusive and which narrows rather than widens inequalities – both across and within countries. This growth should be less intensive in the use of the earth's resources and less polluting of the earth's environment. In essence, this view is directly linked to the implementation of post 2015 development agenda a successor of MDGs.

Secondly, the item on interdependence and sustained recovery of the global economy is premised on the fact that countries have comparative advantage that provides opportunity for all. However, there has been a movement to competitive advantage that is pushing advanced countries to loose sight of interdependence hence marginalizing further the participation of low income countries particularly African countries in international trade. In the final analysis, both LDCs and African countries remains mere suppliers of raw materials and completely missing out in the new frontier of global value chain where value addition provides opportunity for all participating countries along the chain. This board has an opportunity to address this challenge.

Thirdly, the Istanbul Programme of Action gave hope to the LDCs that the implementation of the action plan will be supported and that these countries will be able to address their structural constraints in order to graduate from their status. Despite the fact that the support to the programme has been marginal, African Group wish to acknowledge the efforts of UNCTAD for their informative documents that is providing a critical mass of policy advice and information useful for improved policy design at the level of the Member States.

Fourth, as for the Item on Africa, It is true that countries in Africa are struggling to improve their investment environment necessary for increased inflow of FDI. They are also tapping from their local resources and promoting local investors to assume their rightful role in investing in their own countries. Some countries in Africa have demonstrated vividly that focus on conducive investment environment and supporting critical infrastructure can spur development and increase opportunity which automatically reduces poverty. We have also witnessed that highly diversified

economies in Africa mitigate risks in the market place and increase opportunity for their people. We call on UNCTAD to increase focusing on supporting African countries in their quest for diversification of their economies based on their capabilities and factor endowment.

Mr. President,

Investing in sustainable development goals is an area of importance for all of us. One important point to remember about the SDGs – which differentiates them from the MDGs – is that they are meant for all countries. This has to be true, since the challenges of sustainable development are universal in character. Therefore, all countries need to contribute to mitigating them in accordance with principles of fairness and equity.

Also, linked to SDGs, there has been much discussion of the need to tailor global goals to differing national and regional priorities and circumstances. Conversely, it is important for the regions to work together in order to shape global goals that speak as far as possible to their realities and challenges. For a region like Africa, for example, high rates of poverty, food insecurity and unemployment are relevant facts which make sustained economic growth and industrialization with clear goals and targets pertinent. African Group sees the role of UNCTAD at this juncture to be critical particularly in the area of policy advice and sectoral studies.

Mr. President,

Finally,

We are encouraged that UNCTAD's wide range of technical cooperation activities in Africa has impact and appreciated. Reports produced by UNCTAD are in no doubt important resource and knowledge to all of us. The Africa Group notes the efforts undertaken by the Secretariat to ensure greater synergies across the three pillars of UNCTAD work. In our opinion, UNCTAD policy research and analysis on African economic development issues should be translated in concrete capacity building operations in order to register more impact. In this regard appropriate coordination

should be ensured among the various substantive divisions of UNCTAD and the Division for UNCTAD, LDCs and Special Programmes.

We recognize the important contribution made by UNCTAD programmes in the areas of customs and debt management through ASYCUDA and DMFAS programmes that are successfully implemented throughout the region in many countries and supported by efficient regional centres. The Group also acknowledges the important contribution of projects related to capacity building in the areas of trade negotiations, regional trade integration processes, international investment agreement (IIAs) and trade facilitation through the e-regulations the latter being successfully implemented in the UEMOA sub-region. We call on all development partners to continue supporting UNCTAD in their programmes and projects.

I thank you.