

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

**Trade and Development Board
Sixty-first session**

Geneva, 15–26 September 2014

**Opening Plenary
General Statements**

Speaker: Philippines on behalf of the Asian Group

Monday, 15 September 2014

*Not checked against delivery **

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**Statement delivered by H.E. Amb. Cecilia B. Rebong
On behalf of the Asian Group
at the 61st Session of the Trade and Development Board
Geneva, 15 September 2014**

Madam President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

1. I have the honor of speaking on behalf of the Asian group. At the outset allow me, on behalf of our group, to congratulate you and other members of the Bureau on your election. I would like to assure you of our full support. The Asian Group aligns itself with the statement delivered by H.E. Mr. Malloum Bamanga Abbas of the Group of 77 and China.
2. This cycle of the Trade and Development Board is a historical one given the 50th anniversary of the organization, the on-going urgent discussions on the post 2015 development agenda, and the upcoming UNCTAD XIV in Lima. It is therefore crucial that our discussions during the next two weeks lead to concrete solutions or at the very least, a clearer understanding on possible solutions to address the challenges that we all face as we approach these watershed moments.
3. The theme of the High Level Segment was aptly chosen. Indeed, one of the key post 2015 challenges is how to effectively tackle the rising inequality in our world through trade and development. For our group wherein several nations, including my own, are experiencing strong economic growth, this welcome development of economic expansion brought about through trade must translate to actual tangible benefits for the greatest number of our citizens, some of whom continue to live in poverty. The Asian Group looks forward to the debate that discussions on this issue will surely generate.
4. The Asian Group commends UNCTAD for its fine work in preparing the Trade and Development Report for this year. The document is insightful, highly relevant, and contains research and analysis that will help countries deal with the many issues facing us today, such as interdependence. For the Asian Group, this is a crucial issue given upcoming key developments in our region, in particular the ASEAN Economic Integration in 2015. Furthermore, the group commends the report for recognizing the importance of policy space.
5. The Asian Group looks forward to discussions on how to address the issue of revenue loss brought about by illicit financial flows, tax havens, and inadequate taxation of extractive industries. The latter is of particular relevance to our group given that many of us have the natural resources that are being extracted.

Madam President,

6. The Asian Group commends UNCTAD for its work on developing cross-divisional capacity-building programs in accordance with the Doha Mandate. The group also

commends UNCTAD for its work on strengthening the capacities of national policy makers and academics in understanding the links between trade, finance, investment, technology and developing relevant policies that support development objectives. By expanding the knowledge and capacities of policy makers UNCTAD is directly contributing to the improvement of development strategies.

7. The Asian Group also wishes to express its appreciation for the Third Progress Report on UNCTAD's contribution to the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for LDCs. The Report presents the broad range of activities undertaken by UNCTAD to support the implementation of the IPOA. As the recent performance of LDCs remains weak, national and global actions in its implementation require concerted efforts by LDCs and increased support by UNCTAD and other development partners. Such efforts should aim primarily at addressing the root causes of underdevelopment in LDCs, and in particular, productive capacity-building, diversification of LDC economies and job creation.

Madam President,

8. The Asian Group is particularly appreciative of the focus in the secretariat's background paper on trade and agriculture, as this issue is of particular relevance to members of our group. The paper makes a number of important points about trends in international trade in general and trade in agriculture in particular. For the Asian Group, international trade is key to the integration of developing countries into the international economy and deriving benefits from it. It is an important stimulus for economic growth in developing countries and its importance cannot be overemphasized.
9. Agriculture forms a major part of the economy in most countries of our group. We therefore urge a special focus on agriculture in the period ahead. This should not only be in the form of rhetoric calling for reductions in tariffs and subsidies but a serious and practical framework to address the inherent distortions in agricultural trade at the global level.

Madam President,

10. The Asian Group would like to commend the UNCTAD Report on Assistance to the Palestinian People for its thoroughness and for offering concrete recommendations for facilitating economic development in the occupied Palestinian territory. The group further commends UNCTAD for its pioneering research on the Palestinian economy. The group looks forward to the deliberations on this matter, which has always been a high priority for the group.
11. In closing, I would like to reiterate the Asian Group's support to for your leadership and we look forward to a successful 61st Session of the Trade and Development Board.