GRULAC UNCTAD
  G E N E V A

Statement by Commonwealth of the Bahamas
on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Countries (GRULAC), at the
Sixty-fifth session of the Trade and Development Board

Item 8 - Activities of UNCTAD in support of small island developing States
and in support of landlocked developing countries
Friday, 8 June 2018 (afternoon session)

Mr. President, His Excellency Ambassador Salim Baddoura (Lebanon)
Director of the Division on Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes, Mr. Paul Akiwumi,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

1.   The Commonwealth of The Bahamas has the esteemed honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC) at this session of the Trade and Development Board.

2.   GRULAC thanks the UNCTAD Secretariat for its presentation, and for the background documentation circulated prior to this meeting.

Mr. President,

3.   The Group recognizes the systematic challenges facing landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) due to their geographical position, and their heavy dependence on the export of a limited number of primary commodities. The Vienna Programme of Action was negotiated to help overcome these challenges. Yet, to date, progress towards the goals remains mixed, at best. In some key areas, including economic growth, trade and structural transformation, progress has been far too slow.

4.   GRULAC welcomes the wide range of activities carried out by UNCTAD in support of the Vienna Programme of Action, as presented in the report before us. It further notes that Latin American LLDCs have benefited from several important technical assistance projects by UNCTAD: These include a transit policy seminar, which benefited 9 Latin American LLDCs and transit countries, as well as a Services Policy Review for Paraguay, which assisted the country in identifying challenges and opportunities in priority services sectors.

5.   However, the sharp reduction in growth experienced by the LLDCs, as well as their diminishing share in global trade are a great cause for concern. It demonstrates that despite now more than 15 years of international attention through the Almaty and Vienna Programmes of Action, the LLDCs are still being held back by the constraints of geography. If the populations of the LLDCs are to benefit from the SDGs in the same way as everyone else, it is important for the goals and targets of the Vienna Programme of Action to be achieved. LLDCs and transit countries need to take urgent measures to facilitate trade

and transit transport. This includes hard infrastructure investments, as well as soft infrastructure, such as streamlining of procedures and reducing documentation requirements. The WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement can play a role in lowering customs costs. However, many LLDCs are unable to implement all provisions of the agreement without additional technical and financial assistance.

Mr. President,

6. LLDCs should also work to harness regional and global trade integration for development. Improved market access commitments, reduced non-tariff measures, as well as greater integration into regional and global value chains can be important catalysts for development. UNCTAD can play an important role in this regard.

7. However, it is important to complement measures to facilitate trade with measures to support the creation of productive capacities. Only the creation of higher-value added sectors will support the structural transformation needed to put LLDCs on a sustainable and inclusive growth trajectory.

Mr. President,

8. GRULAC believes that the Mid-term review of the Vienna Programme of Action can make an important contribution to providing new impetus to the LLDC agenda. We hope that UNCTAD will provide strong analytical support to the review process, including at the regional level, and we encourage all member States to support UNCTAD's work in this field.

9. Finally, the members of GRULAC who are part of the Group of 77 and China associate ourselves with the statement made by the distinguished Chair of the G77 and China.

Thank you.