

**Statement by His Excellency Alfredo Suescum, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Panama to the World Trade Organization and Coordinator of GRULAC/UNCTAD on behalf the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean  
At the sixty-sixth session of the Trade and Development Board  
Geneva, 24–28 June 2019**

**Item 7: Fifteenth Session of the Conference**

*Lunes 24 de junio de 2019*

Mr. President, H.E Mr. Michael Gaffey (Ireland),  
Secretary-General of UNCTAD, Mr. Mukhisa Kituyi,  
Mr. Avinash Persaud, Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of Barbados for Finance and Investment,  
Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD, Ms. Isabelle Durant,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I have the honour to present this statement on behalf of the Group of Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC).
2. GRULAC wishes to thank Barbados and the United Arab Emirates for their respective offers to host the XV Conference.
3. The creation of UNCTAD was based on a spirit of solidarity among developing countries. Based on this spirit, the venue of UNCTAD conferences has rotated among the three developing regions of the world. Indeed, after holding UNCTAD XIII in Asia and UNCTAD XIV in Africa, GRULAC considers that it is the turn of one of the Group's countries to host the XV Conference.
4. This rotation not only responds to the solidarity to which we referred, but also reflects the need to incorporate the vision and contributions of all our countries in order to enrich the content of the Conference.
5. In this regard, GRULAC notes that the Government of Barbados held a series of consultations with the UNCTAD secretariat. To determine and validate the requirements to serve as the venue for UNCTAD XV. As a result of these consultations, Barbados has submitted a formal offer in writing to the Secretary-General of UNCTAD. This is the only proposal that has been analysed technically and that meets the requirements of the General Assembly.
6. The Ministerial Conference entails an important political, financial and logistical commitment, and trusts that the country will provide a favourable venue to maintain a productive exchange on the topics that are of interest to members States. GRULAC stresses the importance of making the decision on the venue of this Meeting and does not consider it a possibility to delay the organization of the Conference. GRULAC therefore invites the Trade and Development Board to recommend to the United Nations General Assembly that UNCTAD XV be convened in Barbados.

7. GRULAC takes the opportunity to highlight the importance that the agenda proposed for the next Conference be built on the basis of the consensus of all Members. The Group believes that the Conference should focus on strengthening the role of UNCTAD in the face of the challenges of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in the new international context. The same applies to preparatory documentation for the Conference.

8. For such purpose, it is crucial to initiate the consultation process with members States to define the topics that will be part of the agenda and its preparatory documents and to pave the way to the next Ministerial Conference.

9. The members of the GRULAC have the utmost willingness to work constructively. We also reiterate our commitment to cooperate objectively and collectively in the work that must be carried out looking towards the next Conference.

Thank you.