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**Opening Plenary
General statement by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD
Dr. Supachai Panitchpakdi**

Friday, 22 March 2013

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Statement by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD

27th Special Session of the Trade and Development Board

22 March 2013

AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY

Mr. President,
Dr. Hamad al-Kawari, Minister of Culture and Heritage of the State of Qatar and
President of UNCTAD XIII,
Ambassador Luis Enrique Chavez Basagoitia, Permanent Representative of Peru,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome all of you to this 27th Special Session of the Trade and Development Board. Allow me to express my profound gratitude to their Excellencies, Dr. Hamad al-Kawari, Minister of Culture and Heritage of the State of Qatar and President of UNCTAD XIII, and Ambassador Luis Enrique Chavez Basagoitia, Permanent Representative of Peru, for being with us today. Their presence is testament to the importance of this occasion, and of the work that lies ahead.

In a few minutes, we will begin the transition from UNCTAD XIII to UNCTAD XIV by formally endorsing Peru as host of the next UNCTAD conference in 2016. I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate Peru and to offer my thanks for this generous offer. I am confident that with the hospitality of the people and Government of Peru, UNCTAD XIV will be highly successful and memorable. Allow me to also take this occasion to reiterate my gratitude to the hosts of our last conference, Qatar, for their excellent hospitality and their continuing support of our work. Our institution is fortunate to benefit from the stewardship of both the outgoing and incoming hosts.

As we begin to prepare for our gathering in Peru in 2016, allow me to briefly offer some thoughts on some of the challenges that lie ahead. In my view, the three years ahead until our next Ministerial meeting in Peru are likely to be critical for UNCTAD, for a number of reasons.

Firstly, I hope that in the next three years, we can finally overcome the fallout from the financial crisis and restore the world economy to a strong growth path. I also hope that this growth will be more inclusive and environmentally sustainable. UNCTAD will certainly continue to advocate for the policies and measures needed to achieve this.

Secondly, and perhaps even more directly relevant for the work of UNCTAD, the financial crisis has brought about an important reassessment of the prevailing development discourse. Many previously held tenets of development economics, including the wisdom of financial deregulation and liberalization, are now being questioned and re-thought. In this context, many of UNCTAD's policy positions that were previously considered "unorthodox" have now made it to the mainstream, and can be found in op-ed pieces by mainstream journalists. We hope that UNCTAD's voice will be strengthened as the value of its policy advice is borne out by the evidence. More importantly, we hope that UNCTAD can make a key contribution to the formulation of a new development paradigm. An initial outline of this was already provided by the Doha Mandate agreed at UNCTAD XIII, but work remains to be done to flesh out many of the ideas.

This brings me to my third point, which is that the next two years will see an intense debate over the shape of the post-2015 UN Development Agenda, as we get

closer to the original target date for achievement of the MDGs. As you are aware, a preparatory process for this post-2015 agenda has already begun at the Secretariat level, and task forces and a high-level panel have been established. We in UNCTAD have also established an interdivisional task force, so as to feed our inputs into the process. Over the past years, UNCTAD has already made a number of contributions in this context. For example, we have argued that the future Development Agenda should pay greater attention to the need to build productive capacities, which are needed to sustain social development. We have also pointed out that future goals should address the issue of inequality. And these are only some of the examples. We hope that UNCTAD's thinking on these issues can be a valuable input to the future agenda, which is likely to be fully in place by the time we meet in Peru.

My fourth and final point relates to another important event that will precede our next Conference, namely UNCTAD's 50th anniversary in 2014. On 16 June 1964, the first United Nations Conference on Trade and Development concluded, giving birth to the venerable institution in which we are all privileged to serve, and engage. Fifty years later, the preambular words of the Final Act of UNCTAD I remain highly relevant. "In an age when scientific progress has put unprecedented abundance within man's reach, it is essential that the flows of world trade should help eliminate the wide economic disparities among nations."

I know that our members are still deliberating on how to mark the occasion of this anniversary. However, I think this will be a great opportunity to raise the profile of UNCTAD by highlighting its achievements to its stakeholders and the wider public, and by deliberating on its future potential contributions to development. But we must also clearly identify our shortcomings and take

measures to address them in order to bring UNCTAD to its full potential. This equilibrium between the retrospective and prospective is what will make UNCTAD 50 a success, and what will serve as an excellent contribution to the broader development discourse and into UNCTAD XIV. I am confident that with the stewardship of our two hosts - Qatar and Peru - as well as with the support of our membership, we can ensure that the 50th anniversary will serve to make UNCTAD's voice better heard and to make it a stronger player in international development. This is particularly crucial in the current climate of budgetary austerity.

These are only some of the key challenges ahead in the remaining period until UNCTAD XIV. As I get closer to the completion of my second and final term as Secretary-General of the Organization, it is my sincere hope that UNCTAD will meet these challenges, and that it enters its fourteenth Ministerial Conference with new achievements under its belt and revitalized for the future.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before closing, I would like to recognize another transition in an office that also plays a key role in steering the course of UNCTAD. In a few minutes you will transition to a new President of the Trade and Development Board. Allow me to congratulate the outgoing President, Ambassador Juri Seilenthal – a dedicated and committed friend of UNCTAD and one of the key contributors to the Doha Consensus. His contributions to the Conference, and to its immediate aftermath, have placed the implementation of the UNCTAD XIII outcomes on a firm footing. I also wish to congratulate Ambassador Mukhtar Tileuberdi of Kazakhstan for his

assumption of the Presidency, and I look forward to the accomplishment of the important work ahead.

Thank you very much.