

STATEMENT

BY

**SUDAN ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP AT THE SIXTY-FIFTH
SESSION OF THE UNCTAD TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD**

**ITEM 8: ACTIVITIES OF UNCTAD IN SUPPORT OF THE
LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

11 JUNE, 2018, GENEVA

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Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the African Group. The African Group thanks the Secretariat for the comprehensive report on activities of UNCTAD in support of the Vienna Programme of Action for the Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) for the Decade 2014 - 2024.

The African Group remains concerned that the LLDCs continue to face extraordinary challenges. Amongst these, the major stumbling blocks are high transport and trade transactions costs due to their lack of direct territorial access

to the sea, and remoteness from world markets. These costs in most instances are outrageously way above those borne by their sister coastal economies thus negatively affecting the LLDCs competitiveness at the global stage. It is quite distressing for the African Group that as a result, LLDCs trade by, on average, 30 per cent less than coastal countries.

Mr. President,

Given their high level of vulnerability on various fronts including being commodity dependent, the LLDCs require a unique attention by the International Community. In this regard the African Group commends UNCTAD's contribution in support of the Vienna Programme of Action through multifaceted ways as illuminated in the report.

The African Group is, in particular, grateful for the technical assistance and capacity-building extended by UNCTAD to LLDCs and transit developing countries in the implementation of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation of the World Trade Organization. When fully implemented this agreement is estimated to reduce global trade costs by an average of 14.3 per cent. We therefore call for the full implementation of this historic agreement both in spirit and letter for the LLDCs to escape being prisoners of geography. We also cannot sufficiently stress the importance of trade-related support to help the LLDCs address supply-side constraints and other infrastructural deficits at the border, between borders and behind borders.

The African Group further notes with appreciation that UNCTAD has provided technical assistance on transit cooperation to a number of African regional organizations. These include, inter-alia, the East African Community, Economic

Community of West African States and Southern African Customs Union. UNCTAD has also supported the Continental Free Trade Area negotiations process since its launch. We therefore remain enthused by UNCTAD's efforts in the regional industrialization agenda and development of regional value chains in Africa.

The African Group also welcomes the UNCTAD contribution on the structural economic transformation of the LLDCs. The low productive capacities and structural weaknesses limit the value addition to the LLDC exports and the diversification of their exports and markets. Developing productive capacities is therefore fundamental for the LLDCs. In this regard, we are looking forward to the finalization of the Productive Capacities Index for the LLDCs this year. The African Group firmly believes that the index will aid the LLDCs to gauge their performance in developing productive capacities based on the specific benchmarks and indicators.

On investment, the African Group notes with satisfaction that in the period under review, 28 of the 32 landlocked developing countries benefited from UNCTAD assistance in the area of investment and enterprise through several activities. The African Group is also pleased to recognize that to date, investment policy reviews have been conducted for almost half of the 32 LLDCs.

Mr. President,

More than anything, the LLDCs require all kinds of partnerships especially with the transit countries. It defies logic in the twenty-first century that some LLDCs are still somehow subjugated by certain transit countries through various unilateral trade restricting measures leading to colossal losses for the LLDCs. The transit countries as dignified members of the international community have to honour their

obligations under international law and ensure that LLDCs have unfettered access to the nearest ports for their normal trade transactions through their territories without any hindrances. Needless to say that we are also cognisant of the challenges which the transit developing countries too also face in a quest to provide freedom of transit to the LLDCs. Thus all manners of support and cooperation to both transit and landlocked countries remain indispensable.

Mr. President,

Whilst the African Group appreciates the utility of the Report on UNCTAD Activities in support of the Vienna Programme of Action for the LLDCs, the African Group calls on the UNCTAD Secretariat to step up efforts in providing targeted support to the LLDCs and furnish the Board with a much more disaggregated data on the specific support given to the LLDCs as a group or as individual countries due to their disadvantaged geographical position. This implies more resources should be provided to UNCTAD to strengthen its support to this highly vulnerable group if the targets of the Vienna Programme of Action for the LLDCs are to become a reality.

In conclusion, Chair, the African Group appeals for the accelerated implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action building on the momentum generated by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its premise of leaving no one behind, no matter how remote they are from the world markets.

I thank you.