



**Statement by
His Excellency Mr. Nasir Ahmad Andisha
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Afghanistan
Chairperson of the Group of 77 and China
at the Sixty-Eighth Session of the Trade and Development Board**

Agenda item 4: Annual Report of the Secretary-General

President of the Trade and Development Board Ambassador Maimuna Tarishi of Tanzania,
Acting Secretary-General of UNCTAD Madame Isabelle Durant,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. The Group of 77 and China would like to thank the Acting Secretary-General of UNCTAD for her presentation. The figures she has provided on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as those related to FDI, climate change, digitalization and debt, are a stark reminder that there is a lot of work to be done in order to achieve the more prosperous, more equal, fairer and sustainable world that we urgently need.
2. The Covid-19 pandemic has indeed dominated the agenda for more than a year. In our discussions at the Trade and Development Board last summer, we had already sounded the alarm bells on the reductions of trade and investment flows, shrinking economic activity and mounting debt. Yet little did we know that the sanitary impact and the resulting economic impact were yet to hit developing countries hardest. It was in the second part of last year and into 2021 that we saw the strongest impact on most of the developing world and, contrary to the developed world, the recovery is nowhere near.
3. As we mentioned yesterday during the high-level segment, this impact is compounded by the inability of developing countries to catch up with the pace of vaccinations of advanced economies, due to an array of obstacles that we need to urgently tackle. Every day that passes without adequate access to vaccination delays the recovery and makes it more difficult.

Madame President,

4. This scenario provides for a renewed relevance for UNCTAD. The paradigm shift in relation to ensuring livelihoods, to the role of the State, to resilience, sustainability and inequality, are all in line with the views that the Group of 77 and China has been seeking to advance since 1964 here at UNCTAD and elsewhere.
5. We would therefore like to recognize the contribution of UNCTAD to developing countries during this period, both under SG Kituyi and with the leadership of the Acting SG Durant over the last 4 months. We recognize the excellent work that the Secretariat staff continues to deliver, even with the budget limitations and liquidity constraints that they face. As we look to UNCTAD 15 and to the enhanced role that we all expect from UNCTAD, it is important that we do not only provide a solid conference outcome, but also that we make sure that adequate resources are available for developing countries to be supported in line with their needs.
6. As we look forward to the next few months and years, you have provided some interesting elements that we will take into account, including on the role of WTO under the leadership of the new Director-General and on possible closer collaboration with UNCTAD. We look positively to this

development and we also see UNCTAD's work on accession as an area that needs to be part of such collaboration.

7. Similarly, it is important to take stock of the role of UNCTAD in the context of UN-LDC5 that you have mentioned and that we also discussed in more details yesterday. Our Group believes that the work of UNCTAD in support of LDCs needs to be preserved in the spirit of preserving UNCTAD's long-standing expertise on LDC matters and ensuring LDCs can benefit from it.

8. We also take note of the information of UNCTAD's participation in the reform of the development pillar approved by the General Assembly, and that you will provide further details on this under item 10 later this week. It is indeed paramount that our intergovernmental consensus efforts and UNCTAD's research and analysis outputs are supported by a strong presence of UNCTAD at the national level. We will engage with you during the corresponding agenda item of this session.

Madame President,

9. As we prepare to receive a new Secretary-General of UNCTAD, the Group of 77 and China would like to take this opportunity to thank Acting Secretary-General Isabelle Durant for her engagement with our Group. As we have made it clear in the past, our Group considers itself to be the main stakeholder of UNCTAD. We therefore considered a very positive signal that one of the first acts of Madame Durant as Acting SG of UNCTAD was to meet with our Group at ambassadorial level. We also value her continued participation and engagement at intergovernmental meetings.

10. In doing so, our Group would also like to welcome the recent appointment of Ms. Rebecca Grynszpan of Costa Rica as the next Secretary-General of UNCTAD, after confirmation by the United Nations General Assembly. We look forward to welcoming Ms. Grynszpan at UNCTAD and to working with her.

I thank you, Madame President.