



**GROUP OF 77 & CHINA**  
**GENEVA**

**Statement by**  
**Her Excellency Mrs. Martha Lungu Mwitumwa**  
**Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Zambia**  
**Chairperson of the Group of 77 and China**  
**at the Sixty-Seventh Session of the Trade and Development Board**

**Item 9: Contribution of UNCTAD to the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020**

President of the Trade and Development Board Ambassador Federico Villegas,  
Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD Isabelle Durant,  
Director of the Division on Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes, Mr. Paul Akiwumi,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, on item 9: Contribution of UNCTAD to the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020.

At the outset, the Group wishes to commend the President of the Trade and Development Board for his leadership through out the first and second segments of this Session. The Group wishes to thank the UNCTAD divisions for their work in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in the implementation of the IPOA. UNCTAD, through its Report prepared pursuant to paragraphs 153 and 156 of the IPOA provides a description of activities carried out by UNCTAD through its three pillars of work namely, research and policy analysis, intergovernmental consensus-building and technical cooperation, in the period from April 2019 to June 2020, while taking into consideration the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Group therefore continues to appreciate the work and commitment demonstrated by UNCTAD Divisions despite having resource constraints in carrying out the activities and having to deal with the challenges of the COVID -19 pandemic. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the LDCs thus leading to the contraction in demand, globally and even more so in some of the major trading markets of LDCs, a decline in international commodity prices will likely reverse the limited progress that has been made in poverty reduction, amongst other development indicators. LDCs are highly dependent on investment in natural resources, Tourism-dependent activities which has been negatively affected its price shocks.

Mr. President

The Group wishes to note its appreciation for the comprehensive analysis of foreign direct investment trends in LDCs contained in the the World Investment Report (WIR) 2019: Special Economic Zones. According to the report while foreign direct investment flows to LDCs recovered in 2018, up 15.1 per cent from 2017, reaching \$23.8 billion and representing 1.8 per cent of global inflows, inflows to LDCs declined by 6 per cent to \$21 billion in 2019, down to 1.4 per cent of global inflows.

The Group of 77 and China wishes to reiterate the many socioeconomic development challenges faced by the world's 47 most vulnerable countries, and by the LDCs as a group, as they continue to perform poorly against the goals and targets of the IPOA. With such trends it is unlikely that by the end of this year significant shifts in progress take place, in particular given the setbacks in development processes brought about by the COVID-19 crisis. The Group therefore reiterates the need for engagement with the international community to help LDCs achieve meaningful development, especially at such unprecedented times as we live in. UNCTAD, being a development institution, is called upon to continue its work on the LDCs for them to benefit from their inclusion into the global economy in support of inclusive and sustainable growth and development. Therefore, the Group believes there is a need for UNCTAD to continue its effective interventions in addressing the related challenges of LDCs in trade, finance, investment, technology and sustainable development to support the accomplishment of the internationally agreed development agendas included in the Istanbul Programme of Action, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, among others.

Mr. President,

It is worth noting that while all countries have been adversely affected by the health and economic crises currently ravaging the world, the LDCs are the most vulnerable to exogenous shocks and the least resilient in terms of resources (be they economic, financial and/or institutional) to withstand such shocks and/or to rebound after impact. In this regard, the Group notes the activities UNCTAD has conducted in LDCs and reiterates the need for continued collaboration between UNCTAD, international partners and LDCs themselves. The Group appreciates the support UNCTAD has rendered through the Rules of Origin for Enhanced Intra-African Trade, as they are a cornerstone of the effective implementation of preferential trade liberalization among members of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), without which gains cannot accrue towards Africa. Further activities on the AfCFTA such as the preparation of impact assessments on the economy and trade prospects, are much appreciated by Members.

Mr. President

Activities such as capacity building trainings on productive capacities, competition, fisheries, trade facilitation, trade and gender, investment and enterprise development and investment policy reviews, as well as technical cooperation to LDCs on graduation and activities such as the European Union–UNCTAD joint programme of support for Angola are an important contribution to LDCs. This last project is a model to follow, covering Empretec entrepreneurship training and entrepreneurship policy development, capacity-buidling in human resources and institutions in commercial diplomacy, the creative economy, trade facilitation, transport and logistics and productive capacities, all of which are crucial components for economic diversification and sustainable economic growth contributing to the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action.

The Group further reiterates the need for UNCTAD to continue this work in LDCs in response to the current unprecedented challenges and the quest to achieve and realise the envisioned targets of the IPOA. Activities such as Rapid eTrade readiness assessments have helped LDCs in particular to take stock of their e-commerce development and provided policy direction. The rollout of the Automated System for Customs Data-ASYCUDA has helped LDCs realise the gains by helping to reduce customs clearance costs and time, deal with corruption and improve security. Finally, also on debt sustainability, as external debt is a major concern of the Istanbul Programme of Action, UNCTAD has continued to support LDCs. Indeed, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, LDCs continue to face increasing challenges in fiscal management, including increased risk of debt distress. UNCTAD's Debt Management and Financial Analysis System (DMFAS) programme should therefore continue supporting the LDCs in building capacity to effectively manage central government and government guaranteed debt with the aim of achieving sustainable debt levels.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, 2020 marks the last year of the Istanbul Programme of Action and it has become clear that many of its goals and targets will remain unmet. In this regard the LDCs will continue to rely on UNCTAD for its support for technical assistance in LDCs, including in the areas of graduation, diagnostic trade integration studies, trade policymaking, investment policy reviews and statistical capacities amongst others. The Group therefore takes note of this growing demand as a testimony to the quality and value added of UNCTAD support, despite the existing resource constraints.

I thank you, Mr. President.