

**STATEMENT BY THE COORDINATOR OF THE AFRICAN GROUP PERMANENT  
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF ANGOLA FOR AGENDA ITEM 3 ON  
ACTIONS CARRIED OUT AND/OR PLANNED BY UNCTAD TO SUPPORT  
STATES IN THE RECOVERY OF THEIR TRADE AND INDUSTRIES AFTER  
OVERCOMING THE PANDEMIC**

President of the Trade and Development Board Ambassador Federico Villegas (Argentina),  
Secretary-General of UNCTAD, H.E. Mukhisa Kituyi,  
Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD, Madam Isabelle Durant,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

**Mr. President,**

It is my honour to speak on behalf of the African Group on this agenda item. I would like to associate myself with the statement made by the distinguished Ambassador of Zambia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

**Mr. President,**

COVID-19 has triggered a humanitarian and socio- economic crisis that is already devastating societies and reversing vital gains made in human development. In addition, the Covid-19 has accentuated inequalities in several areas. It could have a massive impact on peace and security, development, human rights but, above all on the lives and livelihoods of ordinary people, particularly the poor and the most vulnerable, who struggle to eke out a living in an already highly unequal world.

**Mr. President,**

Given Africa's acute vulnerabilities, without an aggressive and concerted intervention, socio-economic ramifications, could be immeasurable. The UNECA estimates suggest that Africa will face an immediate decline in GDP growth from 3.2% to 1.8% in 2020 as a result of COVID-19, but with a further adverse impact if COVID-19 is not contained in the short-term.

Moreover, the World Bank biannual Africa's Pulse report refers that economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa will decline from 2.4% in 2019 to between -2.1% and -5.1% in 2020, depending on the success of measures taken to mitigate the pandemic's effects. This means that the region will experience its first recession in 25 years. The decline, as we all know, is primarily due to reliance on exports of commodities whose prices have crashed, impact of the pandemic on tourism sector as well as other structural issues. This will inevitably affect Africa's participation in trade and value chains as well as reduce foreign financing flows.

**Mr. President,**

It is against this backdrop that, we stress the need for UNCTAD to support Africa to further diversify African economies and strengthen the few strategic sectors. The pandemic crisis highlights the importance of agriculture and health sectors for all countries. Africa is uniquely positioned to further leverage its rich agricultural resources by improving basic infrastructure and efficiency, and agro-processing capacity.

**Mr. President,**

We underscore the importance of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the development integration agenda that aims to promote industrialization and diversification. This pandemic crisis provides an opportunity to take more concrete steps towards realizing the African Continental Free Trade Area. We recognise the support of UNCTAD on this important mechanism and underscore the importance of this organization to enhance its support to African countries that need to make concerted efforts to harmonize their trade-related regulations to boost the intra-regional trade.

**Mr. President,**

The pandemic has highlighted the glaring need to bridge the digital divide, both within and across countries, in particular in Africa as seen in the SG's report. Many traditional obstacles have been accentuated and have continued to hamper greater participation in e-commerce activities by small producers, sellers and consumers in Africa. UNCTAD should therefore

continue to assist African countries to address the challenges and opportunities in relation to the use of the internet and e-commerce to develop their international trade capacities.

**Mr. President,**

On the other hand, Africa is confronted by debilitating economic uncertainties, including severe fiscal and foreign exchange constraints, amidst the inevitable slowdown in global economic growth. In this regard, a comprehensive debt framework to assist African countries to recover from the impact of the pandemic is crucial. We welcome all means to provide debt relief and a comprehensive approach to structural issues in the international debt architecture to prevent defaults. The African Group would like to recall the appeal of African Ministers of Finance that a waiver of all interest payments on their debt, estimated at \$444 billion by 2020 and a possible extension in the medium term, would help to provide immediate fiscal space and liquidity to African countries. In this spirit, the African Group would like to express its gratitude to all the Heads of State and International Organizations that have argued in favour of debt cancellation for struggling economies and an immediate halt to sovereign debt payments that should be followed by significant debt relief. We therefore believe that UNCTAD, given its mandate and leadership debt issues has a critical role to play in their partnerships with other international organizations to advise Africa countries to address these challenges.

**Mr. President,**

In conclusion, the African Group wishes to reiterate that now more than ever, our global community must remain focused on accelerating the implementation of the people-centred 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly the SDGs 1, 10, 17 and leaving no one and no country behind now require tangible actions. We therefore call on the international community to demonstrate our capability to work together in solidarity to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 and to build a community of shared future for humankind.

**I thank you for your kind attention.**