



**GROUP OF 77 & CHINA  
G E N E V A**

**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**

**Item 2(a) – High-level segment: Extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures:  
Preparatory meeting on the road to UNCTAD 15 and LDC5  
Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Trade and Development**

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 and also Mr. Steve Macfeely for their presentations, which provide a valuable update on the current state of affairs and the contribution of UNCTAD to the efforts of developing countries to deal with the impact of the pandemic and kick-start a sustainable recovery. Most notably, Mme President was the Prime Minister Motley has provided a thought-provoking presentation that sets the stage for our discussion today and for the ongoing discussion on the way to UNCTAD 15.

Madame President,

2. In the preparatory process for UNCTAD 15, our Group adopted its position paper, some eight months ago. In this paper, our Group highlighted the impact of the pandemic on the achievement of the SDGs, in particular due to the combination of declines in trade and investment flows, shrinking economic activity and mounting debt. All of which exacerbated existing imbalances and, in some cases, wiped out development progress achieved over years in just a matter of days or weeks. Nowadays, over one year into the pandemic, it is evident that while GDP has started to approach pre-pandemic levels in advanced economies, this is not the case at all for developing countries.

3. The reasons for this are manifold, we can on one hand discuss about vulnerability, insufficient productive capacities and less robust health sectors. Collectively these shortcomings severely impact the health and economic sectors in developing countries and make the prospect of recovery more challenging and complex. On the other hand, there is a more immediate challenge that we need to urgently tackle together and that is: how to make sure that the vaccination rate in developing countries catches up to that of developed countries.

Madame President,

4. In the position paper of our Group for UNCTAD, we flagged how the pandemic had brought about a renewed sense of solidarity and unity, while reminding us of our interdependence. Our Group would like to reaffirm that it is indeed imperative to advance international cooperation to combat and recover from the pandemic and provide adequate assistance to countries and regions in need. To this end, the international community must ensure global and equitable access to safe, effective, equitable Covid-19 vaccines at affordable prices, and to recognize that they should be made global public goods to help overcome the Covid-19 pandemic. Our Group continues to be deeply concerned over the

negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on development, especially in the context of global quest to recover from the pandemic and to build-back better.

5. Our Group furthermore believes that equitable, efficient and timely access to and distribution of preventive tools, laboratory testing, reagents and supporting materials, essential medical supplies, diagnostics, drugs and COVID-19 vaccines are of vital importance. Efforts are therefore needed to ensure that no obstacle hinders normal access to such products. Greater sharing of information and technology for the detection, prevention, treatment and control of the pandemic is necessary. Initiatives in this regard, such as the access to Covid-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A), Friends of the COVAX Facility, the Covid-19 Technology Access Pool (C-TAP) and relevant pledging appeals are important contributions that must be supported.

6. Looking forward, the Group of 77 and China believes we must not be complacent in limiting ourselves to going back to business-as-usual. The imbalances and vulnerabilities of the pre-pandemic world are not a worthy aspiration. By now it should be clear to all of us that the pandemic has brought about fundamental changes to our world, including a paradigm shift that opens the door to build back better: to build a more inclusive and fairer world. To do this, we must embrace the increased impetus and consensus on the new and reinforced role of the State and the international community.

7. UNCTAD has an important role to play in this context, including in conducting research and advising developing countries on policy options for sustainable and meaningful recovery; while focusing on mitigating the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic by providing a platform for exchange of information experiences, lessons learned and success stories.

8. The five action areas captured in the Secretariat's report *Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Trade and Development: Transitioning to a new normal* provide a solid basis for an UNCTAD roadmap ahead. The Group of 77 and China will continue to be actively engaged to ensure the adoption of a strong mandate in line with the aspirations and needs of the Global South.

Madame President,

9. To conclude, our Group believes that we must maintain the impact of the pandemic as an item for the Trade and Development Board for the foreseeable future, in order to ensure that we have a platform to continue dialogues on the collective challenges emerging from the pandemic.

I thank you, Madame President.