

**Statement delivered by H. E. Mr Chad Blackman, Ambassador of
Barbados and Coordinator of the SIDS Group in UNCTAD on behalf of
the SIDS Group
Sixty-eighth Session of the Trade and Development Board
21 June 2021 – 2 July 2021**

**Agenda 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,
Prime Minister of Barbados, The Honourable Mia Amor Mottley,
Acting Secretary-General of UNCTAD Madame Isabelle Durant,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, the SIDS Group in Geneva wishes to congratulate you on your
assumption to the Presidency of the Trade and Development Board.

The SIDS Group in UNCTAD would wish to thank the Honourable Mia Amor
Mottley, Prime Minister of Barbados for her inspiring high-level remarks. It is a
timely reminder of our current global realities and the positive role that UNCTAD
can play in addressing the COVID-19 crisis. While we recognise that UNCTAD
alone cannot be the champion of all trade and development woes, we strongly
believe that UNCTAD's role as the focal point in the UN system for the for the
integrated treatment of development and interrelated issues in the areas of trade,
finance, investment, technology and sustainable development, is core to
amplifying the voice of the smallest and most vulnerable amongst us, on the key
issues that are confronting the international trade and economic system. We
would also wish to thank the Acting Secretary General and Mr. Steve Macfeely
for their presentations, specifically as they relate to the Secretariat's analysis on
the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Trade and Development.

Madam President.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that all countries, the world over, are
vulnerable. Despite this however, it also revealed much of what we already knew,
as the socio-economic indicators continue to show that owing our higher
susceptibility and our lower level of capacity to respond and adjust to external

shocks, SIDS are among those that have been, and continue to be, most severely impacted by the pandemic.

The pandemic has had a global impact and more acutely a regional and national impact. It has threatened our food security and resulted in a decrease in tourism earnings. The significance of this is multifaceted given that SIDS are challenged by small size and vulnerability. In this regard, their concentration on a limited number of productive sectors, dependence on trade, particularly on the importation of goods, and the deleterious impacts of climate change and other environmental hazards, have meant that the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic has hit these countries particularly hard. This is principally so for SIDS that are dependent on tourism for a large portion their foreign exchange revenues and employment and reliant on trade for their food security. UNCTAD in its background note for this meeting, entitled, “*Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Trade and Development - Adapting to a new normal*”, has regarded SIDS as the second-most dependent country group on food imports. They have also highlighted much of what we have feared, that is, SIDS may lose our capacity to import food due to the decline of foreign currency derived from the tourism sector.

It is clear that green recovery will need to be a major aspect of any recovery. Goods and services derived from biodiversity and the blue economy will have an important role to play in a green recovery, particularly for SIDS. Diversifying product and market potential will be essential. SIDS must therefore have sufficient policy space to implement the correct policies and policy instruments if they are to effect their economic diversification. Countries must also not impose unnecessary non-trade barriers or measures that are discriminatory. These must be consistent with international rules. There must also be a focus on the development measures that enhance sustainability.

A core objective of recovery from the COVID 19 pandemic will need to be on bringing developing countries back on track to attain the SDGs. Equally, to drive environmental and economic sustainability it will be critical to ensure that there is adequate access to finance, including concessional finance and loans. In considering such green recovery, we therefore must ensure that we do not intentionally, or unintentionally, marginalise vulnerable developing countries purely on the basis of utilising per capita income criteria. Analysis has shown that per capita income criteria alone do not adequately take into account of the development challenges faced by small island developing states (SIDS), yet a number of these countries are unable to access concessional financing or aid for trade programmes. Developing countries have advocated for enhanced multidimensional vulnerability indices which take into account a broader and

more holistic perspective of vulnerability. UNCTAD's longstanding work on multidimensional vulnerability indices is commendable and we encourage them to continue in this regard.

Madam President,

As host country for UNCTAD 15, Barbados counts on your vast experience and vision to guide our work as we prepare for the first major UN Conference in the post pandemic era. We too seek to achieve a truly transformative agenda as the outcome for UNCTAD 15 - one that can ensure that UNCTAD is fit for purpose and takes into account of needs of developing countries, particularly SIDS. Barbados stands ready to engage with you in any format and to continue its active engagement in the negotiations.

I thank you.