



**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 9 – Activities undertaken by UNCTAD in support of Africa (TD/B/68/2)

President of the Trade and Development Board Ambassador Maimuna Tarishi of Tanzania,
Acting Secretary-General of UNCTAD Madame Isabelle Durant,
Director of the Division on Africa, least developed countries and special programme, Mr. Paul Akiwumi,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. At the outset, the Group of 77 and China would like to thank the Director of the Division on Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes, Mr Paul Akiwumi for his presentation, as well as the UNCTAD Secretariat for the work done in addressing the plight of African Countries. This is particularly the case as they are faced with an unprecedented challenge with most countries in the region grappling with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Madame President,

2. Many African countries have been faced with many interrelated challenges in tackling vulnerabilities, transforming economies, building resilience, improving competitiveness, enhancing multilateralism, to mention but a few. In this context, UNCTAD has demonstrated its support to assist African countries in addressing these challenges through its interrelated approach. The Group of 77 and China thus welcomes and appreciates this support provided through all three key pillars of UNCTAD's work.

3. UNCTAD, through its trade facilitation activities in Africa has focused on capacity-building and technical assistance in implementing the Agreement on Trade Facilitation of the World Trade Organization and subregional and regional trade facilitation commitments of national trade facilitation committees. The Secretariat has provided support in the implementation of trade facilitation obligations under the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement and subregional agreements such as the Agreement Establishing a Tripartite Free Trade Area among the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the East African Community and the Southern African Development Community, the Economic Community of the Central African States and the Economic Community of West African States. This work is welcome and greatly commendable as it is a contribution to achieving the aspirations of African countries of fostering regional integration efforts on the African continent.

4. The Group of 77 and China notes with appreciation the work UNCTAD has done in Transforming African economies as its impacts have clearly shown the benefits of reducing poverty, creating jobs, accelerating sustainable development, and facilitating the African region's integration into the global economy. Furthermore, activities such as in science, technology and innovation, development finance and investment, as a means to achieve sustainable development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for African Countries, have helped in building the resiliency in most the countries in Africa by strengthening their capacity to engage more fully at the international level and respond to and recover from global economic shocks such as those brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

5. The Group further notes with appreciation the work done by UNCTAD in enhancing productive capacities in African countries through the UNCTAD Productive Capacity Index. The help of UNCTAD in tackling Illicit Financial Flows, which is an important and key area of interest to many African countries, is particularly relevant in the unprecedented time of the COVID-19 pandemic and the increased need to mobilise and intensify resource mobilization to achieve the SDGs. In addition, UNCTAD has been carrying out investment promotion and facilitation activities under the New Partnership for Africa's Development strategic framework, including for the least developed countries. The Group strongly welcomes and hopes that the framework would provide the necessary platforms to address investment promotion activities in Africa effectively.

6. The Group wishes to commend UNCTAD for its work on digitalization and eCommerce activities in Africa. As a result of UNCTAD work, African countries have received assistance to understand the magnitude of the impact of the pandemic in the context of their efforts to enhance e-trade readiness; and in identifying the key trends and challenges faced by eCommerce businesses and in public and private policy responses to the crisis. In addition, the Debt Management and Financial Analysis System (DMFAS) and ASYCUDA systems are some of the activities that have helped most African countries in enhancing revenue collection and managing our debt stocks more effectively. With UNCTAD's efforts, almost over 90 per cent of countries in Africa were supported by these programmes. Therefore, the Group urges UNCTAD to continue providing support through these programmes and to further expand its work.

7. The Group of 77 and China further calls on UNCTAD to continue its assistance to African countries through its three pillars of work. The Group calls for increased technical assistance, capacity building programmes, and exchange of experiences. This could be coupled with networking among African countries and with other countries on highlighted programmes, in order to help African countries in building the necessary resilience as well as addressing the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and thus to be able to get on track towards the implementation of Agenda 2030. Furthermore, the Group requests a rollout of further support on productive capacities in general, trade facilitation, illicit financial flows, for more African countries to benefit from these programmes.

I thank you, Madame President.