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Chair: Mr. Yohanna (Vice-Chair) (Nigeria)

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In the absence of Mr. Momen (Bangladesh), Mr. Yohanna (Nigeria), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 22: Groups of countries in special situations (*continued*)

(a) Follow-up to the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (*continued*) (A/66/134 and A/66/66-E/2011/78)

(b) Specific actions related to the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries: outcome of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation (*continued*) (A/66/205)

1. **Mr. Liu** Mingming (China) said that, in the context of an already uncertain recovery from the current world economic downturn, the least developed and landlocked developing countries faced particular challenges and needed increased support from United Nations agencies and Member States. To that end, he called for strengthened political commitment to the outcome of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and follow-up to the Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries.

2. In addition, the major donor countries should honour their official development assistance commitments under the Istanbul Declaration and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 and step up their allocation of aid to the least developed countries in accordance with the specific needs of those countries. Support for initiatives in such areas as manufacturing, agriculture, trade and transport was vital to the sustainable development of those two vulnerable groups of countries.

3. In addition, there should be stronger regional cooperation in such areas as the elaboration of cross-border transport policies, trade concessions and the expansion of trade with landlocked developing countries. In that context, China welcomed efforts by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP),

the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to give more prominence on their respective agendas to least developed and landlocked developing countries and called for strengthened support for the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States as the lead coordinating agency in that field, to ensure that it had the necessary capacity to fulfil its mandate.

4. Lastly, he reaffirmed China's commitment to strengthening the least developed and landlocked developing countries, including within the framework of South-South cooperation. In furtherance of that goal, his Government had made specific pledges of assistance in foreign aid, agricultural support, trade concessions, debt relief and other initiatives and would thenceforth focus increasingly on cooperation with those countries, to help them meet their development challenges.

5. **Mr. Bame** (Ethiopia) said that while many least developed countries had achieved high economic growth, certain specific goals had not been attained. Not only had the structural transformation required for their sustainable growth not yet occurred, but they were facing new challenges, such as climate change. The recently adopted Istanbul Programme of Action offered a good framework for addressing the structural challenges and should be mainstreamed in national development efforts.

6. Adequate resources remained the critical issue: domestic resources must be supplemented by foreign financing. His delegation accordingly called on development partners to fulfil their official development assistance (ODA) commitments. Critical support could also be provided through South-South cooperation, while the strengthening of innovative financing mechanisms would help ensure predictable and stable financing. Lastly, he drew attention to the pressing development needs of the sub-Saharan countries, which accounted for two thirds of the Group of Least Developed Countries and were the prime victims of the global crisis.

7. **Mr. Nakonechnyi** (Ukraine) said that his country was committed to the full and effective implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action. Ukraine had traditionally provided assistance to countries hit by

natural disasters and other emergencies, including just recently, Ethiopia, Haiti and the Horn of Africa region. Under its programme of cooperation with Africa and in recognition of the need for international support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development, it provided annual scholarships for African nationals; Africa was an important focus of its foreign policy. Ukraine had been actively involved in peacekeeping activities in Africa since 1992 and was currently a member of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission.

8. **Mr. Al-Sharrah** (Kuwait) said that most of the least developed countries had made significant progress in matters of governance and democratic culture, developing the judicial system, reforming the public sector and enhancing the role and efficiency of the private sector. However, they needed international support; development partners must fulfil their commitments by providing those countries with financial and environmentally safe technological assistance, with all due regard for their circumstances and abilities. It was also important to take into account their aspirations for an equitable international trade system. Free trade and wise investment could help promote sustainable development in developing countries. His country was being transformed into a regional financial and trade centre with that in view; efforts were also under way to incorporate it into the free world economy and attract local and foreign investment.

9. Kuwait had renewed its commitment to assist the developing and least developed countries and had made every effort to respond to calls for humanitarian aid. As an oil-producing country of the South, it was well placed to provide other countries with assistance in achieving sustainable development.

10. **Mr. Ben Allal** (Morocco) said that, given the multiple global crises, the mobilization of the international community around the Istanbul Programme of Action was crucial. ODA would remain essential, without however, taking the place of private sector support; donor countries must therefore make every effort to honour their ODA commitments to the least developed countries. The volatility of agricultural prices had become intolerable for those countries, which relied on imports for food. International solidarity with them required public and private investment in worldwide agricultural production and equitable and differential treatment that could offer

shortcuts to economic growth and facilitate their graduation from the list of least developed countries.

11. Furthermore, aid effectiveness needed to be enhanced. For that reason, Morocco looked to the forthcoming Fourth High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness to establish genuine economic partnerships with the least developed countries. Their needs continued to grow, while traditional funding sources remained insufficient, making it all the more necessary for the international community to explore innovative mechanisms, grant tax exemption for foreign remittances and identify ways of ensuring more sustainable management of those countries' debt. His delegation called on donors to cancel bilateral debts or convert them into investment.

12. Morocco shared the concerns of the least developed countries and fully supported United Nations action to help them meet their economic and ecological challenges. Effective implementation of the monitoring and follow-up mechanisms suggested by the Istanbul Programme of Action would help those countries graduate to developing country status. He reiterated his country's firm support for South-South cooperation and its readiness to share its experience and expertise.

13. **Mr. Stokes** (Australia) said that, while the Istanbul Programme of Action might have been more ambitious, it had focused attention on the most vulnerable countries and balanced human and social development with the need to build viable and competitive productive capacity. Words must now be converted into action. Australia remained committed to giving strong support to the least developed countries and would continue to give priority to their concerns at meetings of the Group of Twenty (G-20) and in other relevant forums. It was currently mainstreaming the Istanbul Programme of Action in its own programming and would invest at least \$10 billion in those countries in a range of areas, including food security, infrastructure and natural resource management. In addition, Australia had substantially increased its contribution to international and multilateral debt relief. It also recognized the special development challenges posed by climate change for the least developed countries and small island developing States and was committed to the global fast-start efforts to assist them.

14. Turning, lastly, to the topic of landlocked developing countries, he emphasized the importance of infrastructure development for such countries. Australia's own commitment to that task was reflected in its support for an Asian Development Bank project to improve transport connectivity in one such country. Stressing the need for more projects of that kind and for support for them from donors and multilateral organizations alike, he called for full and speedy implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action.

15. **Mr. Madani** (Afghanistan), noting that the difficulties of the least developed countries — which included his own — had been compounded by the ongoing food, energy and financial crises, reiterated the call for the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action. He also urged developed countries to meet and even increase their ODA commitments while at the same time respecting the principle of national ownership.

16. The greatest threat to countries in special situations was climate change; it hit hardest those countries that were least responsible for it as demonstrated by the droughts currently affecting the Horn of Africa and his own country. Afghanistan was also a landlocked developing country; as a commodity exporter, it was saddled with disproportionate transit transport and insurance costs. Transit transport systems must be improved and regional cooperation between landlocked and transit countries must be increased.

17. Afghanistan was also a post-conflict country and remained exposed to transnational threats, particularly terrorism; terrorism could not be defeated without an effective global strategy. In post-conflict countries, security and development must go hand in hand; in other words, care must be taken to ensure that the development of natural resources did not exacerbate existing tensions. Conversely, international and regional efforts to improve security and raise standards of living could have synergistic effects; accordingly regional cooperation in both areas should be strengthened.

18. **Mr. Altinörs** (Turkey) said that in order to keep up the momentum, the Istanbul Programme of Action should be mainstreamed into national policies and programmes. Furthermore, increased attention should be given to monitoring and evaluation of its implementation at national, regional and global levels;

Turkey, for its part, had pledged \$5 million for that specific purpose.

19. One of the Programme of Action's main concerns was to enhance productive capacity: active private sector involvement and public-private partnerships could be instrumental in that regard. Moreover, since the least developed countries remained highly reliant on external funding, donor countries should fulfil and further enhance their ODA commitments. Moreover, it was essential to continue providing the least developed countries with incentives for graduation. The support they received should not suddenly be reduced.

20. Turkey would continue its advocacy efforts for the least developed countries in all relevant international forums and would strive to increase its own direct investments in those countries over the next decade. It recognized that landlocked developing countries also had specific needs and challenges and was increasing its bilateral cooperation with them, including in the area of infrastructure building. It remained fully committed to enhanced cooperation and strengthened partnerships with all countries in special situations.

21. **Ms. Silumbu** (Malawi) said that her country was facing multiple challenges that continued to undermine the economic gains it had achieved in recent years. It was therefore disheartening that developed countries had not fulfilled their ODA commitments. The ongoing economic crisis should not serve as a pretext for developed countries not to deliver on their promises.

22. The least developed countries continued to face the problem of an unfair trading system. Conclusion of the Doha Round was essential to the economic recovery of most least developed countries, including Malawi. She also urged the developed countries to mobilize resources through the Aid for Trade Initiative and to create favourable market access conditions for all products originating in the least developed countries, including through timely implementation of duty-free and quota-free market access.

23. Efficient transport and communication infrastructure and services were vital prerequisites for the development of trade. While applauding the progress made in that respect since the adoption of the Almaty Programme of Action, she said that unless the international community increased its efforts to help the landlocked developing countries improve their

transport infrastructure, they would not be able to achieve the MDGs on time.

24. Finally, she expressed the hope that the developed countries, financial institutions and other relevant international organizations would provide the support required for a successful implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action.

25. **Mr. Seksenbay** (Kazakhstan) said that while progress had been made in implementing the Almaty Programme of Action, particularly the recognition by the international community of the specific needs of landlocked States, there was still an urgent need for additional development aid in the form of predictable and concessional financial resources to assist landlocked developing countries facing financing and infrastructure gaps. Technical capacity-building was also crucial in addressing emerging challenges. At the same time, it was important to fulfil all existing financial commitments for development, including those under the Aid for Trade Initiative, and to provide emergency assistance in line with the revised procedures of the international financial institutions.

26. Kazakhstan was committed to implementing the Almaty Programme of Action and was taking steps to facilitate trade, inter alia, by modernizing existing infrastructures, increasing the commercial efficiency of transport services and removing barriers to transit development. It had already begun implementation of a large-scale road project to link Europe with western China, using funds from international financial institutions. The expected benefits from the project included greater development opportunities for the people of the region and reduced transportation costs. In addition, Belarus, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation had recently established a customs union which had increased trade among them by more than 25 per cent.

27. In 2012, Kazakhstan would host the Fourth Meeting of Trade Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries as well as a preparatory global review meeting on international trade and trade facilitation.

28. **Mr. Zan** (Myanmar) said that unless the least developed countries were at the forefront of the global development agenda, real progress in achieving internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, could hardly be expected. It was therefore time for the international community to fulfil the commitments of the Istanbul Programme of Action.

29. Myanmar's new Government was stepping up its efforts to reform and develop the country's entire economic infrastructure with a view to establishing transparency and accountability at all levels while focusing on economic management and poverty alleviation. It had raised State pensions, reduced export taxes and exempted agricultural and timber products from export taxes. It was also providing loans through its microfinance scheme and redesigning the exchange rate system.

30. Although categorized as a least developed country, Myanmar had received little or no international development assistance for decades and had therefore been relying primarily on its own resources and development efforts. The Government hoped that the major reforms taking place in the country would prompt the international community to enhance its support. With increased external assistance and the expected revenues from natural resources, Myanmar was expected to be among the countries which would soon meet the criteria for graduating from the list of least developed countries.

31. In conclusion, his delegation wished to stress that issues concerning the least developed countries must be given due priority at all relevant United Nations forums, including at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, to be held in Rio de Janeiro in 2012.

32. **Mr. Kang** (Republic of Korea) said that the priorities and specific needs outlined in the Istanbul Programme of Action and the Almaty Programme of Action should be adequately reflected in development cooperation policy and other areas closely related to development, such as trade, foreign direct investment and finance. In order to implement those programmes it was essential to engage with a wide variety of development partners, including parliaments, the business sector and civil society. In addition, the development priorities and concerns of countries in special situations should be discussed by — and reflected in the activities of — major international bodies, including bodies outside the United Nations system.

33. During the past 10 years, his country had substantially increased its bilateral ODA to the least developed countries. Nearly 30 per cent of its ODA went to the landlocked developing countries in order to help them achieve the MDGs.

34. Regarding countries in special situations, one important group was the small island developing countries. His Government had taken note of the concerns and priorities outlined in the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and it had made various efforts to develop effective cooperation mechanisms with such countries.

35. Given that the Republic of Korea would shortly be hosting the Fourth High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, it would make every effort to ensure that the concerns of developing countries in special situations were addressed at that forum. In addition, his Government would seek to promote a new and inclusive global partnership for development that would allow the aforementioned programmes of action to be implemented in a more broad-based, synergistic and coordinated manner.

36. **Mr. Empole** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that the international community must now see to it that the Istanbul Programme of Action was implemented. Success would depend on the existence of clearly defined goals and responsibilities, political will to honour commitments and proper follow-up and monitoring at all levels. The ODA directed to least developed countries should take the latter's real needs into account and should be results-oriented. Finally, the private sector should be supported, inter alia, by encouraging investments in new technologies and sustainable tourism.

37. Underscoring the importance of peace and security for economic growth, his delegation called for the removal of the obstacles preventing the adoption of an international treaty regulating the arms trade. The uncontrolled circulation of weapons in his country and in the entire subregion was making it impossible to implement development programmes.

38. His Government was intensifying its efforts to create an investment climate that was favourable to development of the private sector, while also undertaking reforms of the security and justice sectors. Since achieving development goals was particularly challenging in a post-conflict country such as his own, he urged the international community to provide it with sustained assistance so that it could consolidate peace and security, create jobs for young people and take all

necessary steps to promote sustainable development and to graduate from the list of least developed countries.

39. Finally, he said that while his Government was grateful to its international partners and donors for the solidarity they had shown towards it in the past, it would be preferable if, in the future, assistance were not limited to urgent humanitarian aid.

40. **Ms. Beck** (Solomon Islands) said that timely implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action would require genuine cooperation between the least developed countries and their development partners in order to mainstream the Programme into their development strategies and development cooperation. It would also require cooperation among international financial institutions, the United Nations system, the private sector and all other stakeholders. In that connection, it was vitally important that all countries honour their commitments to the least developed countries.

41. Moreover, given that climate change continued to threaten the very survival of her country, she asked that the resources pledged for climate change mitigation and adaptation should be made available urgently so that least developed and small island developing countries could build their climate resilience. She also called for a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and for a second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol.

42. Finally, after stressing the importance of trade as a means of eradicating poverty and creating employment and the need for early conclusion of the Doha Round and for duty-free, quota-free market access for the least developed countries, she said that the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development would provide another opportunity for identifying gaps within existing sustainable development frameworks.

43. **Ms. Balli** (Togo) recalled that the overarching goal of the participants in the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries had been to enable at least half of the least developed countries to graduate to developing country status by helping them to reduce poverty and launch an accelerated process of sustained growth. Persistent problems of food security and the effects of climate change and environmental degradation had exacerbated those countries' vulnerabilities and inequalities. In Togo, for

instance, there had been a steady decline in gross domestic product growth since the outbreak of the current financial and economic crisis, while new challenges had arisen in the form of runaway population growth and rapidly depleting resources.

44. Her delegation therefore called on all stakeholders to adopt the road map for the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action, with due attention to the development priorities set out therein.

45. **Mr. Acharya** (Nepal) said that the multiple challenges facing landlocked developing countries, compounded by the ongoing global crises, were undermining their efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals. Support to those countries should take into account the recent decline in their economic growth and the fact that the proportion of their populations living in extreme poverty remained very high. His delegation therefore attached considerable importance to the outcome of the 2013 comprehensive review of the Almaty Programme of Action.

46. As a landlocked mountainous country that was also among the least developed States, Nepal had been focusing on improving transit formalities and infrastructure so as to ensure an efficient transit transport system that would facilitate trade. Negotiations on trade facilitation for landlocked developing countries were important not only to ensure unhindered access to and from the sea but also to make the transit process smoother. It was imperative that such countries should have greater market access for their products and enhanced support for technology transfer. His delegation accordingly called on donor countries to increase their support for the Aid for Trade initiative and to fulfil their ODA commitments with a view to providing landlocked developing countries with enhanced, targeted, predictable and sustainable funding.

47. **Ms. Riedl** (Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)) said that the Istanbul Programme of Action contained several direct or indirect references to the role of national parliaments and thus marked a milestone in recognizing them as key stakeholders in the development enterprise. The time had now come to mainstream the Programme of Action in national development strategies and plans. IPU had already started to plan to that end, in particular through a five-

year road map designed to build synergies with United Nations efforts on the ground.

48. It would pursue that aim by making the relevant parliamentary committees aware of the policy prescriptions set out in the Programme of Action. It would also try to extend the existing network of parliamentary focal points whose first task would be to assess their parliament's capacity to integrate the Programme of Action into the legislative and budgetary process. For maximum effectiveness, parallel United Nations focal points needed to be established within Resident Coordinator offices to contribute to the efforts of their parliamentary counterparts; ultimately, each parliament should adopt a clear action plan setting out the successive stages in the process; IPU had developed a model action plan for that purpose.

49. She concluded by drawing attention to other activities undertaken by IPU to raise awareness of the Programme of Action in parliaments and develop tools for the use of parliamentarians.

50. **Ms. Klein Solomon** (International Organization for Migration (IOM)) said that the Istanbul Programme of Action recognized the important link between migration and development and was therefore a critical first step towards collective action to tap the potential of migration for the least developed countries. It also drew attention to the phenomenon of environmentally induced migration, which affected the most vulnerable populations, and set out concrete responses to that phenomenon, notably the commitment by development partners and the countries concerned to take into account the needs of those whose livelihoods were endangered by climate change and extreme weather events and reduce the incidence of displacement.

51. However, it was equally important to recognize that migration could be part of an effective adaptation strategy for regions in least developed countries that were vulnerable to environmental degradation. Proactive, targeted legal migration programmes could both take people out of harm's way and reduce pressure on already fragile ecosystems. IOM stood ready to provide any technical assistance required in that regard.

52. Direct recognition of the importance of external remittances for households was also welcome. Not only could they reduce poverty at the household level, but also, when matched through public investment and incentive schemes, they could have the same impact at

the macrocommunity level. It should be recognized that migrants transferred not only money, but also skills and technical expertise, providing important bridges between communities in the least countries and their counterparts in the developed world.

53. IOM accordingly favoured the lowering of the cost of transferring remittances and the provision of financial services to help people save and invest safely and productively; it also encouraged a greater focus on mobility as a means of generating an increase in social remittances for the benefit of all.

54. **Ms. Barth** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that the experience of the past few decades had shown that high economic growth did not by itself generate the productive employment needed to eradicate poverty. There was also a need for coherent development strategies. A recent ILO report entitled “Growth, Productive Employment and Decent Work in the Least Developed Countries” contained policy options for promoting job-intensive growth in least developed countries.

55. The quality of jobs was critical. A gradual transition from informal to formal work was necessary as was economic diversification. Efforts should be made to improve productivity and incomes in agriculture on the one hand, and to develop labour-intensive local non-farm activities, on the other.

56. The Social Protection Floor initiative provided a critical complement to efforts to promote a resilient economy and to ensure that those who worked their way out of poverty were not dragged back. An ILO analysis had shown that the costs of a minimum package of social benefits were affordable — even in very low-income countries — provided that the elements of a social protection floor were sequenced and gradually introduced. Finally, she said that the role of the private sector was integral to success in the least developed countries.

57. **Ms. Manente** (World Food Programme (WFP)) said that the agency was highly invested in the Istanbul Programme of Action, for 70 per cent of its operational expenses were incurred in least developed countries. Enhancing the productive capacity of the least developed countries required investing in people. It was therefore crucial to adopt a people-centred approach, one that reflected the reality that investment in agriculture and scaling up physical infrastructure alone would not translate into gains in nutrition and

health but must be accompanied by direct action to tackle hunger. Nutritional safety nets and land-rehabilitation and irrigation projects offered the potential to strengthen productive assets. Moreover, safety nets could be used in emergencies and also in social-protection systems that served as an investment in future growth.

58. Finally, building Government capacity so as to develop nationally owned social protection systems and safety nets was crucial. WFP would use its experience in those fields to expand its capacity-building efforts under the Istanbul Programme of Action.

59. **Ms. Persic** (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that the agency had taken part in efforts to develop the road map for the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action. It planned to be involved in the establishment of a technology bank, the development of the proposed indicators for monitoring and follow-up of the Programme of Action and in proposed activities on tourism for development. Although the role of culture in development was not specifically mentioned in the Programme of Action, culture was an engine for growth in the least developed countries. UNESCO would therefore continue to promote sustainable tourism. It would also seek to help least developed countries develop their communications capacities and it was working with the International Telecommunication Union to spur broadband growth in the least developed countries.

The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.