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Chair: Mr. Carrillo Gómez (Vice-Chair) (Paraguay)

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In the absence of Mr. Logar (Slovenia), Mr. Carrillo Gómez (Paraguay), Vice-Chair, took the Chair

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 23: Groups of countries in special situations (*continued*)

(a) Follow-up to the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

(*continued*) (A/70/83-E/2015/75, A/70/292, A/70/408 and A/C.2/70/2)

(b) Follow-up to the second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries (*continued*) (A/70/305)

1. **Mr. Penjor** (Bhutan) said that four years into the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020, the goal of halving the number of least developed countries was likely to remain unfulfilled, with only one quarter poised to graduate by 2020; even for those countries, smooth and sustainable transitions remained questionable, given their underlying vulnerabilities and the short time frame remaining. It was therefore necessary to examine the shortfalls in effective follow-up and implementation and address the special challenges of least developed countries.

2. Good governance, national ownership and domestic resources were critical to attaining the transformation envisioned by the Istanbul Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. However, the efforts of least developed countries must be complemented by comprehensive, predictable and effective international support and cooperation at the country level, in addition to broad global commitments. Currently, approximately US\$40 billion per year was earmarked as official development assistance (ODA) for least developed countries; a mechanism that allowed for such commitments to be made in the form of five- or even ten-year pledges at the country level would provide a high degree of predictability, which would enable each country to elaborate comprehensive national development strategies, plans and projects with both a medium and a long-term perspective.

3. Graduation from the least developed category must be viewed in the context of the far more ambitious 2030 Agenda, which would require even greater support for least developed countries, including

countries in transition; it should be regarded as a means to achieve structural change, poverty eradication and economic diversification, and not as an end in itself. Similar predictability was needed in international support measures based on country-specific situations rather than a one-size-fits-all approach in order to serve as a basis for the transition toward graduation, as well as sustainability after graduation.

4. The high-level midterm review of the Istanbul Programme of Action would provide an opportunity to revitalize the Programme's implementation and ensure its coherence with the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and the outcome of the twenty-first Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The commitments made must translate into concrete international support measures for least developed countries.

5. While it was premature to gauge the effectiveness of the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, it would be prudent to consider the logic of country-level implementation, thereby allowing for the mainstreaming of the Programme into national strategies, plans and policies in landlocked developing countries. Development partners, transit countries and other stakeholders such as the United Nations and international financial institutions would thus gain a better understanding of the country-specific needs of landlocked developing countries. Regardless of whether the issue in question was ODA, innovative financing, foreign direct investment (FDI), transit support measures, or infrastructure, clarity was needed regarding the specific needs of landlocked developing countries.

6. **Mr. Zinsou** (Benin) said that despite the significant efforts made by least developed countries in recent years and the support they had received from their development partners, progress had still fallen short of expectations, in particular because of fluctuations in the prices of the commodity exports on which their economies depended, the impact of successive crises in the world economy in recent years and the substantial decline in ODA. Prospects were not good at a time when countries needed to mobilize additional resources to achieve the goals of the Istanbul Programme of Action and effectively implement the 2030 Agenda.

7. The Secretary-General's report (A/70/83) indicated that 46 per cent of the people in least developed countries remained in extreme poverty; the goals of the Istanbul Programme of Action could be achieved before 2020 only if those countries and their development partners intensified their efforts and took concrete action in the eight priority areas of the Programme. His country had recently presided over the Global Coordination Bureau of the Least Developed Countries and welcomed the numerous voluntary measures and creative initiatives taken by Governments, despite the need to divert resources to deal with the effects of global economic crises and other disruptions. Notwithstanding the poor performance of least developed countries, linked with the difficult economic situation, those countries must continue to strive for the agreed upon goals while receiving increased support from their development partners. Real and sustainable economic growth in least developed countries would be achieved by building their production capacities.

8. His delegation urged the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States to maintain its support for the operationalization of the Technology Bank, which should take place during the current session of the General Assembly. It called on development partners to contribute significantly to the financing of the Technology Bank by allocating at least 0.1 per cent of their ODA to that mechanism.

9. **Ms. Premchit** (Thailand) said that on account of their geographical disadvantages and their exposure to external shocks, natural disasters and the impact of climate change, countries in special situations were highly vulnerable to global challenges. At the same time, they held great promise, as they possessed abundant resources and dynamic economies. Her country therefore welcomed the efforts of the international community to complete the unfinished work on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as well as initiatives taken by the United Nations system to ensure sustainable development in countries in special situations, such as the Istanbul Programme of Action, the Vienna Programme of Action and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway.

10. Given Thailand's graduation to middle-income status three decades earlier, her delegation wished to

share its experience with other countries in special situations in order to build development partnerships and ensure inclusive and sustained growth. Promoting regional connectivity, in terms of both hardware and software, was critical to unlocking the economic potential of the most remote and isolated areas, bridging regional development gaps and raising international competitiveness profiles.

11. Thailand had been cooperating with development partners, including fellow members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), to provide financial and technical assistance to neighbouring countries on connectivity projects. It also advocated greater connectivity beyond ASEAN and the development of multimodal transport, including by extending the Greater Mekong subregion economic corridors to the South Asian region, as well as promoting the Asian highway network and the pan-Asian railway network in collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. As one of the main transit countries in the region, Thailand was committed to streamlining and harmonizing regulations to facilitate cross-border transport.

12. Productive capacity-building was fundamental and had a far-reaching impact on economic development and diversification for least developed countries, including in the area of the production of high value-added goods and services. Given the similarities Thailand shared with other countries in special situations in Asia and Africa, her Government had been providing technical assistance and capacity-building in areas of mutual interest such as sustainable agriculture and rural development, public health, and education and vocational training in manufacturing sectors.

13. As access to technology and the promotion of science and innovation helped to transform the lives of people and their productive capacity in developing countries, her country hoped that the recommendations made by the High-level Panel on the Technology Bank would provide a strong impetus to accelerating structural transformation and sustainable development.

14. Since countries in special situations were the most vulnerable to natural disasters and the impacts of climate change, support must be mobilized to build resilience, so that those countries could meet their adaptation and mitigation needs. Mainstreaming

disaster risk reduction in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda should be done through the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. Her delegation also hoped for an ambitious, legally binding outcome to the Paris Climate Change Conference.

15. Past experience had shown that cooperation was the best way to overcome obstacles. South-South and triangular cooperation should be complementary to traditional North-South cooperation. In achieving the agreed goals, the international community must take into account the fragility of certain countries, especially those in special situations, so as not to leave anyone behind on the road to sustainable development.

16. **Ms. Adhikari** (Nepal) said that the initiatives taken by the United Nations to address the challenges facing least developed countries and landlocked developing countries had been instrumental in mobilizing international support for sustainable development in those countries. As countries in special situations faced vulnerabilities of different kinds which impeded their development efforts, they needed revitalized partnerships and strengthened cooperation with commensurate means of implementation in a sustained and predictable manner.

17. Her Government advocated the effective implementation without delay of the 2030 Agenda. The ownership of the Agenda and its integration into national and regional development strategies were of prime importance.

18. The timely, full and effective implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action and the Vienna Programme of Action in the context of the 2030 Agenda remained fundamental to building the productive capacity of least developed and landlocked developing countries, addressing structural barriers and eliminating poverty. The sustainable graduation of the least developed countries, as recognized in the Ministerial Declaration issued by the Ministerial Meeting of Asia-Pacific LDCs held in Kathmandu in December 2014, would require robust, dependable and sustainable trade and transit infrastructure, with no obstacles to boosting trade and investment capacity.

19. Nepal was prone to multiple disasters and bore the disproportionate effect of climate change. Her delegation underscored the need for a climate fund for the least developed countries and called for the

effective implementation of the Sendai Framework and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

20. The proper and timely integration of information and communications technologies (ICTs) into development efforts was extremely important for the economic growth, development and prosperity of least developed countries and landlocked developing countries. The preparatory process for the World Summit on the Information Society must address the issues of least developed countries and landlocked developing countries with a view to bringing the great potential of ICTs to all people, using those technologies as an enabler for poverty reduction. Her delegation also urged the early operationalization of the Technology Bank for least developed countries.

21. Nepal had been incorporating the Istanbul Programme of Action and the Vienna Programme of Action into its national plans and development efforts and was committed to integrating the 2030 Agenda as well. While Nepal was on track to achieve most of the MDGs, and hoped to graduate from least developed status by 2022, the devastating earthquakes that had struck the country in early 2015 had shattered a number of hard-earned development achievements. In the aftermath, her Government was focusing on reconstruction with a build back better approach, as well as on capacity and infrastructure development, connectivity improvement and domestic resource mobilization. As landlockedness was a major impediment to development and prosperity, her delegation urged bilateral, subregional and regional approaches to transit and transport cooperation to provide more efficient and competitive choices to landlocked developing countries. Those countries deserved special understanding from transit countries, enhanced support from development partners and multilateral development institutions, and the involvement of the private sector and other stakeholders so as to enable them to benefit from available opportunities at all levels.

22. **Ms. Soemarno** (Indonesia) said that her delegation was concerned that, despite substantial progress, many least developed countries were unlikely to reach the MDGs in a timely manner, or achieve the goals of the Istanbul Programme of Action by 2020. Half the population of least developed countries still lived in extreme poverty. The structural transformation of those countries was insufficient; investment rates, which were low though improving, must be further

accelerated and sustained over time. Despite improvement in their investment climates, many least developed countries continued to be largely sidelined by FDI, which could help diversify their economies.

23. Her delegation called on the international community to increase support to least developed countries in order to achieve the goals of the Istanbul Programme of Action. If the least developed countries were to meet the more comprehensive Sustainable Development Goals, structural transformation would have to be a priority. Therefore, developed countries must meet their ODA commitments of 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of their gross national income (GNI) to least developed countries. Increased public and private investment in least developed countries would also help the latter generate employment and reduce poverty. However, those countries must have the necessary policy space to enable their Governments to employ the mix of policies required to deal effectively with employment and poverty issues.

24. The special needs of landlocked developing countries relating to infrastructure development, trade development and facilitation, regional integration, productive capacity-building and structural transformation needed to be addressed in the context of the full implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda. Her delegation welcomed the establishment of a global infrastructure forum led by the multilateral development banks, which would encourage a greater range of voices, particularly from developing countries, in identifying and addressing infrastructure and capacity gaps.

25. A multidimensional approach was required to address the specific development challenges of landlockedness and fully implement the Vienna Programme of Action. Within that approach, policies and measures aimed at economic restructuring and specialization must be implemented, taking into account the transport-related obstacles of landlocked developing countries; the development of productive capacities was a key element of that process. Renewed and strengthened partnerships that involved landlocked developing countries, transit countries, development partners, the United Nations system and other international organizations, as well as the private sector, were of great importance. South-South and triangular cooperation, ODA and increased public sector support were needed to provide more resources

for investing in infrastructure development and maintenance, trade facilitation, structural transformation and capacity-building and for addressing both internal and external vulnerabilities.

26. **Mr. Gutulo** (Ethiopia) said that despite the major obstacles of geographical remoteness from major international markets and high transport and trade transaction costs faced by landlocked developing countries, progress had been made over the past decade in implementing the Almaty Programme of Action. Through strong means of implementation with revitalized partnerships among landlocked countries, transit countries, development partners and the private sector, the international community must address the multifaceted development bottlenecks facing landlocked developing countries and work towards the full implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action.

27. His delegation endorsed the importance of achieving structural transformation by implementing an inclusive and sustainable industrialization programme, as the expansion of infrastructure projects enhanced the competitiveness and connectivity of landlocked developing countries. Simplification and harmonization of custom regulations and continued increase in Aid for Trade were important measures to increase the trading capacity of landlocked developing countries and to promote exports through diversification and value addition. Ensuring the right of access and freedom of transit was crucial for integrating those countries into the global value chain.

28. As a landlocked country, Ethiopia continued to invest in trade logistics-related programmes to accelerate trade facilitation and enhance competitiveness and connectivity. The rapid movement of goods and services was key to accelerating the structural transformation process. With the support of United Nations entities as well as the private sector, his Government was implementing a national logistics strategy aimed at boosting exports and improving the multimodal logistics operating system.

29. The Vienna Programme of Action should be fully implemented to establish a secure, reliable and efficient transit transport system; it should also be fully mainstreamed by development partners and the entire United Nations system. The international community should increase ODA to landlocked developing countries, promote the flow of FDI and reduce the cost

of transfer of remittances. Partnership between landlocked countries and transit countries should be further strengthened with regard to infrastructure connectivity, customs and logistics. It was important to revitalize all forms of global partnerships — North-South, South-South and triangular — to turn landlocked developing countries into land-linked countries.

30. Least developed countries could meet multiple development needs by sustaining inclusive economic growth and by engendering structural transformation and economic diversification. Concrete and substantial international support was required to implement the Istanbul Programme of Action and work towards eradicating poverty, enhancing productivity, and enabling graduation from the least developed status.

31. **Mr. Dzonzi** (Malawi) said that the recent global financial and energy crises had exacerbated the vulnerability of least developed and landlocked developing countries, with most of the least developed countries suffering from abject poverty, rising inequality, a stagnant share of manufacturing in their gross domestic product, insufficient decent job creation and a continued low pace of economic expansion given their level of development and growth potential. Although FDI flows had increased by 14 per cent, global FDI was still marginal at only 2 per cent and ODA flows in 2014 remained below 2008 levels. Such trends put least developed and landlocked developing countries at risk of not achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals. To mitigate the adverse effects of crises and consolidate economic development, the international community must take into consideration the priorities of vulnerable countries, inject FDI and assist in capacity-building and technical support, including for research and development.

32. All stakeholders must commit to the effective implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action and fully integrate priority areas into the Sustainable Development Goals to enable half of the least developed countries to graduate by 2020. Although least developed countries, including Malawi, had made great progress with the MDGs, particularly in social and human development, more work remained to be done in order to implement the 2030 Agenda. Development partners should give special priority to least developed countries to help them achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

33. Scaled-up assistance must be provided to least developed countries and other countries in special situations. ODA continued to play a critical role in the development efforts of least developed countries. In accordance with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, at least 0.20 per cent of GNI should be provided as ODA to least developed countries; smarter ODA would help to catalyse growth and development in countries like Malawi. As least developed countries were vulnerable to numerous global challenges, it was to be hoped that the Istanbul Programme of Action would be implemented in its entirety and that through it, those countries would benefit from duty-free, quota-free market access and supply-side capacity-building. Development partners must consolidate and build upon previous achievements and fulfil all their commitments in relation to countries in special situations.

34. His delegation reiterated the importance of establishing a new forum to bridge the infrastructure gap, helping landlocked developing countries to achieve infrastructure development and thus economic growth, and hoped that development partners would support that initiative. It stressed the importance of creating an international investment centre for the least developed countries as outlined in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. His delegation hoped that the Paris Climate Change Conference would result in an ambitious plan that would take into consideration the special needs of countries in special situations. The Committee should continue to advance the issues of both developed and developing countries, with special emphasis on the least developed countries.

The meeting rose at 4.00 p.m.