



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY H.E. MR. PETER THOMSON, AMBASSADOR, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FIJI TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND CHAIR OF THE GROUP OF 77, ON THE SIXTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OPEN WORKING GROUP ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (New York, 11 December 2013)**

Co-Chairs,

1. I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.
2. I would like to acknowledge the issue brief prepared by the Technical Support Team and thank the keynote speakers for their insightful remarks. This G77 statement focuses on the second cluster of issues of this Open Working Group, focusing on 'needs of countries in special situations: LDCs, African countries, LLDCs and SIDS as well as specific challenges facing the middle-income countries'.

Co-Chairs,

3. Countries in special situations, namely the Least Developed Countries, African countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, Small Island Developing States and Middle-income Countries, face significant development challenges that must be overcome in order to achieve inclusive, equitable and sustainable development for all. While many of these countries, collectively and individually, have made varying degrees of progress in their pursuit of development and the achievement of the MDGs, this progress is fragile and uneven in the face of the ongoing crises on development and the serious challenges these impacts pose on the fight against poverty and hunger, social exclusion and environmental degradation. The Group holds the view that among and within developing countries, those who have been left furthest behind require our most urgent attention and support. We are also conscious of the particular challenges and needs of people living in conflict and post conflict countries, and people living under foreign occupation.
4. While economic growth is returning to many of these countries, this growth is uneven, varying across regions and within countries. Significantly, the aggregate performance and selective indicators mask gender and spatial inequalities, income disparities, environmental challenges and social marginalisation for millions of poor people, particularly for those living in vulnerable situations across the developing world. The Group stresses therefore, that aggregate economic indicators and national averages based on criteria such as GDP growth or per capita income do not always reflect the actual development challenges and needs of countries in special situations.
5. In this regard, the Group underscores the importance of not having a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to development and that assistance by the United Nations system to developing countries should be able to respond to the varying development needs of individual countries, which should be aligned with their national development plans and strategies. Moreover, the global macroeconomic system, including the trade regime, international cooperation, technology transfer, financing for development and debt relief should all aim at remedying the injustices and suffering of people worldwide, particularly for those living in countries in special situations.

Co-Chairs,

6. For the least developed countries, the Istanbul Program of Action, adopted in 2011, is an important expression by the international community to assist the LDCs' national efforts towards achieving poverty eradication, structural transformation and sustainable development. We express grave concern that none of the LDCs have been able to meet all the MDGs and that LDCs as a Group have been left behind in the implementation of the MDGs. The marginalisation of the LDCs in the globalised world is also reflected in their minuscule shares of world trade and global FDI flows. More worrisome, the declining FDI and ODA flows are threatening the reversal of those modest gains and the ability to expand such gains.

7. Addressing these challenges and achieving the goal to have at least half of the LDCs to meet graduation criteria by 2020, bold actions and a strengthened partnership for development are urgently required, especially with respect to the fulfillment of agreed commitments such as the provision of zero point one-five to zero point two per cent of GNI as ODA for the LDCs. The fulfillment of commitments also include timely implementation of duty-free and quota free market access, on a lasting basis for all of the LDCs. Concerted efforts are also required to reverse the decline in the mobilisation of resources for the Aid for Trade Initiative for the LDCs. In this regard, we welcome the modest package for the LDCs, which emanated from the recently concluded WTO Ministerial Conference in Bali.

8. The Group reiterates the importance of establishing a Technology Bank and Science, Technology and Information supporting mechanism for the LDCs. This Technology Bank and mechanism are to be dedicated to helping LDCs improve their scientific research and innovation base, and to promote networking among researchers and research institutions. We underscore the need for full and effective operationalisation of the technology bank for LDCs at the earliest and call upon all development partners to extend their full support to the LDCs in ensuring the meaningful functioning of the Technology Bank.

Co-Chairs,

9. While Africa's economic performance has made the continent an increasingly important player in the global economy, economic, social and environmental indicators have shown that many African countries, particularly Sub-Saharan African countries, still face extreme poverty, persistent food insecurity, chronic hunger and under-nutrition.

10. The drastic demographic shifts with a fast growing population that is the youngest in the world, poses both opportunities and challenges. If this population dynamic is managed properly in an increasingly prosperous Africa and inclusive society, African youths will be a significant driving force in the post-2015 development era. However, in the absence of sustained and inclusive growth that creates decent jobs, and without adequate support from the international community, youth unemployment and widespread discontent in the continent could lead to social instability. This could further undermine the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs in Africa.

11. The Group expresses profound concern that the commitment to doubling aid to Africa by 2010 as articulated at the Summit of Gleneagles was not entirely reached. We underscore that aid through a variety of means, including the provision of new additional resources, technology transfer, as well as capacity- building to African countries, remain important to support national efforts to achieve sustainable development in Africa.

Co-Chairs,

12. The Group reiterates its recognition of the special needs of and challenges faced by the landlocked developing countries caused by their lack of territorial access to the sea, with remoteness and isolation from major international markets making the LLDCs highly dependent on transit countries for their seaborne trade.

13. The economic growth and social well-being of LLDCs remain very vulnerable to external shocks as well as the multiple challenges the international community faces including the financial and economic crisis, and climate change. We underscore the need for the international community to enhance development assistance to LLDCs to help them overcome their vulnerabilities, build resilience and set themselves on a path of sustainable social and economic development. To urgently address the special development needs of and challenges faced by the landlocked and transit developing countries, we call upon the international community, including donor countries, to strengthen their assistance through a genuine partnership with sufficient support and cooperation to help the LLDCs to effectively implement the priorities of the Almaty Programme of Action and its successor programme.

14. We welcome the recent decision of the General Assembly to hold a comprehensive ten-year review conference of the Almaty Programme of Action in 2014, which should be preceded by regional and global as well as thematic preparations. In this regard, we call upon the international community, including the United Nations system, development partners, international organisations, private sector institutions, and academia, to critically consider special needs of and challenges faced by LLDCs, and to help develop priorities for a new, more comprehensive, common action-oriented framework of LLDCs for the next decade.

Co-Chairs,

15. Small Island Developing Countries face special development and environment challenges. The international community has long recognised the unique and particular vulnerabilities of SIDS in view of their small size, limited resources, geographic dispersion and isolation from markets. The vagaries of climate change, which pose an existential threat to SIDS, are well-known. They are on the frontline in terms of experiencing the impacts of climate change. These challenges are causing severe set-backs to their socio-economic development.

16. It is important to acknowledge that gains by SIDS toward attaining sustainable development could all come to nought if the climate change challenge is not comprehensively addressed. For many SIDS, global warming and sea level rise threaten the very existence of entire countries. In this regard, the international community must undertake greater political commitment to the UNFCCC processes in addressing the adaptation needs of SIDS, including the provision of new, additional and predictable financial resources. The full operationalisation and capitalisation of the Green Climate Fund by early 2014 with the need to up-scale financing to reach \$100 billion by 2020 would be an important step in the right direction. Likewise, the Group encourages the Secretary-General's Climate Change Summit in 2014 to produce concrete outcomes to increase mitigation measures that would ameliorate impacts on SIDS.

17. While the Group acknowledges some progress has been made at the international level to address the challenges faced by SIDS, we note with concern that much more remains to be done to address their vulnerabilities and effectively support their sustainable development efforts. We reiterate our call to the international community to make good on its commitments as embodied in the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy for further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

18. We reiterate our welcome of the decision to convene the Third International Conference for the Sustainable Development of SIDS in 2014 in Samoa. We welcome the strong commitment of SIDS to take full responsibility for their sustainable development and encourage the international community to lend adequate support to implement the priority outcomes from the Samoa Conference. In this context, we recognise the efforts already made in the various SIDS regional preparatory meetings and the outcome document of the SIDS inter-regional preparatory meeting held in August in Barbados.

Co-Chairs,

19. Middle-income countries are a diverse group by size, population and income level. They constitute 74% of the world's population and contribute approximately 45% of world gross product in recent years. We welcome the positive contributions of MICs, particularly their efforts in eradicating poverty. However, we are also cognizant that today, about three-quarters of the world's 1.3 billion poor people, as well as nearly 70 per cent of global undernourished people now live in middle-income countries. Moreover, MICs comprise 10 of the 20 countries with the highest levels of inequality in the world, a situation that hinders their long-term development.

20. While the classification of MICs based on per capita income captures significant dimensions of development, we are of the view that this provides an incomplete picture that masks significant disparities between and within countries. Economic growth or GDP alone is also not a good indicator of welfare or even a realisable measure of standards of living. This is because economies can grow without addressing social problems like inequality and poverty if all the increase in wealth goes to a few people. It is also true that economic growth can occur within a country while income inequality among its citizens deteriorates.

21. The Group underscores the special challenges facing the MICs, which include widespread poverty; inequality in income; growing environmental pollution and degradation; social constraints; public health challenges and the urgent need to create employment and decent jobs for their growing populations. In this regard, the Group believes that the MICs should continue to receive development assistance from the UN system and that the assistance provided to them should be improved in many dimensions, while ensuring that such assistance does not crowd out or negatively affect the development agenda of the less developed countries.

22. Lastly, the Group of 77 and China stresses that each category of countries faces unique and specific challenges. It is therefore important that the SDG process and the post-2015 development agenda addresses these challenges and concerns with these differences in mind within the overall context of an enhanced development-oriented global partnership.

I thank you, Co-Chairs.