**Draft Internation by LDC group on “International trade as an engine for development”**

**12 February 2025, 3-6 PM**

**Distinguished co-facilitators,**

I am delivering this intervention on behalf of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

We align our statement with G77 and China.

We welcome the Section on International Trade as an Engine for Development in the zero draft.

We support the commitment to a universal, rules-based, non-discriminatory, transparent, open, fair, predictable, and inclusive multilateral trading system with the WTO at its centre. We stress the need for dedicated technical and financial assistance to enable LDCs to meet our commitments under these agreements.

We also appreciate “urging” all countries to refrain from imposing unilateral economic, financial, or trade measures not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

We also express our serious concerns about the trade-related environmental measures which impact trade and productive capacities of developing countries in particular LDC. Therefore, we call for stronger actions urging to refrain from implementing any such measures. We also call for provisions urging countries to work together in relevant multilateral bodies to find the solution.

We appreciate the inclusion of strengthening the principle of special and differential treatment remains crucial for LDCs in a precise, effective, and operational manner across all WTO agreements.

We also welcome the inclusion of UNCTAD in the trade section and wish for further strengthening it since UNCTAD has continued to support LDCs.

We welcome the commitment to review rules of origin with a view to streamlining and simplifying them. We call for the adoption of simple, transparent, and development-friendly rules of origin for LDC products across all preference-giving countries.

We support the proposal for the WTO Director-General and UN Secretary-General to review the role of trade in sustainable development, with particular attention to the specific challenges and needs of LDCs.

We urge WTO members to conclude negotiations on a permanent solution to the issue of public stockholding to address food insecurity and call for the immediate elimination of all forms of distortionary agricultural export subsidies.

We strongly support the commitment to develop trade-related physical and digital infrastructure, with particular attention to transport corridor development for landlocked LDCs. We call on multilateral development banks and other public development banks to significantly increase investment in trade-related infrastructure in LDCs.

While we recognize the importance of sustainability standards, we emphasize that these should not be used as a condition for market access. Instead, we call for increased financial and technical support to help LDCs meet these standards on a voluntary basis.

We encourage public development banks to expand trade finance facilities specifically targeted at LDCs, with dedicated windows for MSMEs, women, and youth-owned businesses.

We welcome the commitment to increasing support for LDCs to industrialize and diversify our exports. We call for this support to be comprehensive, addressing constraints in productive capacity, technology transfer, skills development, and market access.

We call on all developed countries, and developing countries in a position to do so, to provide full duty-free, quota-free market access for all products originating from all LDCs, coupled with simplified rules of origin.

We strongly endorse the commitment to scale up Aid for Trade, with the objective of doubling Aid for Trade to LDCs by 2031. We emphasize that at least 50 percent of this increased Aid for Trade should be dedicated to building trade-related infrastructure in LDCs.

We would like to express our strong support to the separate section on Boosting Trade in LDCs and urge the member states to support the retention of this section as it is.

We welcome the encouragement for development partners and international financial institutions to engage in global commodity partnerships. We call for these partnerships to prioritize local value addition, technology transfer, and skills development in LDCs.

We are happy to see the language on ‘undertake reform to the mechanisms for investor-state dispute settlements in trade and investment agreements through a multilateral approach and establish an advisory support service for developing countries for international investment dispute settlements’.

We also support the call for the Common Fund for Commodities to provide grants, concessional loans, and equity investments to LDCs. We urge member states to increase their voluntary contributions to the Fund to enhance its capacity to support LDCs in adding value to our commodity exports.

In conclusion, we believe these enhancements will significantly strengthen the outcome document's ability to address the unique challenges and opportunities faced by LDCs in leveraging trade for sustainable development.

Thank you, Co-Chairs.