United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least

Hon Ministers, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

I thank the WTO for organizing this session on realizing the trade potentials of LDCs.

International trade can be a key driver in transforming the economies of the LDCs.

The Doha Programme of Action (DPOA) for LDCs has identified international trade as a focus area for action and set an ambitious agenda for promoting trade and regional integration in LDCs for the next decade.

If DPOA is fully implemented, LDCs can achieve significant gains through international trade, including by capitalizing on the multilateral trading system under the WTO.

Excellencies,

Allow me to highlight six specific areas outlined in the DPOA that can support LDCs in realizing their trade ambitions.

<u>First:</u> the DPOA makes specific commitments to ensure full and expeditious implementation of the decisions of the WTO Ministerial Conferences pertinent to LDCs. These include: x

- Duty-free and quota-free market access
- Simplified and transparent rules of origin
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<u>Second:</u> the DPOA sets an ambitious target to doubl share of global exports by 2031.

Regrettably, no progress has been achieved in this regard.

Despite representing approximately 13% of the world's population, LDCs continue to account for less than 1% of global trade.

Their overall trade deficit continued to widen, reaching a new high of over USD 124 billion in 2022.

LDCs need targeted support and interventions from development partners to boost trade capacity through diversification and structural transformation.

There are also huge untapped potentials of South-South trade, which can boost their export.

<u>Third:</u> LDCs need massive investment for trade capacity building, including in diversification, improved value chains, enhancing technology content, and meeting necessary standards. Currently, LDC exports are heavily concentrated in a few primary commodities, making them vulnerable to price fluctuations.

The DPOA sets clear and ambitious targets to increase aid for trade support to LDCs, aiming to double it by 2031.

In 2022, the share of Aid for Trade disbursements to LDCs was 28%, which was worth about US\$ 14 billion.

However, disbursements have fallen short of chort DCs was

The LDCs need more such initiatives like this to reap the full benefits of intra-regional trade.

The DPOA sets a target to fully implement the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. This aims to reduce trade barriers and streamline customs procedures.

LDCs need enhanced financial and technical support in this regard. This can reduce trade costs for LDCs by up to 14% and enable further regional integration and trade.

<u>Fifth:</u> E-commerce and digital trade, have the potential to connect businesses in remote economies, especially businin

<u>Finally</u>: the DPOA calls upon development and trading partners to extend trade preferences to graduated countries. This is especially crucial now as 15 LDCs are at various stages of graduation.

The DPOA facilitated the launch of the Sustainable Graduation Support Facility (iGRAD). This is an important inter-agency support mechanism led by my Office to support graduating and graduated countries. More support is needed to fully operationalize iGRAD.

I am happy to note that MC13 has taken two important decisions on smooth transition support measures for graduated countries to benefit from dispute settlement; and technical assistance and capacity building support after graduation.

We look forward to more such developments in WTO.

commitment to incentivizing graduation and ensuring that

Excellencies,

I am pleased to inform you that my Office has established a partnership with the WTO to support the implementatio trade-related goals and targets for the 45 LDCs. We pla undertake joint programmes in this respect, and we shall be counting on your support in taking that forward.

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By promoting a more inclusive, interconnected, and resilient international trade framework, the benefits extend universally, benefiting people and communities worldwide.

Let me rest it here.

I look forward to a fruitful discussion.

I thank you.