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Statement at the 19th Session of the Committee for Development Policy

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Excellency,
Mr. Chair,
Members of the Committee,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be here today. The United Nations has been celebrating seven decades of global collaboration to promote peace, security, human rights, development and our joint efforts to conquer some of the most pressing challenges facing our world. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) has played a vital part in these efforts. As the entity of the UN Secretariat responsible for development, DESA works closely with governments and other partners to find concrete solutions to economic, social and environmental challenges.

Over the decades, DESA's in-depth policy analysis, including that undertaken by the Committee for Development Policy, has helped resolve many of the world's most pressing socio-economic issues. Whether by supporting policy-making bodies, facilitating major UN conferences, projecting trends in demography,

publishing top quality economic analysis, or helping countries develop national capacity, DESA's influence has reached far beyond the UN.

Recently, a new development landscape has emerged, marked by interconnectivity, challenges that know no borders and new development players. Deep pockets of poverty and inequality persist across countries from different income groups. In LDCs, these are further compounded by vulnerabilities that expose them to risks beyond their control – climate change and economic instability to name but a few. Member States adopted the landmark 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which calls for universal and integrated action to address these issues.

A return to strong and balanced global growth is not expected soon unless there are extraordinary and concerted policy efforts to stimulate investment and productivity. Of particular concern are the prospects for the LDCs, many of which are in Africa. Average GDP growth in the LDCs remains well below the SDG target of at least 7 per cent per annum.

Ending poverty in all its forms in the current economic environment will require tackling inequality more rigorously, including commitments to share prosperity both within and across national borders. Greater efforts are required to mobilize domestic and international resources to help finance much-needed investment, especially in the LDCs, where additional concessional international public financing is needed to ensure the investment necessary to achieve the ambitious targets set by the SDGs.

Members of the Committee,

As the Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development of DESA, I oversee a wide portfolio of areas crucial for development and global action. I am very fortunate to be part of an organisation that has made such remarkable contributions to the global development agenda over the past 7 decades , including through the work of the CDP.

The Committee for Development Planning was launched in 1966 under the chairmanship of Jan Tinbergen, who three years later was awarded the Nobel Prize for Economics. Many other notable Members followed in his footsteps.

As a subsidiary body of ECOSOC, the CDP was initially tasked to assess UN development planning and to suggest how it could be improved. Well before the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development , the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental – have been reflected not only in the membership, but also in your in-depth analyses.

The CDP first put into practice the idea, now widely accepted, that developed countries should contribute 0.7 per cent of their GDP in aid to developing countries.

The CDP also established the least developed country category, allowing these countries access to special support measures from the international development community. The Committee is the able custodian of the category, providing assistance to LDCs.

Recent successes of the CDP include in-depth reports on promoting productive capacity for sustainable development; a critical assessment of new proposals on

measuring aid; the LDC support measures portal; and, in the area of capacity development by your Secretariat, the ePing trade notification tool now adopted by the International Trade Centre and World Trade Organisation and used by about 140 countries.

I am proud to note that, half a century after its inception, the CDP remains at the forefront of international development thinking, providing innovative, timely and practical advice from across various disciplines.

At the same time, I would like to take the opportunity to discuss some ideas for making the CDP even more useful in the context of the 2030 agenda. I hope you allow me to make some suggestions for your discussions this week.

Apart from its advisory role to ECOSOC, I believe that the CDP has the potential to contribute to debates on development policy, including influencing the work of UN inter-governmental bodies.

For example, the CDP could contribute to the discussions of the High Level Political Forum (HLPF), providing knowledge support and strategic guidance to the UN development system, particularly in the areas of policy coherence and policy integration for achieving the SDGs, and undertaking analysis on SDG inter-linkages. To allow the Council more time to consider your inputs, one practical idea is to consider the ECOSOC High Level Segment and HLPF themes one year before these themes are reviewed by the Council.

Also, in the future, the CDP selection of themes could target specific countries, regions, or country groupings, or specialize on particular themes. For example, the

CDP could initiate long-term work on a cross-cutting theme including issues like poverty, inequality, and inclusive growth, all areas of expertise of CDP Members. In doing so, the Committee should think strategically and look for partnerships with other entities and explore how its advice can reach relevant audiences beyond the Council. Given that you are appointed in your personal capacities, rather than as representatives of an organisation or government, I would encourage you to think critically and independently, proposing new or unconventional ideas and practical solutions where appropriate.

I expect the Committee to continue playing a critical role in the 2030 Agenda, as an independent advisory body of the Council and beyond. I am confident that the Committee will continue to break new ground in supporting ECOSOC in the implementation of the SDGs with special consideration for the LDCs. I would like to invite you to reflect on these issues and I look forward to hearing your thoughts and your recommendations.

Thank you.