

**5th United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries
Adoption of the Doha Programme of Action (2022-2031)
17 March 2022**

**Explanation of Position by H.E. The Hon. Mitch Fifield,
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia to the
United Nations**

As Delivered

Good morning Madam President and colleagues,

I have the honour to speak today on behalf of New Zealand and my own country, Australia.

At the outset, can I take the opportunity to thank our friends and colleagues, Ambassador Bob of Canada and Ambassador Rabab of Bangladesh, and to acknowledge their absolutely stalwart efforts in coordinating the preparatory process and negotiation of a strong new ten-year *Programme of Action*.

We'd also like to express our immense gratitude to our good friend, Ambassador Alya of Qatar, for your country's generous support in hosting the LDC5 conference; and we so look forward to finally meeting together in Doha in 2023.

And finally, we extend our sincere thanks to the UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States, for its tireless work on behalf of countries in special situations.

Madam President,

Australia and New Zealand are staunchly committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which

represent the agreed principles and values of the international development system, underpinned by human rights and international law. With eight years left, our focus must be on delivering the promise of the 2030 Agenda in its entirety, through concrete implementation.

COVID erased hard won gains and showcased the vulnerability of least developed countries. It's also tested our multilateral system, whether related to the production and distribution of vaccines, or to our collective response to the debt and liquidity challenges facing many countries around the world. We have heard loud and clear how fundamental these issues are for most LDCs.

But COVID has only made more important our collective agreement to the priorities of the 2030 Agenda. The new *Programme of Action* is well equipped to address the immediate impacts of COVID - which will no doubt also be felt into the future – and also, they're well equipped to stand the test of time, guiding us through the Decade of Action leading to 2030.

Madam President,

Having witnessed a number of LDCs defer their graduation in recent years, we are convinced of the need to review the indices, timelines and incentives associated with the graduation process, and to improve our focus on a country's vulnerability, and their ownership of the decision to graduate. We commend member states for agreeing on a *Programme of Action* which frames graduation as a genuine aspiration, rather than as a hard target. This is vital to ensure that graduation is sustainable.

Our support to LDCs, including SIDS, must be practical, realistic, and adapted to the challenges of the 21st century. As we work toward the mid-term review of

the Sendai Framework, we must re-double our commitment to “*build back better*”. We need to keep front of mind that LDC’s vulnerability and risk levels often greatly exceed their capacity to respond to and recover from disasters; it is critical that graduation processes build resilience by integrating disaster risk reduction into transition strategies.

In this connection, Australia is pleased to be participating in the new High-Level Panel to finalise a multidimensional vulnerability index. We strongly believe that this exercise will offer important lessons for the entire multilateral development system. And we look forward to valuable discussion on this at the forthcoming Global Platform on DRR in Indonesia, and at the Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference on DRR in Australia.

Madam President,

As we commence implementation of the new *Programme of Action*, we must keep front of mind the catalytic impact gender equality can have on the achievement of sustainable development. We are pleased that the *Programme of Action* includes particular attention to the empowerment of *women and girls* – which is vital to delivering better outcomes for all. And we are pleased it pays due regard to the issue of *human security*, which, as we know, is fundamental to protection and promotion of sustainable development.

And, Madam President, finally, we would like to note that the effects of Russia’s unprovoked, unjust and illegal invasion of Ukraine, which we condemn in the strongest possible terms, are far-reaching. As the Secretary-General has highlighted, this war is also an assault on the world’s most vulnerable people and countries with food, fuel, and fertiliser prices skyrocketing and supply

chains disrupted. Madam President, we call on Russia to cease its attacks on Ukraine and withdraw its forces from Ukrainian territory.

Thank you Madam President.