



Statement by the Republic of South Africa

First Part of Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries taking place in New York

17 March, 2022

**United Nations General Assembly Hall
New York**

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

South Africa aligns itself with the statements of the African Group and the Group of 77 and China.

We are pleased that the LDC5 process has been able to progress as it has despite interruptions. The huge obstacles we have all dealt with in progressing on the SDGs, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, have been amplified in magnitude and impact for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

The severity of this situation is well laid out in the introductory section of the Draft Doha Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries which we will adopt today, and which describes the immense socioeconomic damage suffered by LDCs in the context of the COVID-19 crisis. This crisis, coupled with others such as worsening climate change, saw economies shrinking, debt burdens rising, with a reversal of gains on poverty reduction and on issues like education, health, food security and malnutrition. All of this whilst many LDCs have yet to receive access to COVID-19 vaccines. It is no understatement to say that this situation has dealt a **devastating** blow for these countries, which are already the least developed amongst us.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The urgency and importance of providing these countries with the maximum support possible cannot be overstated, to overcome these obstacles and to get back on track in providing their populations with the basic life sustaining essentials that so many of us elsewhere in the world take for granted. We have a moral duty to accelerate assistance to these most vulnerable countries amongst us, so as to afford the citizens of these countries, not least the 226 million young people, the opportunity to live lives of dignity, and indeed to assume their rightful role in shaping the world's future.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is our view that the Doha Programme of Action (DPOA) which we adopt here today, and which will define the agenda of LDCs for the next decade, 2022-2031, is an ambitious, comprehensive and detailed guiding blueprint for supporting LDCs which confronts, head on, the serious challenges that exist. These include the worsening climate crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic. South Africa can therefore lend its full support to the adoption of the Doha Programme of Action. As a friend and partner of LDCs and indeed all developing countries, South Africa will also remain a champion for support towards the full implementation of the Doha Programme of Action in the decade ahead.

In this regard, we are hopeful that this important blueprint for the advancement of LDCs in the decade ahead will be matched with the required support measures at the main conference of the LDC5 process in Doha, Qatar in March, 2023, where the main goal is precisely to identify actions and partnerships at the highest possible level to deliver on this agenda.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

In conclusion, South Africa reaffirms its strong solidarity with LDCs and all developing countries, and looks forward to a decade ahead characterized by significant, developmental progress for all LDCs.

I thank you.