STATEMENT BY SOUTH AFRICA ON GROUPS OF COUNTRIES IN
SPECIAL SITUATIONS
LEAST DEVELOPED AND LAND-LOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES
21 OCTOBER 2013
South Africa aligns itself with the statements delivered on this debate by Fiji on behalf of the G77 and China and Ethiopia on behalf of the Africa Group.

The Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 (the Istanbul Programme of Action) that was adopted by the Fourth Conference on the Least Developed Countries in 2011 signified the expressed commitment by the international community to assist least developed countries address the challenges that they are faced with. These include overcoming the structural challenges, eradicating poverty and achieving internationally agreed development goals. These issues need urgent attention in order to meet the Istanbul Programme of Action's objective to enable half of the 48 least developed countries to graduate out of this category by 2020.

While some progress has been made by these countries, we are concerned that achievements have been uneven as a number of these countries are sadly still characterized by constraints such as low per capita income, low levels of human development, and economic and structural handicaps to growth that limit resilience to both internal and external vulnerabilities.

The challenges faced by the least developed countries have been compounded by new and emerging challenges such as the volatility in key global markets and energy and commodity prices as well as food insecurity. It should also concern us all that this group of countries is the most off track in the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. As the 2013 report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Development Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 points out, poverty rates continue to be unacceptably high and that "one half of the 880 million people in the least developed countries continue to live on less than $1.25 a day".

Bearing in mind that sub-Saharan Africa still maintains the biggest regional presence in this group, South Africa finds it disturbing that only three countries have graduated out of this category so far in the past three decades.

In this regard, our solidarity with this group of countries will always focus on development initiatives aimed at addressing the primary objectives of NEPAD, especially the development of infrastructure and the promotion of sustainable growth and development in Africa.

Mr Chairman,

We are also deeply concerned by the particular challenges faced by land-locked developing countries emanating from their isolation from world markets. There has been limited success in meeting the strong commitments made by the international community to address the special needs of land-
locked developing countries. Yet these commitments are clearly articulated in the Almaty Declaration and Programme of Action.

The international community has to re-commit to the objectives of the Almaty Programme of Action and assist to develop efficient transit transport systems in landlocked and transit developing countries, taking into account the interests of both landlocked and transit developing countries. We have to re-double our efforts to assist land-locked developing countries realise the aims of the Almaty Programme. In this regard, the Review Conference scheduled for 2014 is vital for assessing the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and assist landlocked developing countries to move closer to achieving the internationally agreed development goals.

Mr Chairman,

Least developed and land-locked developing countries have been unable to overcome their economic vulnerability and to structurally transform their economies or build resilience against internal and external shocks and crisis. These countries continue to require international assistance because their productive capacity is limited, and they have severe infrastructure deficits.

It is nonetheless encouraging to note, as the Secretary-General reports, that many of the least developed countries have embarked on integrating the priorities and goals of the Istanbul Programme of Action into their national development strategies and programmes.

While it is true that the responsibility for development rests primarily with the governments of least development countries, the international community and development partners have an obligation to ensure the delivery of development assistance commitments. Commitments made under Millennium Development Goal 8 and the Monterey Consensus must be upheld. Development partners, furthermore, have a responsibility to ensure that official development assistance (ODA) is aligned to the productive capacity building priorities of the recipient countries.

ODA is still the single largest financing source for national budgets in least developed countries. It is therefore unfortunate that ODA to least developed countries has declined in the last 2 consecutive years — that is, 2011 and 2012. This fact is made even more startling when combined with the one pointed out in the Secretary-General’s report that inflows of foreign direct investment to least developed countries have been on a downward trend since 2008! While other financing sources must be explored, this current decline in ODA and foreign direct investment must be reversed!
Mr Chairman,

We note that while climate change affects all of us, it nonetheless does not affect us equally. The most vulnerable among us, especially the least developed countries will be the worst affected. Climate change is therefore expected to further increase the vulnerability of these countries. Compared to other member states, the least developed countries have contributed the least to the problem of climate change, yet they will suffer the most. It is for this reason that we call on major emitters to contribute towards ensuring that least developed countries are resilient to climate change.

Conditions in least developed countries pose a particular challenge for defining the post-2015 development agenda. The ongoing process of formulating sustainable development goals and the envisaged intergovernmental negotiations on the post 2015 development agenda offer unique opportunities to focus on the problems facing these countries especially since they are the most exposed to challenges while least equipped to deal with them. It is therefore of utmost importance that the interests of least developed countries are at the forefront in crafting a new post-2015 development agenda.

South-South cooperation plays a significant role in the development programmes of LDCs. However, we would like to emphasise that South-South cooperation is an expression of solidarity and cooperation between countries and does not rescind the responsibility of donor countries towards LDCs.

We, together with our IBSA partners India and Brazil, through the IBSA Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation (IBSA Fund), contribute to projects in LDCs across Africa, Asia and Latin America to address poverty and other development related challenges like health, HIV-Aids, sanitation and access to safe drinking water.

Thank you.