Madame Chair,

The Secretary General’s report on the implementation of the Program of Action for Least Developed Countries (LDCs) reminds us that, while least developed countries as a group have seen relatively strong growth over the past decade, progress has varied significantly among countries. While armed conflict and external factors play a role in these differences, some key actions that make a difference are: diversification of economies heavily focused on extractive industries and commodities; investment in access to quality education; improvement of business environments to attract domestic and foreign investment; strengthening public management structures; and investment on food security.

The Least Developed Countries are a primary focus of U.S. official development assistance. In 2012, we provided this group of countries an estimated $8.56 billion in Official Development Aid (ODA), as well as support to multilateral, regional and private sector efforts that address development challenges in line with the Istanbul Program of Action and the Almaty Program of Action. We look to both LDC and LLDC country leaders to deploy strategically the full array of external sources of support to move their countries toward inclusive and sustainable development and eventual graduation.

The 10-year Review Conference of the Almaty Program of Action will appraise its implementation and build a development agenda to further integrate LLDCs into the global trading system. Let us focus on practical results to reduce the costs of trade through the establishment of efficient transit transport systems, which will help stimulate productive capacity, diversify exports and strengthen resilience to external and internal shocks. The United States believes that deepening regional cooperation and integration can help reduce the high transport and trade transaction costs for LLDCs. In this respect, we encourage landlocked and transit developing countries to cooperate in developing their transit transport and ancillary roadside, energy, information and communication technology infrastructures, and to commit to trade facilitation projects, including customs reforms and modernization.

Recognizing benefits to be derived from science, technology and innovation, we welcome the opportunity to discuss mechanisms to help improve the scientific research and innovation base of LDCs and global networking among researchers and research institutions.
The United States supports increasing foreign direct investment (FDI) in countries in special circumstances, including through preferential financing programs, export credits, risk management tools, co-financing, and venture capital. Stable, predictable and enabling investment environments will leverage such options and attract increased and more diversified FDI.

Clear commitments to effective governance and to sharing the gains from development across all sectors of society will also attract official development assistance and unlock internal and external investment. Countries that strive to include women, youth and disadvantaged groups in their economies will be most likely to see broader and lasting economic prosperity.

As we look to graduation of LDCs in the near future, we welcome the emphasis of many delegations on developing a smooth transition process. The United States recognizes that graduation from LDC status should not result in an abrupt and disruptive change in economies. Advance planning between donors and recipients, as countries near graduation, can help mitigate this risk.

Thank you, Madame Chair.