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## Seventy-fifth session

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**Letter dated 24 November 2020 from the Permanent  
Representative of Guyana to the United Nations addressed to the  
Secretary-General**

I have the honour to transmit herewith the Ministerial Declaration adopted at the forty-fourth annual meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the States members of the Group of 77, which was held virtually on 12 November 2020 (see annex).

On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I would appreciate your having the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 9, 10, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 37, 38, 42, 46, 52, 53, 56, 59, 62, 63, 69, 70, 73, 76, 79, 91, 122, 126, 128, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 145, 146 and 148.

*(Signed)* Carolyn **Rodrigues-Birkett**  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative of the Co-operative  
Republic of Guyana to the United Nations  
Chair of the Group of 77

## **Annex to the letter dated 24 November 2020 from the Permanent Representative of Guyana to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

### **Forty-fourth annual meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Group of 77, New York, 12 November 2020**

#### **Ministerial Declaration**

1. The Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the States members of the Group of 77 and China met via virtual platform on 12 November 2020, on the occasion of their forty-fourth annual meeting. The Ministers reviewed the world economic situation, discussed the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the recent developments in the world and the particular challenges faced by developing countries in the economic, social and environmental areas, recognizing that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, remains the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, and adopted the following Declaration.

2. The Ministers reaffirmed full respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. They reaffirmed in this regard the need to respect the principles of equality among States, national sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of States and non-interference in their internal affairs. They also reaffirmed the need to respect the right to self-determination of peoples living under colonial or foreign occupation and other forms of alien domination.

3. The Ministers reaffirmed that there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development. They stressed the importance of building a culture of peace by strengthening multilateralism based on international law, developing friendly relations among nations, promoting peaceful settlement of disputes, and taking other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace and to ensure the fulfilment, promotion and protection of all human rights, including the right to development. They recognized that peace is not only the absence of conflict, but also requires a positive, dynamic participatory process where dialogue is encouraged and conflicts are solved in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation.

4. The Ministers stressed that those purposes and principles inspire the full commitment to multilateralism and the search for a more just and equitable international economic system that offers opportunities to raise the standard of living of our peoples.

5. The Ministers reiterated that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement adopted under the UNFCCC, the New Urban Agenda and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, as well as major outcome documents in relation to countries in special situations, shall be implemented in their integrity and totality, and the commitments enshrined in them shall be honored, in line with the principles of multilateralism and international cooperation.

6. The Ministers welcomed the 75th Anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations and reiterated their commitment to the ideals of the United Nations Charter to ensure that the dignity of every person is respected and to foster the attainment of social progress and better standard of living for all. The Ministers committed to do everything they can to fulfill obligations to their peoples, in this Decade of Action and Delivery for Sustainable Development.

7. The Ministers stressed the critical importance of multilateral and international cooperation as a relevant tool to tackle humanity's challenges and recommitted to the full embrace and strengthening of the multilateral system, particularly of the UN system.
8. The Ministers considered this as a special opportunity to highlight the values, achievements and multilateral spirit of the United Nations. More importantly, they stressed that the international community needs to recognize the UN's pivotal importance in supporting countries to tackle present and future problems and challenges facing humankind, and arriving at their solutions within an overarching framework agreed to multilaterally, in a democratic and equitable way, and inspired by common interests and aspirations of "we the peoples of the United Nations" who need to work, cooperate and exist together in harmony, solidarity and peace.
9. The Ministers expressed solidarity with all countries in the battle against the multidimensional effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and saluted the dedicated and hard-working healthcare professionals, medical researchers and other frontline workers bearing the brunt of the response to the crisis; while also recognizing the contribution of health volunteers in working to support the prevention, detection and reporting of Covid-19, they stressed the need to address the COVID-19 pandemic through a global response based on unity, solidarity and renewed multilateral and international cooperation among States, peoples and generations that enhances the ability and resolve of States and other relevant stakeholders to fully implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
10. The Ministers recalled the adoption of General Assembly resolution [74/306](#) of 11 September, entitled "Comprehensive and coordinated response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic" and recognized the importance of its implementation, and also recalled resolutions [74/270](#) of 3 April 2020, [74/274](#) of 21 April 2020 and [74/307](#) of 15 September 2020.
11. The Ministers recognized the primary responsibility of Governments to adopt and implement responses to the COVID-19 pandemic that are specific to their national context, and that emergency measures, policies and strategies put in place by countries to address and mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 must be targeted, necessary, transparent, non-discriminatory, time-bound, and proportionate.
12. The Ministers expressed concern that the COVID-19 pandemic has undermined many development gains and that the pandemic has brought to the forefront the challenges faced by developing countries, such as frail health systems, increased poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition, insufficient financing and high debt levels, inadequate market access for goods and services, unstable global supply chains, the expanding digital divide, restrictions in accessing needed pharmaceuticals and medical supplies and reductions in revenue from tourism, remittances and exports, among others. In this regard, the Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to take actions needed for coordinated and comprehensive multilateral response to the developmental challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
13. The Ministers expressed concern that the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the challenges faced by people in vulnerable situations, including children, youth, persons with disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDS, older persons, indigenous peoples and local communities, displaced persons, refugees and migrants, and is deepening already existing inequalities and risks reversing the progress in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in recent decades.
14. The Ministers called upon Member States and other stakeholders to prevent, monitor and address the disproportionate effects of the pandemic on older persons, including the particular risks that they face in accessing social protection and health

services, and to ensure that health-care decisions affecting older persons respect their dignity and promote their human rights, including the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

15. The Ministers acknowledged the key leadership role of the World Health Organization (WHO) led by the Director-General, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus and reiterated support for its work in providing information, technical guidance, training and other assistance to developing countries to efficiently respond to the pandemic, and recognizing the central efforts of Member States therein.

16. The Ministers stressed the importance of ensuring global and equitable access to safe, effective, equitable and affordable Covid-19 vaccines at affordable prices and recognize that they should be made global public goods to help overcome the Covid-19 pandemic worldwide and recover the momentum for sustainable development. They also stressed importance of equitable, efficient and timely access to and distribution of preventive tools, laboratory testing, reagents and supporting materials, essential medical supplies, new diagnostics, drugs and future COVID-19 vaccines. The Ministers also called for greater sharing of information and technology for the detection, prevention, treatment and control of the pandemic, and recognized initiatives in this regard, such as the access to Covid-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A), Friends of the COVAX Facility, the Covid-19 Technology Access Pool (C-TAP) and relevant pledging appeals.

17. The Ministers committed to achieving a speedy, inclusive, sustainable and resilient recovery and building back better, as well as pandemic preparedness and the prevention and detection of and response to any future outbreak, putting people at the center of the response, protecting our planet and achieving prosperity through, inter alia, targeted measures to eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions, stable food supply chains, ensured daily livelihoods, strengthened health systems and achievement of universal health coverage, enhanced digital connectivity, high-quality education, productive employment and job creation, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, increased domestic and foreign investment, sustainable consumption and production patterns, strengthened climate adaptation and mitigation capacities, conservation of biodiversity, strengthened means of implementation.

18. The Ministers noted with concern our already daunting development challenges have been exacerbated by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and decades of developmental gains have been undermined. The Ministers underscored that our actions in the coming years will be critical to accelerating our efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda. In this instance, the Ministers reiterate the importance of our work focused on the overarching objective of eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, as well as pursuing sustainable development in its three dimensions, in a balanced, coordinated and integrated manner.

19. The Ministers emphasized the need to address the systemic challenges that have been aggravated by the economic downturn caused by COVID-19, and its impact on global trade and supply chains, commodity prices, capital outflows, currencies depreciation, tourism, remittances, FDI, employment, incomes and fiscal revenues. The Ministers noted with concern that the deterioration of the economic and fiscal conditions, as a result of the pandemic, could significantly increase the number of countries in or at risk of debt distress. The Ministers expressed deep concern about the ability of developing countries, including those hosting refugees, displaced persons and those with a large informal sector to withstand the impact of the COVID-19 shock, and to invest in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In the context of the global pandemic, the Ministers recognized the need to explore avenues for systematic, transparent and coordinated debt relief for all developing countries, including the most vulnerable, especially those with unsustainable debt levels. The

Ministers welcomed the call by the world leaders for a global initiative for debt relief to provide necessary fiscal space through debt restructuring and other additional measures for developing countries, in particular the highly indebted and most vulnerable countries. The Ministers also welcomed the steps taken by the IMF and World Bank to provide liquidity and other support measures to ease the debt burden of developing countries, and called for increased access to concessional finance and long-term loans, including through the issuance of new SDRs, repurposing of existing SDRs, and reallocation of existing unutilized SDRs, as appropriate, taking into account ongoing discussions within the IFIs. The Ministers noted the ongoing discussions regarding emerging initiatives, including the proposal for a creation of Liquidity and Sustainability facility by Economic Commission of Africa and the Fund to Alleviate Covid-19 Economics (FACE), to provide necessary liquidity to the developing countries, upon their request and in accordance with their national priorities, to fight against the Pandemic and achieve sustainable development.

20. The Ministers acknowledged that the Covid-19 pandemic has put a spotlight on the limitations of governments of developing countries to marshal their budgetary resources in times of crisis and that the immense harm done by illicit financial flows limits the ability of developing countries to mobilize domestic resources for longer-term development goals.

21. The Ministers recognized that the Sendai Framework, including its core provision to “build back better”, provides guidance relevant to a sustainable recovery from COVID-19 and also to address underlying drivers of disaster risk in a systemic manner, including epidemic and pandemic prevention and preparedness.

22. The Ministers stressed that a clear mandate should be given for the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development (IATF) to undertake a deeper analysis of the longer-term effects of COVID-19 on the implementation of and follow-up to the Addis Agenda, particularly with respect to progress at the national, regional and global levels.

23. The Ministers emphasized that in many countries migrants make up a disproportionate share of the workforce in sectors that have remained open and active throughout the crisis, while also being over-represented in some sectors hardest hit by the pandemic. The Ministers also noted with concern that measures implemented to stop the spread of the virus such as lockdowns and site closures have at times worsened the living conditions of migrants, and that border closures have also put pressure on job security and increased irregularity; and further noted, with concern, that COVID-19 has emerged as a unique threat for remittances, thus harming the ability of remittance-receiving families to meet basic needs. The Ministers underscored the contribution of migrants to the COVID-19 crisis response and recovery.

24. The Ministers recognized that COVID-19 pandemic significantly underscores humanity’s growing reliance on information and communications technologies for business continuity, employment, education, healthcare, and other services that are vital for all societies. In this regard, they reiterated the importance of ensuring data security and maintaining a stable supply chain of global ICT products and services.

25. The Ministers recognized that substantial digital divides and data inequalities exist within and among countries and regions, and between developed and all developing countries, and that many developing countries lack affordable access to information and communications technologies, and urged Member States and other relevant stakeholders to accelerate the catalytic role that digital technologies play in reducing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education, health, communication, commerce and business continuity and to take concerted action to further digital governance and economy, scientific research, emerging technologies

and new data sources and to build resilient, inclusive and integrated data and statistical systems, under the leadership of national statistical offices, that can respond to the increased and urgent data demands in times of disaster and ensure a path towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

26. The Ministers called on the international community and all relevant stakeholders to scale up cooperation and resource mobilization to support developing countries in their efforts to mitigate the impact of school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, including for the poorest, women and girls, migrants, refugees, displaced persons and persons with disabilities, in accordance with national circumstances, and to facilitate the continuity of education for all through, inter alia, connectivity support, remote and lifelong learning.

27. The Ministers called upon Member States to prevent the harmful effects of the pandemic on children by mitigating the damaging socioeconomic impacts, including by ensuring the continuity of child-centred services on an equal access basis, upholding the right of the child to education and supporting education that is inclusive, equitable and of quality by implementing appropriate measures, including by supporting families in ensuring the return of children, in particular girls and children in vulnerable situations, to school, when it is safe to do so, in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic, and while in confinement, to support school systems, teachers and families in ensuring a reliable source of daily nutrition and using accessible and inclusive distance-learning solutions to close the digital divide, while protecting children from violence, abuse and exploitation in digital contexts, and recalling that no child shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy and family.

28. The Ministers took note of the statement dated 28 April 2020 of the Group of Least Developed Countries on the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and called upon development partners, international organizations and other stakeholders to support the least developed countries in its implementation.

29. The Ministers expressed concern about the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on middle-income countries and underlined the need to work together to protect the development gains thus far achieved, and to build back better in the context of the Decade of Action and Delivery amidst COVID-19. In this regard, the Ministers noted the 5th Ministerial Meeting of the Like-Minded Group of Countries Supporters of Middle-Income Countries held on 02 October 2020, which adopted the Ministerial Declaration that elaborates on the impacts of the pandemic on middle-income countries, and recalls the requests and mandates given to the UN system to address the specific challenges of middle-income countries.

30. The Ministers recognized the outcomes of the virtual Extraordinary G20 Summit under the presidency of Saudi Arabia convened on 26 March 2020, and its call for provision of immediate resources to combat the impacts of COVID-19 including launching the debt suspension initiative (DSSI) and the decision of the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Banks Governors meeting convened on the 14 Oct to extend the initiative until June 2021.

31. The Ministers noted the convening of the Meeting of Heads of State on Financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond on 29 September 2020, which aimed to respond to and explore options to recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

32. The Ministers welcomed the convening by the Government of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, on 29 October 2020, of the virtual Flagship Event under the theme “*Maintaining a Low Carbon Development Path towards the 2030 Agenda in the Era of COVID-19*” on the occasion of Guyana’s 2020 Chairmanship of the Group

of 77 and China, which recognized that both climate change and COVID 19 can impact progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. The Ministers noted that The Flagship Event recognized that a few countries have pioneered workable, home grown models that have incentivized moving to a low carbon growth trajectory while also addressing emission reduction and removal. Guyana's efforts in this regard are recognized through its Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) and payment for forest climate services model between Guyana and Norway which has incentivized sustainable forest management and avoided deforestation. This represents the first national scale model of REDD+ and one of the first national level strategies on low carbon development.

33. The Ministers reiterated that poverty eradication in all its forms and dimensions is a central imperative of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and emphasized the need to address poverty in all its forms and dimensions in order to truly leave no one behind, focused in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable. In this regard, they reaffirmed their commitment to work tirelessly for the full implementation of this Agenda by 2030 in a balanced and integrated manner to achieve sustainable development in its three dimensions and building on the achievements and lessons learned of the Millennium Development Goals and seeking to address their unfinished business. The Ministers emphasized that the international community must address the challenges and needs faced by developing countries, especially countries in special situations, in particular, African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States as well as specific challenges faced by many middle-income countries, conflict and post-conflict countries and countries and peoples living under foreign occupation.

34. The Ministers recognized the importance of promoting socioeconomic development in rural areas as an effective strategy at the global level for the eradication of poverty, including extreme poverty. They stressed that, in many developing countries, poverty is still overwhelmingly concentrated in rural areas, and in this regard, recognized the importance of considering in national plans and policies rural-focused poverty eradication strategies and measures, including increasing investments that bolsters productive capacities and structural transformation of rural economies, bridging the digital divide and improving access to basic services to reduce inequalities.

35. The Ministers recalled that the SDGs are integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development, and in this regard underlined that all SDGs should be treated equally when reviewed in inter-governmentally agreed outcomes.

36. The Ministers reaffirmed in this regard that the HLPF was mandated to provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations for the implementation of sustainable development commitments and that it has a central role in overseeing a network of follow-up and review processes of the 2030 Agenda at the global level, working coherently with the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and other relevant organs and forums, in line with existing mandates. The Ministers welcomed the convening virtually, under the auspices of ECOSOC, of the meeting of the 2020 HLPF from 7 to 16 July 2020 and expressed deep regret that the Forum concluded without the adoption of a Ministerial Declaration.

37. The Ministers commended all the countries that presented voluntary national reviews to highlight the steps taken to implement the 2030 Agenda at the 2020 HLPF, convened under the auspices of ECOSOC. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of voluntary national reviews as a mean to facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

38. The Ministers recalled that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development reaffirms all the principles of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992, in particular the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. They further reaffirmed that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda should be guided by the principles in accordance with its paragraph 74.

39. The Ministers stressed that the end of the first four-year cycle of the HLPF after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda marks an important opportunity to set the stage for a decade for implementation of the Agenda. They noted with concern that, despite significant effort, the current pace and scope of implementation is still quite distant from achieving sustainable development for all, in particular for the poorest and most vulnerable.

40. The Ministers reiterated the continued unwavering commitment of the Group of 77 to further translating ambitions set out in the Agenda into real action. They stressed that implementing the 2030 Agenda at all levels requires provision of means of implementation, and a revitalized global partnership, in accordance with SDG 17. They stressed in this regard that further support is needed from developed countries especially regarding the transfer of technology, capacity building and financing to developing countries.

41. The Ministers expressed their deep concern about the significant impacts of the current challenging global environment on national efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda, including not only economic factors, natural disasters, climate change, environmental degradation, humanitarian crises and conflicts. The Ministers stressed the need for concrete and immediate action to create the necessary enabling environment at all levels for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

42. The Ministers underlined the importance of comprehensive follow-up and review at the global level, as well as the regional level as appropriate, in order to assess progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, ensuring that its overall objectives of poverty eradication in all its forms and dimensions and achieving sustainable development are duly attained. In this regard, they took note of General Assembly resolution [70/299](#) of 29 July 2016 on the Follow-up and Review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the Global Level which underscores the shared vision and aspiration of all States members of the United Nations and States members of the specialized agencies for the crucial path set forth to assess progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. They reiterated and reaffirmed that the implementation and the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda must include and address the severe difficulties faced by countries and peoples living under colonial and foreign occupation and strive to remove the obstacles to the full realization of their right to self-determination and right to development, which adversely affect their economic and social development, as well as their environment and their ability to achieve the sustainable development goals, and ensure that they will not be left behind.

43. The Ministers recalled the reaffirmation by the 2030 Agenda of the need to respect the territorial integrity and political independence of States.

44. The Ministers reiterated their firm belief that all states and stakeholders should devote themselves collectively to the pursuit of “win-win” cooperation for global development on the basis of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits, which can bring huge gains to all countries and all parts of the world in building a community of shared future for humankind.

**45. The Ministers welcomed the adoption of the Resolution International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development 2021 by the 74th Session of**

**UN General Assembly in 2019.** They recognized the important role of creative economy as a driver for inclusive and sustainable development growth that may assist developing countries in achieving SDGs and, in this regard, reaffirmed the importance to create enabling environment for the promotion of creative economy, among others by encouraging creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship, supporting the development of cultural institutions and cultural industries, providing technical and vocational training for culture professionals and increasing employment opportunities in the cultural and creative sector.

46. The Ministers emphasized that digital cooperation can contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and, in this regard, were committed to achieve universal digital connectivity, which is important for developing countries to bridge the digital divide. They also recognized that UN can play a key role in enhancing digital cooperation by enhancing greater organizational and human capacity on digital issues and improving its ability to respond to Member States' need for technology transfer and capacity building.

47. The Ministers underlined that the UN Decade of Family Farming (2019–2028), aims to raise the profile of the role of family farming in contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to the achievement of food security and improved nutrition.

48. The Ministers stressed that Financing for development is key to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They highlighted the importance of assessing progress, identifying obstacles and challenges to the implementation of the financing for development outcomes, addressing new and emerging topics of relevance to the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda as the need arises, and providing policy recommendations for action by the international community, in particular regarding the support of developed countries for developing countries.

49. The Ministers welcomed the fifth ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development, a crucial platform for financing for development, held virtually 23 April 2020, and called for the implementation of its inter-governmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations.

50. The Ministers called on the United Nations system, in consultation with the international financial institutions, to develop transparent measurements of progress on sustainable development that go beyond per capita income, building on existing initiatives as appropriate. These should recognize the multidimensional nature of poverty and the social, economic and environmental dimensions of domestic output and structural gaps at all levels. In this regard, the Ministers underscored the importance of achieving concrete progress in this issue.

51. The Ministers recognized the importance of developing integrated national financing frameworks, in support of nationally owned sustainable development strategies, in order to further implement the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, aiming at effectively mobilizing and aligning a wide range of financing sources and instruments with the 2030 Agenda, and to make use of the full potential of all means of implementation.

52. The Ministers underscored the need to provide fiscally sustainable and nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, well designed, efficiently operated, responsive to shocks and sustainable in the long term, stressing that investing in quality, accessible, affordable, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including transport, energy, water and sanitation for all, is vital to the achievement of many of our goals.

53. The Ministers reaffirmed the paramount importance of Official Development Assistance (ODA) in supporting the sustainable development needs of developing countries, in particular countries in special situations and those facing specific challenges.

54. The Ministers reaffirmed that ODA will remain the main channel for international cooperation and urged developed countries to fulfil their unmet ODA commitments to developing countries, in keeping with their previous undertakings, and to scale up those efforts to play a meaningful role in eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including to achieve the national target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to the least developed countries. They expressed concern that net Official Development Assistance decreased 0.6 per cent in real terms in 2017 from 2016. They noted that donor countries have shifted more ODA resources to funds for hosting and processing refugees within donor countries themselves in recent years. This shift in ODA resources towards humanitarian and crisis situations is not consistent with long-term and sustainable approach to financing development needed to achieve 2030 Agenda targets. The Ministers reaffirmed that ODA should be aligned with national priorities and development strategies of the recipient countries. The Ministers were concerned by the failure to increase concessional finance to the countries most in need, as well as the declining trend in the share of country programmable aid in ODA.

55. The Ministers reiterated that international development cooperation, especially North-South cooperation, remains a fundamental catalyst to sustainable development. As North-South cooperation is the main channel of development financing, the international community must uphold the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities” (CBDR) and push North-South cooperation to continue to play its key role. Developed countries should bear the primary responsibility in financing for development.

56. The Ministers reiterated their position that South-South cooperation is a complement to, rather than a substitute for, North-South cooperation and reaffirmed that South-South cooperation is a collective endeavor of developing countries. The Ministers emphasized that South-South cooperation deserves its own separate and independent promotion, as reaffirmed in the Nairobi outcome document. In this context, the Ministers stressed that South-South cooperation and its agenda must be driven by the countries of the South and should continue to be guided by the set of 14 principles for South-South cooperation contained in the Declaration adopted on the occasion of their thirty-second Annual Ministerial Meeting held at UN Headquarters in New York on 26 September 2008.

57. The Ministers recalled the convening of the Second UN High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation in Buenos Aires from 20 to 22 March 2019, and welcomed the adoption of the Buenos Aires outcome document, and encouraged its full and effective implementation, building on the Buenos Aires Plan of Action and the Nairobi outcome document.

58. The Ministers reiterated their strong support to the mandate of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) and stressed that the Office is the articulator of South-South cooperation in the United Nations system. They appreciated the countries of the South who have stepped up their cooperation with UNOSSC.

59. The Ministers invited the Member States to come forward with an offer of venue for hosting the thirteenth session of the Intergovernmental Follow-up and Coordination Committee on South-South Cooperation (IFCC-XIII) in 2021. They also invited Member States to host regularly high-level meetings of the Group on key issues of interest to the South, as well as sectoral meetings in various fields of

cooperation including South-South forums for parliamentarians, mayors, youth, media and civil society and other thematic meetings as envisaged in the Doha Plan of Action adopted by the Second South Summit held in Doha, Qatar, from 12 to 16 June 2005, and look forward to the continued support of the UN Office for South-South Cooperation in this regard.

60. The Ministers reaffirmed the generous offer of the Government of Uganda to host the Third South Summit noting its postponement to 2021 and invited the Chair of the Group of 77 and the Executive Secretary, in close cooperation with the host country, to resume preparations for the Summit, devising its modalities, including timing, venue, format, agenda, outcome and other necessary arrangements required for the Summit. In this context, the Ministers recalled the historic importance of this largest gathering of the Global South, and welcomed generous contributions to the Executive Secretariat in support of the preparatory process of the Summit.

61. The Ministers noted the various experiences and home-grown approaches to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and reiterated the importance of learning and sharing of best practices including through North-South, South-South and Triangular Cooperation, including, among others, Thailand's initiative on "Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) for SDGs Partnerships", as well as the importance of concrete collaboration between Member States and the United Office of South-South Cooperation, including the South-South-in-Action series on Thailand's application of the SEP, Bangladesh's citizen-friendly public service innovation, Cuba's best practices in health, education, climate change and disaster reduction, and agriculture sectors, as well as UAE's best practices through the Global South-South Development Expo and the launch of the francophone network of actors for South-South and tripartite cooperation in Morocco on 18 July 2018. They also noted other experiences that enhance South-South Cooperation, inter alia, PETROCARIBE by Venezuela, and the Singapore Cooperation Programme by Singapore.

62. The Ministers recognized the important role of the South Centre as a think tank of the countries of the South and emphasized its importance in enhancing South-South Cooperation through promoting solidarity and mutual understanding among the countries and peoples of the South, as well as providing the intellectual and policy support required by developing countries for collective and individual action in the international arena.

63. The Ministers underlined that while developing countries seek to maximize their domestic public resources in order to achieve 2030 Agenda, through broadening the tax base, there is a need to continue addressing the international dimension of taxation. Furthermore, ODA in support of domestic resource mobilization remains small. In this regard, the Ministers called on the developed countries to continue to increase their contributions to revenue mobilization capacity building of the developing countries.

64. The Ministers reiterated the need to strengthen international cooperation on tax matters, recognizing with concern that there is still no single global inclusive forum for international tax cooperation at the intergovernmental level. In that regard, they reiterated the need to fully upgrade the Committee of Experts in Tax Matters to an intergovernmental body with experts representing their respective governments. The Ministers stressed that the most relevant issues are the challenges posed by the lack of international tax cooperation, the existing illicit financial flows and tax evasion. They reiterated that appropriate emphasis must be placed on an enabling global environment and global partnership for development, balanced against the increased emphasis being placed on domestic resource mobilization. In this regard, they underlined that it is counterproductive to highlight the importance of domestic

resource mobilization in developing countries, while at the same time not robustly tackle areas that impede their ability to capture necessary resources.

65. The Ministers noted with appreciation that, in response to the call of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Republic of India was the first developing country to make a voluntary contribution to the Trust Fund for International Cooperation in Tax Matters, the only such contribution since its establishment, and reiterated their appeal to Member States, relevant organizations and other potential donors to consider contributing generously to the Trust Fund for International Cooperation in Tax Matters established by the Secretary-General in order to supplement regular budgetary resources, and invited the Secretary-General to intensify efforts to that end.

66. The Ministers acknowledged the ongoing discussion for a consensus-based solution on tax measures in response to the digitalization of the economy and stress the need for thorough analysis of its implications for developing countries and the need for the voices of developing countries to be prioritized in all tax norms setting processes.

67. The Ministers noted with concern the steady increase in the illicit flow of funds, particularly from developing countries, and the negative impact it poses with respect to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals, the rule of law and the security of nations. The Ministers recognized that States continue to face challenges in the recovery and return of stolen assets owing to, inter alia, differences in legal systems, the complexity of multijurisdictional investigation and prosecution, divergent interpretations of the provisions of the Convention, lack of familiarity with the mutual legal assistance procedures of other States parties and difficulties in identifying and exposing the flow of the proceeds of corruption. The Ministers expressed concern that a large proportion of the proceeds of corruption, including those emanating from transnational bribery-related cases, have yet to be returned to the countries of origin.

68. The Ministers urged all States to scale up the level of cooperation to curb illicit financial flows and recover the proceeds of crime, including embezzled public funds, stolen assets and unaccounted-for assets that are found in safe havens, and to demonstrate strong commitment to ensuring the return of such assets to the countries of origin. The Ministers also urged the international community to enhance its support for the efforts of Member States to develop and strengthen capacities in various areas, inter alia, their national tax authorities, legal and regulatory institutions, businesses and financial institutions, and for increased public awareness to enhance accountability mechanisms and help to combat illicit financial flows. In addition, the Ministers called upon States to consider the possibility of waiving or reducing to the barest minimum the processes and costs of the recovery of assets, in particular by reducing the administrative and legal bottlenecks in the recovery of illicit assets.

69. The Ministers stressed the importance of eliminating safe havens that create incentives for the transfer abroad of stolen assets and illicit financial flows. They reiterated their commitment to working to strengthen regulatory frameworks at all levels to further increase transparency and the accountability of financial institutions, the corporate sector and public administrations. The Ministers reaffirmed that they would strengthen international cooperation and national institutions to combat money-laundering and the financing of terrorism.

70. The Ministers emphasized the importance of improving investment and financing into sectors that are critical to accelerating the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in developing countries. They encouraged in this regard, private and public sectors investors to take steps to address SDG investment gaps.

71. The Ministers stressed that the private sector should contribute in mobilizing resources needed to finance sustainable development, including through blended finance, where applicable. They emphasized the need for accountability and transparency as well as the commitment towards a long-term approach.

72. The Ministers called on the international community to align financial markets with sustainable development. They underlined that States should demonstrate their willingness to implement the commitments they have made, both in the national and international levels, in order to create the necessary conditions and the enabling environment for private resources to be adequately channeled towards long-term sustainable development goals. Foreign direct investment must be increased and become more long-term oriented and aligned with national development priorities to support developing countries in implementing the SDGs.

73. The Ministers stressed the importance of national policies and development strategies, while respecting each country's policy space, priorities and leadership to implement policies for poverty eradication and sustainable development; and the need for an enabling international economic environment, including coherent and mutually supporting world trade, monetary and financial systems, and strengthened and enhanced global economic governance.

74. The Ministers emphasized that international trade is an engine for inclusive economic growth and poverty eradication as well as an important source to finance development and achieving sustainable development. In this context, the Ministers stressed the significance of the principle of special and differential treatment for developing countries in harnessing the developmental benefit of international trade, to facilitate the integration of their economies to the multilateral trading system and the fulfillment of the obligations and commitments under the World Trade Organization (WTO). The issues of particular concern to developing countries should be addressed, especially as related to sectors of special interest to them with a view to enhance their capacities to finance development and to diversify their economies.

75. The Ministers reaffirmed the central role of the WTO in today's global economy, and their commitment to ensure full implementation and enforcement of existing WTO rules, as well as their determination to work together to further strengthen the WTO. They also reaffirmed that the WTO provides the multilateral framework of rules governing international trade relations, an essential mechanism for preventing and resolving trade disputes, and a forum for addressing trade related issues that affect all WTO members. They remained firmly committed to a rules-based, transparent, non-discriminatory, open and inclusive multilateral trading system as embodied in the WTO.

76. The Ministers maintained that a successful conclusion of the Doha Development Round launched in 2001 can only be achieved if the outcomes thereof, significantly address the imbalances and inequities in the multilateral trading system. It is a matter of deep concern that the Doha Development Agenda, which aims at addressing the systemic imbalances in the multilateral trading system and ensuring more integration of the developing countries in international trade, has not been concluded.

77. Furthermore, in the spirit of globalization and interdependence, the Ministers reiterated the need to achieve an outcome that strengthens the multilateral trading system under the WTO and continues to fight all forms of protectionism. They expressed their deep concern with the increase in the unilateral and protectionist measures, which run counter to the spirit and rules of the WTO and the purposes and principles of the UN, and that will not only undermine the multilateral trading system, but also will lead to negative impact on access of the developing countries' exports to the global markets.

78. The Ministers reaffirmed that the WTO dispute settlement system is a cornerstone of the MTS and promotes predictability in international trade. They noted with concern the impasse in the selection process for new Appellate Body Members that can paralyze the dispute settlement system and undermine the rights and obligations of all Members, and therefore urged all Members to engage constructively to address this challenge as a matter of priority.

79. The Ministers emphasized the importance of facilitating the accession of developing countries to the WTO, recognizing the contribution that their accession would make to the rapid and full integration of those countries into the multilateral trading system. They urged in this regard the acceleration of the accession process on a technical and legal basis and in an expeditious and transparent manner for developing countries that have applied for membership in the WTO, and reaffirmed the importance of the Organization's decision WT/L/508/Add.1 of 25 July 2012 on accession by the least developed countries.

80. The Ministers reaffirmed their full support to the rules-based multilateral trading system with the WTO at its core and reaffirmed their commitment to work constructively with all WTO Members on the necessary reform of the Organization, with a view to better addressing current and future challenges in international trade, thus enhancing its relevance and effectiveness. The reform must, inter alia, preserve the centrality, core values and fundamental principles of the WTO, and consider the interests of all its members.

81. The Ministers stressed that emerging debt challenges and vulnerabilities have intensified across developing countries in recent years, several developing countries are fiscally constrained in generating resources needed for implementation of the 2030 agenda due to their debt burdens. Many natural resources producing countries have seen rapid debt accumulation as governments have attempted to cushion the shock from falling commodity prices. Strains are also evident in several countries experiencing conflicts or political unrest, and in some small island developing States, which remain vulnerable to natural disasters. In this context, risks of a potential renewed cycle of debt crises and economic disruption, pose severe challenge to the achievement of the SDGs. The Ministers underlined the need to explore the means and instruments needed to achieve debt sustainability as well as the necessary measures to reduce the indebtedness of the developing countries,

82. The Ministers recognized that borrowing is an important tool for financing investment critical to achieving sustainable development and noted with concern that public and private debt levels and vulnerabilities have continued to rise in a growing number of developing countries. In this regard, while debt levels in the majority of countries remain sustainable, risks of a potential renewed cycle of debt crises and economic disruption pose severe challenges to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In this respect, the Ministers recognize that a large gap between public resources and financing needs persists in many countries and is widening in the wake of the pandemic. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of debt restructurings being timely, orderly, effective, fair and negotiated in good faith. The Ministers reiterated that debtors and creditors must work together to prevent and resolve unsustainable debt situations. Maintaining sustainable debt levels is the responsibility of the borrowing countries; however, they acknowledge that lenders also have a responsibility to lend in a way that does not undermine a country's debt sustainability.

83. The Ministers recalled that the 2008 world financial and economic crisis highlighted the regulatory gaps in the international financial system. The structural reform of the international financial system and the relevant institutions is urgently

needed to avoid recurrence of crises that could have severe negative impacts on the economies of the developing countries.

84. Moreover, they reiterated the prerequisite of making the international financial system and the relevant institutions more responsive to the needs and concerns of developing countries including broadening and strengthening the participation in the global economic governance and the international economic decision-making.

85. The Ministers highlighted resolution 69/319, which further established that sovereign debt restructuring processes should be guided by basic international principles of law, such as sovereignty, good faith, transparency, legitimacy, equitable treatment and sustainability. The resolution reflected the continued concerns about the long-term debt sustainability in the context of a continued global economic fragility.

86. The Ministers stressed the need to enhance capacity-building at all levels as an essential prerequisite to achieving sustainable development and poverty eradication. In this regard, they called upon developed countries to step up support to developing countries in order to help them fulfill their capacity- building gap.

87. The Ministers stressed that technology transfer is one of the core priorities of the developing countries in implementing the 2030 Agenda. They reiterated the need to accelerate the transfer of technology on favourable terms, including on concessional and preferential terms.

88. The Ministers reaffirmed that enhancing capacity building in science, technology and innovation is fundamental for the progress of the developing countries in implementing the 2030 Agenda. In this regard, there is an urgent need for allocation of financing for the fulfillment of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism's (TFM) mandate. They recalled however that limitations in the capacity and speed of fixed-broadband connections in the developing countries will affect the quality and functionality of this development tool and widen the already existing inequalities.

89. The Ministers stressed that climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time and its widespread, unprecedented impacts disproportionately burden all developing countries and in particular the poorest and most vulnerable among them. Extreme natural disasters can affect the environment, the economy and society and reverse hard-earned developmental gains overnight. They reiterated the need for an effective and progressive response to the urgent threat of climate change on the basis of the best available scientific knowledge.

90. The Ministers welcomed the full operationalization of the local communities and indigenous peoples' platform for the acknowledgement of their valuable voice and support of the spreading of their knowledge in the fight of climate change.

91. The Ministers reaffirmed that the Paris Agreement, adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), is the collective achievement of all Parties, and seeks to enhance the implementation of the Convention, in accordance with its objectives, principles and provisions, in particular equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances, and the right to development, in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty. It is also essential to maintain focus on the implementation of existing commitments by developed countries in the pre-2020 period, acknowledging that the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol will enter into force on 31 December 2020. They stressed that global effort to fight climate change is an irreversible process that cannot be overlooked nor postponed. The Ministers also called for increased action to address loss and damage and the adverse effects of climate change from extreme and slow onset events,

including through the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts.

92. The Ministers encouraged all parties to fully implement the Paris Agreement and parties of the UNFCCC that have not yet done so to deposit their instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, where appropriate, as soon as possible. They also highlighted the importance to hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change. Parties aim to reach global peaking of greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible, recognizing that peaking will take longer for developing countries Parties, and to undertake rapid reductions thereafter in accordance with the best available science, so as to achieve a balance between anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks of greenhouse gases in the second half of this century, on the basis of equity, and in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty.

93. The Ministers noted the postponement of the COP 26 and anticipated its convening from 1–12 November 2021. They stressed the importance of ensuring that the outcomes reflect the delicate balance of the Paris Agreement, including issues related to adaptation, mitigation and means of implementation. They stressed the fact that these outcomes should not renegotiate nor reinterpret the Paris Agreement, as the process under the Paris Agreement is irreversible. The Ministers highlighted the importance of reflecting the commitment of all Parties to fully implement the Agreement within their respective responsibilities and capabilities with developed countries taking the lead both on action and support, in line with the UNFCCC.

94. The Ministers called for mobilizing further action and support, in line with the UNFCCC and its Paris Agreement, for climate change adaptation, mitigation, and loss and damage, taking into account the specific needs and special circumstances of developing countries, especially those particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. They also called for increased efforts to mobilize and enhance access to climate finance, including public and private, domestic and international, bilateral and multilateral, as well as alternative sources of finance.

95. The Ministers stressed the importance of finance as a cornerstone to ensure the success and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement and of the provision of adequate, predictable and sustainable financial resources to developing countries, in line with the Convention and its Paris Agreement, to enhance developing countries actions in mitigation and adaptation. Developing countries are already making significant efforts and all means of implementation are essential to assist and enable them to make their contributions under the Paris Agreement. The Ministers expressed their deep concern regarding the shortfalls in resources of the financial mechanism of the UNFCCC, in particular the GCF and the GEF, and stressed the urgency of a successful and ambitious Replenishment Pledging Conference.

96. The Ministers expressed their deep concern on the recent development in some developed countries in relation to fulfilling their commitments under the Paris Agreement, in particular the announcement of withdrawal from the Agreement. They stressed that the global effort to combat climate change is an irreversible process that should not be undermined or weakened, and highlighted the expectation that developed countries should fulfil their leadership role through more ambitious mitigation targets and financial support to developing countries in line with priorities of developing countries.

97. The Ministers emphasized that developed countries shall continue to take the key leading role on mitigation by undertaking and increasing economy-wide absolute

emission reduction targets for their pledges and nationally determined contributions (NDCs). For developing countries adaptation to climate change is a priority, and a key component of the implementation of the Paris Agreement. In this regard adequate capacity-building, transfer of technology and financing support for developing countries according to historic responsibilities and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities for climate action is critical and should be based on and respond to national needs, and foster country ownership. The process of capacity-building must be participatory, country-driven, and cross-cutting. Enhanced financial and technological support coupled with knowledge and skills transfer from developed countries will allow for effective implementation and enhanced ambition of developing countries. Multilaterally agreed modalities are needed to track the delivery of \$100 billion per year in climate finance by 2020. Furthermore, additional and scaled up finance that is secure, predictable and sustainable is crucial for developing countries in the post-2020 context. In concrete baseline target for post-2020 financing with progression from \$100 billion per year is needed to prevent backsliding and build trust.

98. The Ministers stressed that climate finance must not be double counted as official development assistance and must therefore be considered as new and additional to such assistance.

99. The Ministers having recognized that the importance of planet Earth and its ecosystems, are our home and that “Mother Earth” is a common expression in a number of countries and regions, noting that some countries recognize the rights of nature in the context of the promotion of sustainable development, and expressing the conviction that, in order to achieve a just balance among the economic, social and environmental needs of present and future generations, it is necessary to promote harmony with nature.

100. The Ministers expressed regret that the interactive dialogue on Harmony with Nature scheduled for the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly was cancelled owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. They reiterated their support for the continuation of the dialogue on harmony with nature in the future recognizing the need to mobilize financial resources, including to the Voluntary Trust Fund established for that purpose and to achieve sustainable development in harmony with nature.

101. The Ministers recalled the common determination to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, ensuring that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature. The Ministers stressed the need to accelerate implementation of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) Patterns with developed countries taking the lead. They further stressed that developing countries need financial and technical assistance to strengthen their scientific and technological capacity to move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production.

102. The Ministers recognized that protecting ecosystems and avoiding harmful practices against animals, plants, microorganisms and non-living environments contributes to the coexistence of humankind in harmony with nature.

103. The Ministers recognized the need for a broader and a more people-centered preventive approach to disaster risk and that disaster risk reduction practices need to be multi-hazard and multi-sectoral, inclusive and accessible in order to be efficient and effective. In this regard, the Ministers recalled the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, reaffirming that disaster-prone developing countries, in particular the LDCs, SIDS, LLDCs and African countries, as well as MICs facing specific challenges, need particular attention in view of their higher vulnerability and

risk levels, which often greatly exceed their capacity to respond to and recover from disasters, and recognizing also that similar attention and appropriate assistance should also be extended to other disaster-prone countries with specific characteristics, such as archipelagic countries, as well as countries with extensive coastlines.

104. The Ministers reiterated that urgent and significant actions are needed to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity, protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species. They expressed their deep concern that up to one million species currently face the threat of extinction, more than any other time in human history. They urged the international community to strengthen its efforts to halt the biodiversity loss and protect the ecosystems. They welcomed the 14th Meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, on 17–30 November 2018 and expressed their support for a post-2020 global biodiversity framework that addresses the three objectives of the CBD in a balanced manner, that contributes to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and places the global community on a path towards realizing the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity.

105. The Ministers welcomed the convening of the Summit on biodiversity on 30 September 2020, at the level of Heads of State and Government, in order to highlight the urgency of action at the highest levels. The Ministers also looked forward to the convening of the 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Kunming, China from 17–30 May 2021, which is mandated to update the Convention’s strategic plan and adopt a post-2020 global biodiversity framework, as a follow-up for the next decade, considering the 2050 Vision of the CBD strategic plan “Living in Harmony with Nature”.

106. The Ministers reaffirmed the necessity of fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources. They welcomed the increase in parties to the Nagoya Protocol.

107. The Ministers acknowledged the contribution from indigenous peoples and local communities whose traditional knowledge, including traditional knowledge associated to genetic resources, and practices are relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.

108. The Ministers expressed their deep concern about the continuous illicit poaching and trafficking of wildlife, with nearly 7,000 species of animals and plants reported in illegal trade, which continues to thwart conservation efforts. Strong international and local action is still needed to curtail the illegal trade in certain species, particularly ivory.

109. The Ministers recognized the importance of promoting efforts in the area of ecosystem restoration, as an integral part of the promotion of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda. In this regard, they supported the discussions towards the establishment of a “United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030”, as a framework to boost the advancement of existing mandates and commitments in this field.

110. The Ministers recalled the importance of oceans for sustainable development as embodied in Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, various decisions taken by the former Commission on Sustainable Development, as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including Goal 14 Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources. Oceans, seas, islands and coastal areas form an integrated and essential component of the Earth’s ecosystem and are critical for global food security and for sustaining economic prosperity and the well-being of many national economies, particularly in developing countries. The Ministers further recalled that, in this context, targets related to means of implementation including

target 14.a, related to increasing scientific knowledge, developing research capacities and transferring marine technology in order to improve ocean health and to enhance the contribution of marine biodiversity to the development of developing countries, in particular SIDS and LDCs, are crucial for the achievement of sustainable development.

111. In this context, the Ministers welcome the proposed convening of the 2nd UN Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, sea and marine resources for sustainable development. They reiterated their strong support for the Outcome of the 1st UN Conference: “Our Ocean, Our Future: Call for Action” which raises awareness of the commitments needed to achieve the targets of Goal 14 within the timelines and stressed the need to sustain action over the long term to address the causes that impair the irreplaceable role and the health of the Ocean. The “Call for Action” and the voluntary commitments announced at the conference are just one step and one way forward to conserve and sustainably use the ocean. The Ministers reiterated the importance to embark collectively in building commitments and in taking actions beyond those mentioned in the Call for Action.

112. The Ministers stressed the need for the comprehensive global regime to better address the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. They stressed the importance of the adoption of resolution [72/249](#) of 24 December 2017, wherein the General Assembly decided to convene an Intergovernmental Conference, under the auspices of the United Nations to elaborate the text of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, with a view to developing the instrument as soon as possible. In this context, the Ministers underlined the importance of this achievement and welcomed the holding of three substantive sessions of the Intergovernmental Conference at the UN headquarters in New York, and commended the fruitful discussions that took place, reiterating the need for all relevant stakeholders to build on these discussions to advance this important process following the right pace, with a view to adopting such an instrument by 2021 during IGC4.

113. The Ministers reiterated that such an instrument must encompass the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, including marine genetic resources (MGRs), and the question of the sharing of benefits, measures such as area-based management tools (ABMTs), including marine protected areas (MPAs), environmental impact assessments (EIAs) and capacity-building and the transfer of marine technology, without prejudice to the coastal States’ sovereign rights over their respective continental shelf within and beyond 200 nautical miles and the Exclusive Economic Zone.

114. The Ministers recognized that neither participation in the intergovernmental conference nor its outcome may affect the legal status of non-parties to the Convention or any other related agreements with regard to those instruments, or the legal status of parties to the Convention or any other related agreements with regard to those instruments, as agreed by the General Assembly in paragraph 10 of resolution [72/249](#).

115. The Ministers firmly reiterated that the principle of common heritage of mankind should guide and underpin the new legal regime for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, including the access and sharing of benefits of MGRs. They are of the view that this principle provides a legal foundation for a fair and equitable regime that would allow all countries to benefit from the potential that marine biodiversity represents in terms

of global food security and economic prosperity, and to address the challenges of conservation and sustainable use of MGRs of areas beyond national jurisdictions.

116. The Ministers emphasized that capacity building and transfer of technology should be promoted and carried out on fair, favorable and reasonable terms and conditions, especially with regards to developing countries. Furthermore, they highlighted the importance of encouraging international cooperation at all levels, including North-South/South-South cooperation and partnerships with relevant stakeholders.

117. The Ministers underscored that ABMTs, including MPAs, which should be established on the basis of existing internationally recognized criteria, play an important role for, and should have as a main objective, the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. They expressed the view that the protection and preservation of the marine environment, inclusiveness, transparency, and their precautionary approach taking into account best available science, are principles that should guide the establishment of ABMTs, including MPAs.

118. The Ministers recalled that the legal bases for the conduct of EIAs are reflected in the provisions of UNCLOS, in particular articles 204 and 206, and in this regard the Ministers expressed the importance of the liability for damage to the marine environment.

119. The Ministers stressed the need for mandatory and voluntary funding, in support of the implementation of the Internationally Legally Binding Instrument, to enable developing States to fulfill their obligations and secure their rights in the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of the Ocean in the ABNJ.

120. The Ministers underlined that desertification, land degradation and drought are major environmental, economic and social challenges for global sustainable development.

121. The Ministers expressed deep concern on the magnitude, frequency and intensity of droughts as well as their economic and human costs. Noting with appreciation the ongoing implementation of the Drought Initiative adopted by the Conference of the Parties, the Ministers committed to pursue efforts to develop and implement national drought management policies, as well as the establishment and strengthening of comprehensive drought monitoring, preparedness and early warning systems.

122. The Ministers welcomed the 14th session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification held in New Delhi, India, from 2 to 13 September 2019, and its outcomes. They took note with appreciation of the adoption of the New Delhi Declaration as well as the Legacy Programme tabled by the Government of India to address land restoration, biodiversity conservation and carbon sequestration. The Ministers reaffirmed that addressing desertification and drought and progressing towards achieving the voluntary land degradation neutrality can yield multiple benefits in terms of food security and water availability, building resilience to climatic shocks, sequestering and preventing carbon emissions, all of which would thereby serve as an accelerator of the achievement of related SDGs.

123. The Ministers expressed their deep concern about the continuous trend of land degradation in which about one fifth of the Earth's land surface covered by vegetation showed persistent and declining trends in productivity. They stressed that in some cases, advanced stages of land degradation are leading to desertification. In this context, it is significant to continue combatting desertification, restoring degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, especially in developing countries. They recognized that the Land Degradation

Neutrality Fund, a unique public-private partnership, is an innovative model that can be replicated and provide a vehicle for the increased commitment of private capital to land management and restoration.

124. The Ministers recognized sand and dust storms as a serious challenge to sustainable development in the affected countries and regions. They called upon the United Nations system to play its role in advancing international cooperation and support to combat sand and dust storms and invited all relevant bodies, agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations and all other related organizations to integrate into their respective cooperation frameworks and operational programmes measures and actions aimed at combating sand and dust storms, including the following measures: enhancing capacity-building at the national level; the development and implementation of regional and sub-regional programmes and projects; the sharing of information, best practices and experiences and the transferring of technology; efforts to control and prevent the main factors of sand and dust storms; and the development of early warning systems as tools. They also stressed the importance of addressing the socioeconomic and environmental challenges of the affected countries in the context of the SDGs.

125. The Ministers encouraged developed countries and other stakeholders to sustain and increase their transfer of technology and the provision of funds oriented to addressing desertification, land degradation and drought, particularly in support of the national efforts of affected countries and in light of the cost-effectiveness of implementing pre-emptive measures instead of restoring degraded land.

126. The Ministers recognized that the UN Forum on Forests, with its universal membership and comprehensive mandate, plays a vital role in addressing challenges and issues relating to forests in a holistic and integrated manner and in promoting policy coordination and cooperation to achieve the sustainable management of all types of forests and of trees outside forests. They encouraged other forest-related forums, initiatives and processes to cooperate with the Forum to achieve sustainable forest management.

127. The Ministers stressed that the full implementation of Global Forest Goal 4 and its five associated targets constitutes a common aspiration to deliver a real impact on the ground, to catalyze and facilitate the mobilization of increased, predictable and sustaining financing from all sources, including in ODA, to adequately carry out sustainable forest management at all levels, in particular for developing countries. They reiterated that the adequate and timely implementation of the UNSPF is fundamental for developing countries. In this regard, they highlighted the important issue of financing and the need to recognize major gaps on current allocation of resources.

128. The Ministers called on the international community to restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation, reforestation and conservation globally. While protecting areas in forest and terrestrial ecosystems is on the rise and forest loss has slowed, other facets of terrestrial conservation continue to need accelerated efforts to protect biodiversity, land productivity and species and genetic resources.

129. The Ministers emphasized that water is critical for sustainable development and the eradication of poverty and hunger and is indispensable for human development, health and wellbeing and a vital element in achieving the SDGs and other relevant goals in the social, environmental and economic fields.

130. The Ministers expressed their deep concern that lack of access to a safe drinking water source, basic sanitation and sound hygiene, water-related disasters, water scarcity and water pollution will be further exacerbated by urbanization, population growth, desertification, drought and other extreme weather events and climate

change, as well as by the lack of capacity to ensure integrated water resource management. They stressed that developing countries need capacity building and transfer of environmentally sound technologies to achieve efficiency in water management and reiterated that ODA for the water sector should be increased.

131. The Ministers expressed their concerns that water stress is above 70 percent in some countries, including Northern Africa, Western Asia and Central and Southern Asia and South America, as well as the Lake Chad Region, which provides strong indication of future water scarcity. The Ministers acknowledged the additional challenges facing countries suffering from water scarcity and concerned with the impacts of such challenges including, inter-alia, on their ability to achieve the SDGs.

132. The Ministers recognized that the World Water Forum, since it first convened in Marrakesh, Morocco, in 1997, has contributed to international dialogue on water and has promoted local, national and regional action on integrated and sustainable water resources management worldwide.

133. The Ministers recalled that the International Decade “Water for Sustainable Development” 2018–2028 aims to further cooperation and partnership at all levels in order to help achieve internationally agreed water-related goals and targets, including those contained in the 2030 Agenda. The Ministers recognized the leading role of Tajikistan in this regard.

134. The Ministers reiterated the need to commit to improving cooperation across borders, in transboundary waters, in accordance with applicable international law.

135. The Ministers welcomed in this regard, the endorsement by the African Heads of State and Government of the Inter-Basin Water Transfer Initiative, as a Pan African project to restore Lake Chad and promote its navigation, industrial and economic development, and encouraged relevant UN entities and development partners to support such African-oriented initiatives for stabilization, recovery and climate resilience in the region.

136. The Ministers stressed the necessity of ensuring universal access to affordable, reliable and renewable energy for all and the need for strengthened political will and increased levels of investment and action by all stakeholders to increase access, on mutually agreed terms, to clean energy research and technology, according to national plans and policies and with a view to transfer the relevant technologies to the developing countries. They reiterated that international cooperation should be strengthened to assist developing countries in achieving this target as well as in expanding infrastructure and upgrading technology for supplying renewable and sustainable energy services for all in developing countries.

137. The Ministers noted with appreciation that the transformation of the world’s energy systems is being accelerated by advances in technology, rapid declines in the cost of renewable energy, deployment of least-cost decentralized solutions, policy support, new business models and sharing of best practices. In this regard, they welcomed the establishment of the International Solar Alliance as an international organization. They note with appreciation the work of the Global Energy Interconnection Development and Cooperation Organization (GEIDCO) and of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) and the Biofuture Platform. The Ministers took note of the G-20 Ministerial meeting on energy and its outcomes, held on September 28, 2020, hosted by Saudi Arabia.

138. The Ministers further reaffirmed their support to sustainable energy access in accordance with national needs, in particular for Least Developing Countries. They expressed their will to tackle the energy access challenge by identifying the specific needs of each country by mobilizing technical, financial assistance and tools to deploy sustainable energy solutions to tackle the energy access deficit.

139. The Ministers affirmed that States have, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental and developmental policies, and the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to ecosystems of other States or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction. They reaffirmed the importance of the protection of planet Earth and its ecosystems as our common home and that “Mother Earth” is a common expression in a number of countries and regions.

140. The Ministers also reaffirmed that the right of peoples and nations to permanent sovereignty over natural wealth and resources must be exercised in the interest of their national development and of the well-being of the people of the State concerned.

141. While emphasizing the sovereignty of their countries and peoples over their natural wealth, the Ministers are also aware of the duty to respect protect, conserve and sustainably manage and use these resources and ensure the conditions for nature and ecosystems to have the capacity to regenerate, for the benefit of present and future generations. The Ministers also recognized that the sustainable use of natural resources is an effective way to achieve economic growth in harmony with nature while contributing to the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions and environmental degradation.

142. The Ministers reiterated the importance of promoting and taking concrete action for the full, effective and timely implementation of the New Urban Agenda adopted in Quito, Ecuador, at all levels while urging the United Nations development system to maintain support for its implementation. They recalled that many cities are facing challenges in managing population growth, ensuring there is adequate housing and resilient infrastructure to support these growing populations, and addressing the environmental impacts of expanding cities and vulnerability to disasters.

143. The Ministers reaffirmed the significance of ensuring access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums. They expressed deep concern at the significant increase in the number that, the actual number of people living in slums increased from 689 million to 883 million. In many cities, especially in the developing countries, slums dwellers constitute more than half of the urban population with little or no access to shelter, water, and sanitation. There is an urgent need for international cooperation and solidarity to improve the life of slum dwellers in the developing countries.

144. The Ministers reaffirmed that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions is the highest priority and the overarching objective of the repositioning of the UN development system (UNDS) to deliver on the 2030 Agenda. In this regard, they reiterated that it is of the utmost importance that the operational activities for development of the UN development system take into account the need to build, promote, and strengthen the capacity of developing countries in their efforts to address long-term sustainable development at the national level.

145. The Ministers reaffirmed that the operational activities for development of the UN system should provide a key contribution to the implementation of the ambitious and transformational 2030 Agenda through the strengthening of national capacity. They also reaffirmed that strengthening the role and capacity of the UNDS to assist countries in achieving their development goals requires continued improvement in its effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, inter-agency efforts and impact, along with a significant increase in resources. In this regard, the fundamental characteristics of UN operational activities for development must retain, among others, their universal, voluntary and grant nature, their neutrality and their multilateralism, as well as their ability to respond to the development needs of programme countries in a flexible manner. Moreover, operational activities should be carried out for the benefit of

recipient countries, at the request of those countries, and in accordance with their own national policies and priorities for development.

146. The Ministers recognized the efforts being made and stressed that all the mandates contained in the General Assembly resolutions [71/243](#), [72/279](#), [73/248](#) and ECOSOC resolution [E/RES/2019/15](#) should continue to be translated into actionable commitments across the UNDS entities, and transparency, accountability and national ownership and leadership must be ensured during the whole process of implementation.

147. The Ministers emphasized that the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, formerly known as UNDAF, should be prepared and finalized in full consultation and agreement with national governments, through an open and inclusive dialogue between the host Government and the UNDS in accordance with national development policies, plans, priorities, and country needs, and the criteria regarding the presence and the composition of the United Nations country teams should be determined based on country development priorities and long-term needs.

148. The Ministers noted the progress made in reinvigorating the RC System and emphasized that it should increasingly be development-focused, with eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions as its overarching objective, and that geographical and gender balance should be addressed to enhance the representation of the developing countries in the system, especially on the selection of RCs and recruitment of UNDCO staff.

149. The Ministers reaffirmed that ODA is a critical source of funding the UNDS and urged traditional donors to come forward with the required funds to the Special Purpose Trust Fund and to address the current gap in funding.

150. The Ministers took note of the proposals of the Secretary-General for revamping the regional approach, reiterated the request contained in General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) for the Secretary-General to provide options, in accordance with annex III of Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/46 of 31 July 1998, on a region-by-region basis, for longer-term re-profiling and restructuring of the regional assets of the UN, as soon as possible. They also stressed that further efforts are needed to identify and address gaps and overlaps at the regional level, and look forward to inclusive, intergovernmental consultations for the finalization and implementation of the regional review, on a region-by-region basis.

151. The Ministers reaffirmed the role of the UNDS in particular UN-DESA to support the inter-governmental UN processes and enhance the capacity of developing countries to implement the 2030 Agenda, with a view to addressing national needs, priorities and challenges.

152. The Ministers reiterated their call upon the UNDS to continue to support developing countries, in particular countries in special situations and those facing specific challenges, in their efforts to achieve internationally agreed development goals and their development objectives. The Ministers stressed that the UNDS should continue to enhance its support for the implementation of the Programme of Action for the LDCs for the Decade 2011–2020 and the Political Declaration of the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) for the LDCs for the Decade 2011–2020 of 2016, the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs for the Decade 2014–2024, as well as the African Union Agenda 2063 and the programme of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, all of which are integral to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and called upon the entities of the United Nations development system to integrate and mainstream them fully into their operational activities for

development. These specific programmes of action for LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS and African countries must remain the most important entry points for the international community to focus its attention and resources to assist these groups of countries.

153. The Ministers stressed that the call contained in the 2030 Agenda to reduce inequality within and between countries, as well as promoting inclusive, just and equitable societies is critical to empower people, in particular the most vulnerable. The Ministers underlined that in adopting the 2030 Agenda, with the pledge to “leave no one behind”, the international community reaffirmed that tackling inequality is vital to all the efforts to build sustainable, prosperous and peaceful societies and thus committed to ensuring that the goals and targets were met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society, reaching those furthest behind first.

154. The Ministers stressed that the interlinkages among the SDGs, and addressing the well-being and the rights of youth, women and girls, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, older persons, migrants, refugees and those in vulnerable situations, are a prerequisite for achieving the 2030 Agenda.

155. The Ministers reiterated their full commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and welcomed the measures taken by the G77 countries to promote the empowerment of women and girls, as well as progress made by women and girls in many fields around the world. However, they noted that poverty, inequality, violence and discrimination linger in the world’s current affairs, particularly affecting women and girls, especially those living in countries affected by armed conflict and living under colonial administration and foreign occupation, unilateral coercive measures or unilateral economic, financial or trade measures not in accordance with International Law and the Charter of the United Nations.

156. The Ministers reaffirmed that an environment that maintains world peace and promotes and protects human rights, the democracy and the peaceful settlement of disputes, in accordance with and principles of non-threat or use of force against territorial integrity or political independence and of respect for sovereignty, as set forth in of the Charter of the United Nations, is an important factor for the advancement of women.

157. The Ministers emphasized the mutually reinforcing relationship among women’s economic empowerment and the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda. They acknowledged the important contribution of women and girls to sustainable development and reiterated that women’s economic empowerment not only helps to fulfill women’s rights, fosters gender equality and improves the lives and wellbeing of women, but it also accelerates achievement across other development outcomes. They reaffirmed in this regard that gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and women’s full and equal participation and leadership in the economy and as partners for development are vital for achieving sustainable development, promoting peaceful, just and inclusive societies, enhancing sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and productivity, ending poverty in all its forms and dimensions everywhere and ensuring the well-being of all throughout their life course.

158. The Ministers recognized that violence and discrimination against women and girls continue to be a major obstacle to the achievement of women’s empowerment and gender equality. They emphasized the need for measures to prevent and eliminate all forms of gender violence, in particular femicide, and to ensure that, girls, youth, indigenous, Afro-descendant, migrant, older and women with disabilities, are not subject to multiple or aggravated forms of violence and discrimination.

159. The Ministers recognized the vast potential of young people to contribute towards sustainable development and social cohesion and noted that unavailability of quality employment in most developing countries not only blocks the successful transition of young people from school to decent jobs, but also impedes economic growth and development as a whole. Therefore, it is important that efforts at every level are taken to improve the quality of and access to education, and to enhance the acquisition of skills for youth towards decent work.

160. The Ministers encouraged the international community, including the UN and development agencies, while taking into consideration the sovereign right of all countries to develop their own national legislation and policies, in accordance with international law, to enhance their support to education, training and skills development for youth.

161. The Ministers recognized the commitment made to strive to provide children and youth with a nurturing environment for the full realization of their rights and capabilities, helping our countries to reap the demographic dividend, including through safe schools and cohesive communities and families.

162. The Ministers took note with appreciation of the Buenos Aires Declaration on Child Labour, Forced Labour and Youth Employment adopted in November 2017.

163. The Ministers expressed their commitment to the accelerated implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. In this regard, they reiterated their opposition to all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in all parts of the world and expressed deep concern on the resurgence of contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance in all parts of the world. They reaffirmed that all forms of racism, discrimination and xenophobia as well as foreign occupation among others constitute serious violations of human rights, which should be rejected through all political and legal means. They condemned all forms of racism, and discrimination spread through the new communications technology, including the Internet.

164. The Ministers noted the Programme of Activities for the Implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent, including the establishment of a forum to serve as a consultation mechanism, the elaboration of a draft UN declaration on the rights of people of African descent and the adoption and implementation of policies and programmes to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance faced by people of African descent.

165. The Ministers recognized the importance of interreligious and intercultural dialogue and its valuable contribution to promoting social cohesion, peace and development, and called upon the international community to consider, as appropriate and where applicable, interreligious and intercultural dialogue as an important tool in efforts aimed at achieving peace and social stability and the full realization of internationally agreed development goals. They welcomed in this regard all international, regional and national initiatives aimed at promoting interreligious, intercultural and interfaith harmony and combating discrimination against individuals on the basis of religion or belief.

166. The Ministers welcomed the 2022–2032 International Decade of Indigenous Languages to draw world attention to the critical loss of indigenous languages and the urgent need to preserve, revitalize, promote indigenous languages and recognized the work carried out by UNESCO in this regard.

167. The Ministers recognized the positive contribution of migrants to inclusive growth and sustainable development in countries of origin, transit and destination.

168. The Ministers stressed that migration is an enabler of development. The roles and responsibilities of the countries of origin, transit and destination should be appropriately balanced. It is crucial to cooperate internationally to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration involving full respect for human rights and the humane treatment of migrants, regardless of their migration status, refugees and displaced persons. Such cooperation should also strengthen the resilience of communities hosting refugees, particularly in developing countries.

169. The Ministers recognized that international migration is a multidimensional reality of major relevance to the development of origin, transit and destination countries that must be addressed in a coherent, comprehensive and balanced manner. They endeavoured to increase cooperation on access to and portability of earned benefits, enhance the recognition of foreign qualifications, education and skills, lower the costs of recruitment for migrants and combat unscrupulous recruiters, and smuggling of migrants, in accordance with national circumstances and legislation. They further endeavored to implement effective social communication strategies on the contribution of migrants to sustainable development in all its dimensions, in particular in countries of destination, in order to combat racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia, facilitate social integration and protect migrants' human rights through national frameworks. They reaffirmed the need to promote and protect effectively the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrants, especially those of women and children, regardless of their migration status.

170. The Ministers expressed their commitment to protecting the human rights of migrant children, given their vulnerability, particularly of unaccompanied as well as separated migrant children, and to providing for their health, education and psychosocial development, ensuring that the best interests of the child are a primary consideration in policies of integration, return and family reunification.

171. The Ministers welcomed the Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration held in Marrakesh, Morocco, on 10 and 11 December 2018.

172. The Ministers reaffirmed General Assembly Resolution [46/182](#), which remains the global framework for humanitarian assistance and coordination, and the guiding principles for the provision of humanitarian assistance, namely humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence as well as the need for promotion and respect for international humanitarian law.

173. The Ministers reaffirmed the necessity for the UN system and other relevant stakeholders to continue to enhance the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance in order to effectively address the needs of the increasing number of people affected by humanitarian emergencies.

174. The Ministers also underlined that response to humanitarian emergencies must be based on respect for the principles of international law, namely the sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of States. In this context, they stressed that international cooperation, technical and financial support from States, as well as the UN remain indispensable. At the same time, they noted that the response must be channeled in a way that does not undermine or replace the national or local mechanisms already put in place but rather strengthen them to afford governments the ability to respond promptly and more effectively and make significant and positive change for affected communities. In this regard, the Ministers recalled the primary role of affected states in humanitarian assistance, as well as national leadership in the initiation, organization and coordination of humanitarian assistance.

175. The Ministers stressed, in light of growing humanitarian needs, the importance of increased and predictable humanitarian financing through innovative and diversified means from other States is becoming more urgent to assist developing countries in enhancing their capacities and mobilizing their own resources. They also stressed the importance of ensuring that humanitarian assistance reaches its intended beneficiaries.

176. The Ministers reaffirmed that humanitarian emergencies arising out of natural and man-made disasters and other causes and the outbreak of epidemics, and other global health threats, deserve to be given adequate attention by the International Community.

177. The Ministers reaffirmed that relief, recovery, rehabilitation, reconstruction and longer-term development are different means to the one ultimate end and their complementarity should be underscored to ensure effective coordination of humanitarian assistance. While acknowledging that there is a need to narrow the humanitarian-development divide, they stressed that the line that separates their mandates and priorities must not be blurred. The Ministers reiterated their firm conviction that there is a new way of working that brings them closer together while allowing them to do their respective functions in accordance with their comparative advantages in an integrated and coordinated manner.

178. The Ministers recalled that in the 2030 Agenda, the international community committed to strengthen efforts to address the burden of non-communicable and communicable diseases, including ending HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, Malaria and Hepatitis as part of Universal Health Coverage, to address the social and economic determinants of these epidemics and support the research and development of new vaccines.

179. They also underlined that in the 2030 Agenda the international community committed to reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through diagnosis, prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being throughout their life course, by addressing the risk factors as well the social and economic ones.

180. The Ministers noted with concern that non-communicable diseases pose an enormous burden on all countries. However, these costs are particularly challenging for developing nations, especially as they have to face exorbitant costs of health technologies. They underlined that the global response to non-communicable diseases remains an area of particular challenge since the current level of progress is insufficient to meet the 2030 Agenda's relevant goals and commitments made under the high-level meetings of the UN General Assembly on non-communicable diseases. Lack of capacity and near zero increase in ODA to address the issue as well as the protection of NCDs policies from commercial and other vested interest of the industry continued to be key challenges.

181. The Ministers emphasized the need to promote access to quality health care, including to affordable, safe, effective and quality medicines, diagnostics, and other technologies, including health technologies. In this regard, the Ministers reaffirmed the political declaration of the High-Level meeting on Universal Health coverage.

182. The Ministers recognized that generic drugs have played a key role in ensuring access to medicines in the developing world. They have called on all parties to urgently remove all obstacles that limit the capacity of countries to use, to the full extent, the TRIPS flexibilities, as confirmed by the Doha Declaration on TRIPS and Public Health, as well as acknowledge the need to effectively implement the Global Strategy and Plan of Action on Public Health as important tools to help develop national capacities in developing countries in order to strengthen public health and

ensure the universal access of the population to medicines and medical technologies without any kind of restriction to specific diseases.

183. The Ministers underscored the need to ensure that all research and development efforts should be needs-driven, evidence-based and guided by the principles of affordability, effectiveness and efficiency and equity, and should be considered as a shared responsibility. In this regard, they have stressed on the importance of delinking the cost of investment in research and development from the price and volume of sales so as to facilitate equitable and affordable access to new medicines, diagnostic tools, vaccines, as well as other innovative care and prevention approaches results to be gained through research and development, as highlighted in previous health-related political declarations.

184. The Ministers emphasized that transnational corporations have a responsibility to respect all human rights and fundamental freedoms and should refrain from causing environmental degradation, and environmental disasters and affecting the well-being of peoples.

185. The Ministers recalled with appreciation the decision of the Human Rights Council, in its resolution [26/9](#), to establish an Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises with Respect to Human Rights (OEIGWG). The Ministers took note of the presentation of a draft international legally binding instrument to regulate, in international human rights law, the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises, both focusing on the victims of business-related human rights abuses.

186. The Ministers expressed their concern about the seriousness of the problems and threats to the stability and security of societies posed by corruption. In that regard, the Ministers recognized the need to strengthen international cooperation to prevent and combat corruption through collective efforts, and therefore welcomed the convening of a special session of the General Assembly on challenges and measures to address this scourge in the first half of 2021.

187. The Ministers reiterated their support to the UN Programme of Assistance in the Teaching, Study, Dissemination and Wider Appreciation of International Law established by General Assembly resolution [2099 \(XX\)](#) of 20 December 1965 for the purpose of contributing to greater knowledge of international law as a means of strengthening international peace and security and promoting friendly relations and cooperation among States. They recalled that the Programme and its components are one of the cornerstones of the efforts of the UN to promote international law and that jurists, academics, diplomats and other public officials from developing countries greatly benefit from the regional courses of international law, fellowships, publications and the Audiovisual Library of International Law. In this regard, the Ministers welcomed the inclusion of additional resources under the programme budget for the current year for the organization of the Regional Courses in International Law for Africa, for Asia-Pacific and for Latin America and the Caribbean each year and for the continuation and further development of the UN Audiovisual Library of International Law. They also expressed their commitment to include the International Law Fellowship Programme, the seminars and regional training on international treaty laws and practice and the legal publications and training materials, as well as the necessary funding for the Hamilton Shirley Amerasinghe Memorial Fellowship, in the budget of the UN.

188. The Ministers reiterated their commitment to intensify international efforts directed at safeguarding cyberspace and promoting its exclusive use for the achievement of peaceful purposes and as a vehicle to contribute to both economic and social development. They highlighted that international cooperation in accordance with domestic law and as far as international obligations require, as well as in full

respect of human rights, is the only viable option for fostering the positive effects of information and communications technologies, preventing their potential negative effects, promoting their peaceful and legitimate use and guaranteeing that both scientific and technological progress are directed at preserving peace and promoting the welfare and development of humanity.

189. The Ministers reaffirmed that the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly is the sole Main Committee of the Organization entrusted with responsibilities for administrative, financial and budgetary matters. In this regard, the Ministers requested that any budgetary, financial and administrative matters, including those related to the establishment of a peacekeeping operation or a special political mission, be discussed solely in the framework of the Fifth Committee, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.

190. The Ministers expressed their serious concern at the financial health of the Organization, in particular the deep and persistent liquidity problems in the regular budget and, while recognizing the need to extend sympathetic understanding to those temporarily unable to meet their financial obligations as a consequence of genuine economic difficulties, and commending Member States of the UN who have made real efforts to reduce their outstanding contributions despite facing difficulties at home, they urged all Member States of the UN to pay their assessed contributions in full, on time, and without conditions, in particular those Member States of the UN who, for political reasons, consistently and deliberately withhold payments.

191. The Ministers expressed concern at the late settlement of payments to troop and police contributing countries for peacekeeping operations and underlined that it is unacceptable that the Organization continues to owe payments to troop and police contributing countries, most of which are developing countries, including in terms of the longstanding issue of claims from closed peacekeeping missions. This creates a situation whereby the developing countries, several of which are financially challenged, are in fact subsidizing peacekeeping operations.

192. The Ministers also expressed grave concern that cash shortfalls in the regular budget continue to be covered by borrowing from the accounts of closed peacekeeping missions, which is not good budgetary practice, nor is it sustainable.

193. The Ministers recognized the efforts led by the Secretary-General on management reform and took note of the adoption of resolution [A/72/266 B](#) by the General Assembly. They emphasized that reforms should result in better mandate delivery, enhanced transparency, accountability, efficiency and oversight. They underscored the centrality of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as well as the need to monitor and evaluate mandate implementation. They stressed the importance of addressing gender parity and balanced geographical representation at all levels of the Secretariat and ensuring fair and equitable access to UN procurement opportunities for developing countries.

194. The Ministers reiterated that the goal of equitable geographic representation is a Charter obligation as reflected in Article 101, paragraph 3, and called for appropriate measures towards attaining that goal. They urged in this regard the Secretariat to implement a comprehensive strategy to ensure equitable geographic representation through the increase of the representation of developing countries, in particular at senior levels, in order for the UN to have a truly global Secretariat adequately representing the diversity of its membership, a condition necessary for the UN to succeed in implementing its global mandates.

195. The Ministers reaffirmed that any Secretariat and management reform efforts, including on its budget process, must not be intended to change the intergovernmental, multilateral and international nature of the Organization, but must

strengthen the ability of Member States of the UN to perform their oversight and monitoring role and that prior consideration by and approval of Member States of the UN is essential in all cases where the measures to be implemented fall under the prerogatives of the Assembly. In this regard, they recall resolution 66/257. They also reaffirmed the right of the entire membership of the United Nations to pronounce itself on the administration of the Organization, including on budgetary matters, and the need for continuous interaction and dialogue between the Secretariat and the General Assembly aimed at fostering a positive environment for the negotiations, the decision-making process and the implementation of the reform measures.

196. The Ministers strongly supported the oversight role performed by the General Assembly, as well as its relevant intergovernmental and expert bodies, in planning, programming, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation. In this context, they renewed their commitment to strengthen the role of the Committee for Programme and Coordination. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of ensuring the preservation of the sequential nature of the review processes of the proposed programme budget. The Ministers also urged the rest of the membership of the UN to actively participate in the sessions of the Committee.

197. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of the strategic framework as the principal policy directive of the Organization and that its content should fully reflect the mandates approved by Member States of the UN, including the UN financial rules and regulations.

198. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of preserving the budget methodology, the established budgetary procedures and practices and the rules and regulations governing the budget process, and stressed that the level of resources to be approved by the General Assembly must be commensurate with all mandated programmes and activities in order to ensure their full and effective implementation. In this sense, they underlined that the existing recosting methodology is a fundamental and integral element of the budgetary methodology agreed in the General Assembly and affirmed that the existing recosting methodology ensures that mandated activities are not negatively impacted by currency fluctuations and inflation.

199. The Ministers underlined that the current methodology for the preparation of the scale of assessments reflects changes in the relative economic situations of the Member States of the UN. The Ministers further reaffirmed the principle of “capacity to pay” as the fundamental criterion in the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations and rejected any change to the elements of the current methodology for the preparation of the scale of assessments aimed at increasing the contributions of developing countries. In this regard, they emphasized that the core elements of the current methodology of the scale of assessment, such as base period, Gross National Income, conversion rates, low per capita income adjustment, gradient, floor, ceiling for LDCs and debt stock adjustment must be kept intact and are not negotiable.

200. The Ministers stressed that the current maximum assessment rate, or ceiling, had been fixed as a political compromise and is contrary to the principle of the capacity to pay and is a fundamental source of distortion in the scale of assessments. In this context, they urged the General Assembly to undertake a review of this arrangement, in accordance with paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 55/5 C.

201. The Ministers emphasized that organizations which have an enhanced observer status at the United Nations giving them the rights and privileges usually only applied to Observer States, such as the right to speak in the general debate of the General Assembly and the right of reply, should also have the same financial obligations to the UN as Observer States. In this context, they urged the General Assembly to consider a decision on an assessment for such organizations.

202. The Ministers affirmed that the current principles and guidelines for the apportionment of the expenses of peacekeeping operations approved by the General Assembly in its relevant resolutions should constitute a basis for any discussion on the peacekeeping scale. In this regard, the Ministers stressed that the peacekeeping scale must clearly reflect the special responsibilities of the permanent members of the Security Council for the maintenance of peace and security. The Ministers also recalled that the economically less developed countries have limited capacity to contribute towards the budgets of peacekeeping operations. In this context, the Ministers emphasized that any discussion on the system of discounts applied to the peacekeeping scale should take into account the conditions of developing countries whose current positions must not be negatively affected. The Ministers stressed, in this regard, that no member of the Group that is not a permanent member of the Security Council, should therefore be categorized above level C.

203. The Ministers express their concern for the growing restrictive nature of “earmarked” contributions within different UN entities, such as UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS and UNICEF among others. They also emphasized that regular resources are the bedrock of those entities and are essential to maintain and fulfill their universal mandate and work. Hence, the declining trend of regular resources and a high concentration of earmarked funds put the organization at risk of not having the capacity to deliver on its programmes. The Ministers appealed to assure stable and predictable contributions and noted the important need to emphasize the quality, flexibility, predictability, transparency and alignment of such contributions.

204. The Ministers emphasized the importance of the United Nations collaborating and coordinating with regional and sub-regional actors and in this regard urged the Secretary-General to use his reform initiatives as an enabling tool for the deepening of the partnership, cooperation and coordination between the United Nations and UN recognized inter-governmental regional and sub-regional actors in accordance with relevant mandates and memoranda of understanding (MOUs).

205. The Ministers recalled the special needs of Africa and recognized that, while economic growth had improved, there was a need to sustain the recovery, which was fragile and uneven, to face the ongoing adverse impacts of multiple crises on development and the serious challenges that these impacts posed to the fight against poverty and hunger, which could further undermine the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals in Africa, including Agenda 2063 and the SDGs and the unfinished business of the MDGs.

206. The Ministers expressed profound concern that the commitment to doubling aid to Africa by 2010, as articulated at the summit of the Group of Eight held in Gleneagles, United Kingdom, had not been entirely reached and in this regard stressed the need to make rapid progress in order to fulfill that and other donors’ commitments to increasing aid through a variety of means, including the provision of new additional resources and the transfer of technology to and the building of capacity in African countries, and to supporting their sustainable development. They called for continued support for Africa’s development initiatives, including Agenda 2063 and its 10-year plan of action, the New Partnership for Africa’s Development and the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa. On the other hand, they welcomed the support that some developing countries had extended to Africa through South-South and triangular cooperation programmes.

207. The Ministers underlined the need to address the economic, social and environmental impact of climate change, desertification and land degradation in Africa, and highlights the importance of supporting the implementation of initiatives aimed at enhancing agriculture resilience in Africa, in particular the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme and other initiatives launched under the

leadership of the African Union Commission such as the Great Green Wall and the Land Policy Initiative, as well as initiatives launched by African countries such as the Adaptation of African Agriculture and the Security, Stability and Sustainability initiatives.

208. The Ministers welcomed the Beijing Declaration and the FOCAC Beijing Action Plan (2019–2021) adopted by the African countries and China at the 2018 Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, covering fields such as industrial promotion, infrastructure connectivity, trade facilitation, health care and green development, which give strong impetus to the implementation of the Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda. The Ministers also welcomed the Extraordinary China-Africa Summit on Solidarity against Covid-19, held on 17 June 2020.

209. The Ministers underlined the importance of the principles of universality and inclusiveness which must not be forgotten in order to enhance the capacities of LDCs towards their efforts to achieve the priority areas set forth in the IPoA and to implement the 2030 Agenda. The Ministers recalled the objective of the IPoA to enable half of the LDCs to meet the criteria for graduation by 2020 and expressed concern that this target by 2020 is most unlikely to be fulfilled considering the current status of progress. The Ministers reiterated that with strong support, coordinated actions and acceleration of support from the international community, the LDCs will be able to strengthen their collective capacities in all sectors, including through structural transformation and this support will accelerate the achievement of graduation by the LDCs.

210. The Ministers reiterated that ODA continues to be the largest and a critical source of external financing for the development of the LDCs and that it provides a buffer to weather the impacts of the unstable and volatile global economic environment. They expressed their deep concern that overall share of ODA to LDCs in donor's GNI is only 0.09 per cent in 2016, while noting with concern that total bilateral ODA from OECD-DAC to LDCs has decreased by 2.7 per cent in real terms in 2018. They also recalled the provisions of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda that encouraged ODA providers to consider setting a target to provide at least 0.20 per cent of ODA / GNI to LDCs and expressed encouragement to those providers that are allocating at least 50 per cent of their ODA to LDCs. They called upon all development partners to fulfil these targets.

211. The Ministers noted with appreciation that after three years of negative growth, LDCs' exports of goods and services increased by 13 per cent in 2017, thanks largely to increases in the prices of fuels and minerals and expressed deep concern that even if in 2018, the share of the LDCs in exports of goods increased, we are still further away from the target of 2 per cent of global exports called for in the Istanbul Programme of Action and target 17.11 of the SDGs. The Ministers also reaffirmed that fulfilling the commitments of the ministerial decisions of the WTO for duty-free and quota-free market access for all products from all least developed countries for the least developed country preferential rules of origin was urgently needed to reverse the decline in the global trade share of those countries. In addition, fulfilling those commitments would also contribute to the achievement of the target contained in the IPoA of doubling the share of LDCs in global export. In that regard, it is important that at least 50 per cent of the Aid for Trade by development partners be allotted to the LDCs. The Ministers called for significant progress on LDCs issues, preferential rules of origin and the application of the LDCs' services waiver at the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference.

212. The Ministers expressed concern that, despite minor signs of recovery the latest global financial and economic crisis, have contributed to undermining development in all developing countries and recalled that the modest development gains, in

particular those in the LDCs made over the years are being reversed, pushing a larger number of their people to extreme poverty. The Ministers expressed their concern that, under the current growth trajectory, nearly 35 per cent of the population in LDCs could remain in extreme poverty by 2030. Many LDCs continue to be lagging behind in meeting most of the internationally agreed development goals, including the unfinished business of the MDGs.

213. The Ministers expressed deep concern that LDCs are disproportionately affected by a variety of systemic shocks, including the global financial and economic crisis, excessive commodity price volatility, health epidemics, natural disasters and other environmental shocks. These shocks not only halt the pace of economic progress and deteriorate poverty, but also undermine the capacity of LDCs to achieve the 2030 Agenda. In this regard, the Ministers underlined the need for establishing a comprehensive multi-stakeholder resilience-building mechanism for LDCs, leveraging the existing measures and initiatives.

214. The Ministers stressed the need for the international community to remain vigilant in monitoring the debt situation of the LDCs as many of them are in debt distress or at high risk of debt distress situation and the ratio of debt service to exports sharply worsened in the last decade. The Ministers called upon the international community to continue to take effective measures, preferably within existing frameworks, when applicable, to address the debt problem of those countries, including through coordinated policies aimed at fostering debt financing, debt relief, debt restructuring and sound debt management, as appropriate, for the multilateral and bilateral debt owed by the LDCs to creditors, both public and private. They reiterated their commitment to work through existing initiatives, such as the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. They reaffirmed the importance of transparency in debt management. The Ministers underlined that the debt sustainability framework for the LDCs should systematically take into account their structural constraints and longer-term investment requirements for the implementation of the SDGs.

215. The Ministers welcomed the operationalization of the Technology Bank for the least developed countries, and the inauguration of its headquarters in Gebze, Turkey and emphasized the need to sustain its financing in order to fulfill its potential to foster productive capacity, structural transformation, poverty eradication and sustainable development. They also called upon all relevant stakeholders to ensure continued financial and in-kind support for the effective functioning of the Technology Bank.

216. The Ministers recalled resolutions [73/242](#) of 20 December 2018, [74/232](#) of 19 December 2019 and [74/232 B](#) of 11 August 2020; by which it was decided that the Fifth UN Conference on LDCs (LDC V) would be held in Doha, State of Qatar from 23 to 27 January 2022 at the highest level including heads of state and government and that the meeting of the intergovernmental preparatory committee would be organized in New York in two parts, from 24 to 28 May 2021 and from 26 to 30 July 2021, of no more than five working days each; The Ministers expressed their full support to the successful holding of the Fifth UN Conference on LDCs and looked forward to its comprehensive, forward looking and ambitious outcome.

217. The Ministers recognized the special development needs and challenges of LLDCs arising from their landlockedness, remoteness from world markets and geographical constraints that impose serious impediments for export earnings, private capital inflow and domestic resource mobilization of LLDCs and therefore adversely affect their overall sustainable development and expressed concern that their efforts towards sustainable development are affected by the frequent falling of commodity prices and that the LLDCs are highly exposed to climate change and disproportionately affected by its adverse impacts.

218. The Ministers called upon the development partners, transit countries and international organizations to mainstream the Vienna Programme of Action and establish special facilities for the LLDCs, as appropriate, to assist them with execution and scaling-up of trade facilitation initiatives and effective implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement, and invited multilateral financial and development institutions and regional development banks to establish dedicated infrastructure funding for the LLDCs. The Ministers noted the declaration adopted at the 5th Meeting of Trade Ministers of LLDCs held in June 2016 in Geneva that calls for the establishment of a specific Work Programme for LLDCs at the WTO by the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference, the Communique adopted at the Ministerial Meeting of the Group of LLDCs at the margins of the 11th Ministerial Conference of the WTO held in Buenos Aires in December 2017 and the Ministerial Communiqué of the Landlocked Developing Countries adopted prior to the 14th session of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XIV) in July 2016, as well as the Ministerial Declaration 2018 adopted at the Ministerial Meeting of LLDCs on Trade and Transport held in Astana, Kazakhstan in May 2018.

219. The Ministers reaffirmed their strong commitment to the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs for the decade 2014–2024, and encouraged the LLDCs, transit countries, their development partners, the UN system and all other actors to implement the actions that have been agreed upon in the Vienna Programme of Action, in its six priority areas, namely: fundamental transit policy issues; infrastructure development and maintenance; international trade and trade facilitation; regional integration and cooperate on; structural economic transformation; and means of implementation; in a coordinated, coherent and expeditious manner. Furthermore, the Ministers reaffirmed that the Vienna Programme of Action is integral to the 2030 Agenda and welcomed in this regard the Political Declaration adopted at the high-level mid-term review of the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for the LLDCs held on 5-6 December 2019 in New York and took note with appreciation of the Roadmap adopted on 23 September 2020 during the LLDC Ministerial Meeting.

220. The Ministers welcomed the convening of the Africa regional midterm review meeting of the Vienna Programme of Action for the LLDCS for the decade 2014–2024 in Marrakech, Morocco, in March 2019. They underlined the progress and challenges in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action in Africa and called for stronger regional cooperation on transit policies and greater support in areas including connectivity in transport, energy and information and communication technologies infrastructure, export diversification, value addition and trade facilitation.

221. They emphasized the importance of fostering strong synergy and coherence in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Vienna Programme of Action and encouraged coordination and coherence in the follow-up of their implementation. The Ministers stressed that the availability of and use of accessible, timely, reliable and high-quality disaggregated data to measure poverty in all its forms and dimensions as well as progress on sustainable development underpin the efforts to leave no one behind and called upon the development partners and international organizations to assist LLDCs in building and strengthening their official national capacities for data collection, disaggregation, dissemination and analysis. They called upon a revitalized Global Partnership based on renewed and strengthened partnerships between landlocked developing countries and the transit countries, their development partners and other stakeholders for the full, successful and timely implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action.

222. The Ministers welcomed the operationalization of the International Think Tank for LLDCs. They emphasized the need to build a platform which generates knowledge

and develops analytical tools in order to maximize LLDCs' coordinated efforts and overcome their common challenge – landlockedness. They also called upon all relevant stakeholders to ensure voluntary contributions and supports for the effective functioning of the International Think Tank.

223. The Ministers reaffirmed that SIDS remain a “special case” for sustainable development in view of their unique and particular vulnerabilities, including their small size, remoteness, narrow resource and export base, external economic shocks, and exposure to global environmental challenges, including to a large range of impacts from climate change and more frequent and intense natural disasters. Climate change and its adverse impacts continue to pose a significant risk to SIDS and their efforts to achieve sustainable development and, represent the gravest threat to their survival and viability, including through the loss of territory.

224. The Ministers welcomed the five-year review of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA Pathway) held on 27 September 2019 in New York, which assessed the progress made in addressing the vulnerabilities of SIDS and the gaps and challenges remaining. They stressed the need for the implementation of the Call for Action in the Political Declaration for the Mid-term Review and called for action in particular in the examination of the disaster related funding and support environment, and the development of targets and indicators to monitor the SAMOA Pathway.

225. The Ministers acknowledged the close interlinkages between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SAMOA Pathway. In addition, they urged full and effective implementation of both agendas, including the fulfilment of the provisions of all means of implementation. In this regard, the Ministers also encouraged other initiatives and programmes in support of the sustainable development priorities of SIDS. This includes the further strengthening of global partnerships for SIDS in priority areas of the SAMOA Pathway in order to ensure its timely, effective and full implementation.

226. The Ministers welcomed the UNIDO Strategic Framework for Partnering with Middle-Income Countries adopted in Resolution GC.18/Res.9 of 7 November 2019 of the General Conference of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, entitled Inclusive and Sustainable industrial development in middle-income countries.

227. The Ministers recalled that despite notable reductions in poverty, middle-income countries are still home to most of the world's people living in poverty and inequalities and gaps still remain. They continue to face significant challenges to achieve sustainable development. The Ministers reiterated the urgent need to identify ways and means to ensure that the diverse and specific development needs of MICs are appropriately considered and addressed, in a tailored fashion, in their relevant strategies and policies, with a view to promoting a coherent and comprehensive approach towards individual countries. In this context, the UNDS must improve its support to different country contexts, including how to provide efficient, effective, more coordinated and better and focused support to MICs. The Ministers welcomed the convening of the High-level Meeting on Middle-Income Countries under the General Assembly held on 4 December 2018.

228. The Ministers recognized the importance of addressing the specific challenges facing MICs. In order to ensure that achievements made to date are sustained, efforts to address ongoing challenges should be strengthened through the exchange of experiences, improved coordination and better and focused support from the UNDS, the international financial institutions, regional organizations and other stakeholders. The Ministers also acknowledged that ODA and other concessional finance are still important for a number of these countries and have a role to play for targeted results,

taking into account the specific needs of these countries. In this regard, the Ministers highlighted the need to make all institutional arrangements necessary to support MICs within the UN system and its respective mandates, in particular through a comprehensive UN system-wide and long-term strategy aimed at facilitating sustainable development cooperation and coordinated support towards MICs.

229. The Ministers reaffirmed that sustainable development cannot be realized without peace and security, and that peace and security will be at risk without sustainable development. In this regard, they further recognized that the countries in conflict and post-conflict situations, in particular among least developed countries, and countries and peoples living under foreign occupation have specific structural challenges and require context-specific approaches, including targeted national policies and international support measures to address these challenges and to support peacebuilding, State-building activities and sustainable development. The Ministers took note of the principles set out in the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States by the Group of Seven Plus, countries that are, or have been, affected by conflict.

230. The Ministers reaffirmed that the right of self-determination is a primordial right that anchors the United Nations. For developing countries, it has been and continues to be a beacon of hope for all those who struggle under the weight of occupation. In this context, in the implementation and the follow-up and review of 2030 Agenda, the international community must not forget the severe difficulties faced by peoples living under colonial and foreign occupation and strive to remove the obstacles to the full realization of their right to self-determination, which adversely affect their economic and social development and their ability to achieve and implement the sustainable development goals, and ensure that they will not be left behind.

231. The Ministers reaffirmed, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the need to respect the territorial integrity and political independence of States.

232. The Ministers reaffirmed their unwavering support for the just cause of Palestine and solidarity with the Palestinian people. They reaffirmed their principled and long-standing support for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the achievement of their legitimate national aspirations, including for freedom, independence, justice, peace and dignity in their independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The Ministers expressed deep regret about the absence of a political horizon for bringing an end to the Israeli occupation and achieving the rights of the Palestinian people and the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative. They called for the exertion by the international community of the necessary efforts in support of these objectives, stressing the urgency of intensified efforts to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive solution and peace.

233. The Ministers reiterated their call for the immediate and full withdrawal of Israel, the occupying Power, from the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967 and from the remaining Lebanese occupied land. They reaffirmed their support for a Middle East peace process aimed at achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolutions [242 \(1967\)](#), [338 \(1973\)](#), [425 \(1978\)](#), [497 \(1981\)](#) [1850 \(2008\)](#) and [2334 \(2016\)](#) and the principle of land for peace. In this context, they also reaffirmed their support for the Arab Peace Initiative, endorsed by the Arab Summit Conference in March 2002.

234. The Ministers condemned any decisions and actions which purport to have altered the character, status or demographic composition, and any measures of *de facto or de jure* annexation, of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East

Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan and declared that such unilateral decisions have no legal effect, are null and void and must be rescinded, in compliance with international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

235. The Ministers deplored the systematic, grave breaches of international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law, committed by Israel. They called for accountability for these violations and called upon the Security Council, in line with its Charter duty for the maintenance of international peace and security, to undertake serious follow-up efforts to bring an end to Israel's impunity and realize justice for the victims and to contribute to a peaceful and just solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

236. The Ministers deplored the continuing de-development of the Gaza Strip and the dire humanitarian crisis, severe socio-economic conditions and challenges, including widespread poverty and unemployment and health, water, sanitation and energy crises facing the civilian population, in particular as a result of the ongoing Israeli blockade and the lasting and massive negative impact of the successive military aggressions committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian civilian population in the occupied Gaza Strip. The Ministers reiterated their demand for the immediate and full lifting of the Israeli blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip, which constitutes massive collective punishment. They expressed grave concern about the continuing obstruction of recovery due to the Israeli blockade and the resulting deterioration of infrastructure and services and called for urgent measures to advance reconstruction.

237. The Ministers requested all members of the international community, the UN and other international organizations and non-governmental organizations to continue providing much-needed developmental and humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people, among them Palestine refugees, during this critical period, particularly for reconstruction and economic recovery in the Gaza Strip, including through the UN agencies present on the ground.

238. The Ministers reiterated their concern in this regard about the recurrent financial crisis and under-funding of UNRWA, exacerbated by the termination of funding by one of the Agency's largest donors. They urged States to contribute to UNRWA and urged their strong support for the continuing efforts to follow-up the Secretary-General's report (A/71/849) and relevant recommendations aimed at mobilizing more sufficient, sustained and predictable funding to the Agency, including by the UN, to ensure the Agency's effective operation and uninterrupted provision of vital humanitarian and development assistance to the Palestine refugees, in accordance with its General Assembly mandate, including its education, health, and relief and social services, which have been recognized as promoting 10 of the 17 SDGs.

239. They appealed to States and organizations for the maintenance of their voluntary contributions to the Agency, as well as an increase in contributions where possible, and also appealed for the support of new donors, to meet the needs of the Palestine refugees and essential associated costs of operations, including to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and mitigate its impact. They reaffirmed strong support for the mandate of UNRWA, in accordance with the continuing responsibility of the international community as a whole to assist the Palestine refugees, pending a just solution in accordance with the relevant UN resolutions.

240. The Ministers expressed deep concern about the further decline of the social and economic conditions of the Palestinian people as a result of illegal Israeli practices, which include, but are not limited to, the continuing colonization of Palestinian land by Israel, the occupying Power, in grave breach of international humanitarian law and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, as well as in flagrant violation of relevant UN resolutions, including, inter alia, Security Council resolution [2334](#)

(2016), and disrespect of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. In this connection, the Ministers demanded a halt to Israel's confiscation of Palestinian property, construction and expansion of Israeli settlements and the wall, demolition of Palestinian homes and forced displacement of Palestinian civilians, and all measures of annexation, and called for full respect of international law and all relevant resolutions. They also expressed grave concern over the frequent acts of violence, terror and incitement against Palestinian civilians and the destruction of Palestinian properties by Israeli settlers in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and called for action to hold the perpetrators accountable for these crimes.

241. The Ministers reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and of the population of the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources, including land, water and energy resources, and demanded that Israel, the occupying Power, cease the exploitation, damage, cause of loss or depletion and endangerment of the natural resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan, which constitute violations of international law and severely undermine their ability to pursue sustainable development.

242. Recalling that 16th December 2020 marks the 55th anniversary of the adoption of UN General Assembly resolution 2065 (XX), the first resolution which specifically refers to the Question of the Malvinas Islands, the Ministers reaffirmed the need for the Governments of the Argentine Republic and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to resume negotiations in accordance with the principles and the objectives of the UN Charter and the relevant resolutions adopted by the General Assembly, in order to find, as soon as possible, a peaceful solution to the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas, South Georgias and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, and appreciated the good predisposition and willingness of Argentina in holding negotiations related to this aim.

243. In this regard, the Ministers reaffirmed the principle of territorial integrity as enshrined in General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV), highlighted the right of the Member States of the Group to permanent sovereignty over their natural resources, including the right of the Argentine Republic to take legal action with full respect for international law and relevant resolutions against non-authorized hydrocarbon exploration and exploitation activities in the referred area and recalled the need for both parties to refrain from taking decisions that would imply introducing unilateral modifications in the situation while the islands are going through the process recommended by the Assembly, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 31/49.

244. The Ministers welcomed the efforts made by the Government of Colombia in order to implement its policy of stabilization and consolidation in its territory. In this regard, the Ministers called upon the international community to lend its full support to Colombia at this critical stage of the process.

245. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of supporting and strengthening multilateralism, and, in this regard, recognized that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the other parties is a concrete case of a successful multilateral action for resolving outstanding global issues, stressed that such model sets a real example for further accelerating the achievement of sustainable development including by strengthening international co-operation, through enhanced means of implementation.

246. The Ministers recalled that the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, was unlawfully excised by the United Kingdom from the territory of Mauritius, prior to independence, in violation of international law and UN General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960 and 2066 (XX) of 16 December 1965

and that all inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago were forcibly evicted. In this regard, the Ministers took note of the adoption by the UN General Assembly on 22 May 2019 of resolution [73/295](#) welcoming the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 25 February 2019 on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965. The Ministers took note of the Court's findings that the right to self-determination was a rule of customary international law in 1965 and that the excision of the Chagos Archipelago from the territory of Mauritius was an internationally wrongful act. In that regard, the Ministers fully supported the Court's ruling that the United Kingdom is under an obligation to bring to an end its administration of the Chagos Archipelago as rapidly as possible. The Ministers reaffirmed, in the light of the Court's advisory opinion, that the Chagos Archipelago is and has always been part of the territory of Mauritius and that Mauritius is the sole State lawfully entitled to exercise sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago and sovereign rights over the appurtenant maritime spaces. They resolved to cooperate fully with the UN General Assembly in ensuring the prompt decolonization of Mauritius, as required by the Court, and take all necessary measures for the process of decolonization of Mauritius to be completed without hindrance and as rapidly as possible.

247. The Ministers also took note of the concern expressed by the Republic of Maldives regarding the legal and technical issues arising from the United Kingdom's illegal decision in 2010 to declare a "marine protected area" in the Chagos Archipelago which overlaps the exclusive economic zone of the Republic of Maldives as declared in its Constitution without prejudice to future resolution of maritime delimitations.

248. The Ministers reaffirmed that the imposition of coercive economic measures, including unilateral sanctions, against developing countries does not contribute to economic and social development, including dialogue and understanding among countries.

249. The Ministers reaffirmed their firm rejection of the imposition of laws and regulations with extraterritorial impact and all other forms of coercive economic measures, including unilateral sanctions, against developing countries and reiterated the urgent need to eliminate them immediately. They emphasized that such actions not only undermine the principles enshrined in the Charter of the UN and international law but also severely threaten the freedom of trade and investment. The Ministers therefore called upon the international community to adopt urgent and effective measures to eliminate the use of unilateral coercive economic measures against developing countries.

250. The Ministers expressed their strongest rejection of the implementation of unilateral coercive measures and reiterated their solidarity with Cuba. They reaffirmed their call upon the Government of the United States to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on that sisterly nation for almost six decades that constitutes the major impediment for its full development. At the same time, the Ministers regretted the measures implemented by the government of the United States since November 9th, 2017, which strengthen the blockade. They expressed deep concern over the widening of the extraterritorial nature of the embargo against Cuba, including the full implementation of Chapter III of the Helms-Burton Act, and rejected the reinforcement of the financial measures adopted by the Government of United States, aimed at tightening the embargo.

251. The Ministers reaffirmed their rejection to the unilateral economic sanctions imposed on the Sudan, which have a negative impact on the development and prosperity of the people of the Sudan, and in this regard called for an immediate lifting of those sanctions.

252. The Ministers reaffirmed their rejection of the unilateral economic sanctions imposed on the Islamic Republic of Iran, which have a negative impact on the development and prosperity of the people of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and in this regard called for an immediate lifting of those sanctions.

253. The Ministers reaffirmed their rejection to the unilateral economic sanctions imposed on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which have a negative impact on the development and prosperity of this country, and in this regard emphasized the importance of dialogue and called for an immediate lifting of those sanctions.

254. The Ministers reaffirmed their rejection to the unilateral economic sanctions imposed on the Syrian Arab Republic, which have a negative impact on the development and prosperity of the people of the Syrian Arab Republic, and in this regard called for an immediate lifting of those sanctions.

255. The Ministers reaffirmed their rejection to the unilateral economic sanctions imposed on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which have a negative impact on the development and prosperity of the people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and in this regard called for an immediate lifting of those sanctions.

256. The Ministers approved the Report of the Thirty-fifth Meeting of the Committee of Experts of the Perez-Guerrero Trust Fund for South-South Cooperation (PGTF) contained in document G-77/AM(XXXII)/2020/2 and endorsed its recommendations. The Ministers commended the Chair of the PGTF for his continued commitment and expressed their satisfaction with the results achieved by the PGTF. In light of the low level of interest earnings of the Fund caused by the current world financial situation as reported by the Chair of the PGTF, the Ministers appealed to every Member State to make a significant contribution to the PGTF on the occasion of the UN Pledging Conference for Development Activities.

257. The Ministers approved the Financial Statement of the ECDC Account of the Group of 77 contained in document G-77/AM(XXXII)/2020/3, as presented by the Chair of the Group of 77 and urged those Member States that have not yet done so to make special efforts to pay their outstanding contributions.

258. The Ministers warmly welcomed the election by acclamation of the Republic of Guinea to the Chairmanship of the Group of 77 for 2021.

259. The Ministers highlighted the progress and challenges experienced since the adoption of the Charter of Algiers and stressed that the Group of 77 and China remain committed to our aspirations, our principles of unity, complementarity, cooperation and solidarity. The Ministers declared their firm pledge to continue their common actions for achieving the sustainable development goals, especially the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions, inclusively.