Mr Chairman,

I have the honour to deliver the following remarks on this agenda item on behalf of the members of the Group of 77 and China.

Our engagements today are informed by the sobering progress reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of both the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011 – 2020 (Istanbul Programme of Action) and the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024.

We note that while the reports of the Secretary-General have generally been positive on progress towards the implementation of other agenda items, they bring a sobering reality with regards to the development of least developed and land-locked developing countries. The Secretary-General’s reports show that our euphoria about the recently adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will remain an unattainable dream for those among us who are lagging behind the sustainable development path and that they will never catch up unless there is concerted effort to lift and bring them up to speed.

With regards to the least developed countries, for whom the Istanbul Programme of Action is meant to assist in achieving sustainable development, eradicating poverty and structural transformation, the Secretary-General’s report points to the persistently low and decelerating levels of economic expansion and growth because of a variety of factors, including declining oil prices, a slowdown in agricultural output growth, severe floods or travel restrictions and the closure of borders because of Ebola in some cases.

What is also worrying is the perception that many least developed countries are not likely to reach the Millennium Development Goals or the targets included in the Programme of Action in a timely manner.

Mr Chairman,

The IPoA sets an ambitious target of enabling half of LDCs to reach the stage of graduation by 2020. The full and timely implementation of the eight priority areas of the IPoA is vitally important to achieve this target. The international community should provide adequate support to LDCs in achieving this objective.

A fact that cannot be wished away is that ODA is the largest source of development finance for a large number of LDCs. It is therefore a matter of grave concern that ODA
to LDCs fell by 15 per cent in 2014. This has to be reversed immediately, as this group of countries is in need of increased international support for achieving the IPoA and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We call upon the ODA providers to fulfill their ODA commitments of 0.15-0.20 per cent of their GNI to LDCs and invite them to set a target to provide at least 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to LDCs as per the Addis Agenda.

Duty-free and quota free market access for all products from all LDCs, debt relief and increased FDI are vitally important for LDCs, as is the full implementation of the Bali LDCs package.

The Mid-term review is vitally important for LDCs. We want to see a comprehensive outcome coming out of the Mid-term review that provide strong impetus to the realization of the existing initiatives and commitments and launch concrete and specific global initiatives and measures, building on the decisions contained in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the outcome of the CoP-21 of the UNFCCC.

We fully recognize the high vulnerability of least developed countries to economic, natural and environmental shocks and disasters, as well as climate change. We need to undertake necessary measures in building the resilience of LDCs to withstand various kinds of shocks and crises to make their development gains sustainable.

We commend the High-level Panel of the Secretary-General for undertaking the feasibility study on the Technology Bank for LDCs and welcome its recommendation that the Technology Bank is not only feasible but also desirable. We invite the Secretary-General to undertake the necessary measures to ensure its full operationalization during this current session of the General Assembly. Development partners should provide necessary financial support for the operationalization of the technology bank.

We also note the Secretary General’s report on the Implementation, effectiveness and added value of smooth transition measures to support countries during their graduation from least developed country category finds that the graduation process should be handled in a way that development process of graduating countries are not jeopardized and that their progress towards the sustainable development goals will be sustained and irreversible. The follow-up on the exiting smooth transition measures need to be further strengthened so that graduation becomes a cause for celebration, not cause for discomfort.

Mr Chairman,

The Secretary-General’s report on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries points to persistent difficulties in addressing the structural challenges faced by landlocked developing countries related to geographical disadvantages, which inhibit their full participation in global production
networks and isolate them from global markets. The report is also instructive in pointing to the unique challenges of LLDCs that are exacerbated by poor infrastructure, low levels of development in the information and communications technology (ICT) sector and severe challenges in gaining access to energy.

What is also distressing is the indication that in 2013, landlocked developing countries also ranked among the countries with the lowest levels of human development.

It is imperative that landlocked developing countries structurally transform their economies if sustained economic growth and poverty eradication are to be achieved in the next decade. Development partners are also encouraged to provide targeted technical and financial support, as appropriate, towards the implementation of the specific actions in the Vienna Programme of Action.

In conclusion, Mr Chairman,

Efforts to assist and address the challenges faced by least developed countries through the Istanbul Programme of Action and landlocked developing countries through the Vienna Programme of Action would benefit immensely from a strong synergy and coherence of both Programmes with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

Both LDCs and LLDCs need increased and strengthened support to facilitate the coordinated implementation and coherent follow-up and review of their Programmes, the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

The international community together with the UN system, especially the Office of the High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, needs to further strengthen their support for these group of countries if they are effect structural changes to their economies and attain sustainable development.

Thank you.