Statement by the United States of America
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Agenda Item 23: Groups of Countries in Special Situations
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States appreciates this opportunity to address the challenges and achievements of countries in special situations.

At the Summit to adopt the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the United States pledged to implement the Sustainable Development Goals and work with partners to “leave no one behind.” Making this pledge a reality will require acknowledging the special circumstances many countries face and adapting our development efforts to meet the changing needs of the 21st century.

As President Obama said during his speech at the Summit to adopt the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it is no coincidence that half of the people living in extreme poverty around the world live in places afflicted by chronic violence and conflict. Many of these places are threatened by climate change, which means the world’s poorest people will bear the heaviest burden of adapting to rising seas, more intense droughts, shortages of food and water, and more frequent and severe natural disasters.

These are the realities confronting us. Climate change, geographic isolation, regional conflicts, and other external factors beyond the control of individual citizens, businesses, and even governments, play a significant role in shaping the economic development outcomes of many countries in special circumstances. But we cannot let these realities become an excuse for inaction.

The United States is committed to focusing Official Development Assistance resources where they can produce the greatest impact. In fulfillment of our 2005
G8 agreement, we will continue to “focus aid on low income countries that are committed to growth and poverty reduction, to democratic, accountable and transparent government, and to sound public financial management.” Indeed, since 2005, the U.S. allocation to Low Income Countries -- as a portion of total bilateral net official development assistance disbursements -- has more than doubled from close to 18 percent to nearly 37 percent.

However, overcoming the structural challenges facing countries in special circumstances will require far more than official development assistance.

Major developmental progress requires a continued commitment to transparent and accountable government and to promoting truly inclusive growth, with every individual contributing to development and sharing in its benefits. It also requires the creation of stable, predictable and enabling investment environments to attract increased and more diversified foreign direct investment. Many countries have been successful in recent years by emphasizing accountability and transparency to draw greater foreign investment, and those countries that do so have also enjoyed greater success in unlocking domestic financing as well.

Mr. Chairman,

As the Istanbul Program of Action for Least Developed Countries, the S.A.M.O.A. Pathway, and the Vienna Program of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries make clear, achieving sustainable development requires coordinated actions that both developing countries and their partners must take together. Our Global Development Lab is transforming the way we approach international development by bringing a diverse range of partners together to identify, test, and scale innovations to solve the world’s toughest challenges. Our bilateral assistance programs help bring electricity to African countries in need, deliver lifesaving medications to millions, help bring more adolescent girls into the classroom, and boost food supplies. Our pledge to the Green Climate Fund will help reduce carbon pollution and strengthen resilience in developing countries, especially the poorest and most vulnerable nations.
Fostering economic growth and resilience is one piece of the puzzle, but building strong institutions is equally important. The United States’ leadership in advancing the goals of the Open Government Partnership has increased transparency, bolstered citizen engagement, and harnessed new technologies to improve governance. And through our participation in the Addis Tax Initiative we are increasing our efforts to help countries gain better access to and better leverage over resources in their own countries.

Mr. Chairman,

We should all be proud of what we have already accomplished this year. The Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development directly address many of the unique situations and special needs of the world’s most vulnerable countries.

Reaching consensus in these negotiations took an unprecedented amount of compromise, pragmatism, and dedication. Guided by the same spirit of cooperation, we can avoid rehashing old language that no longer captures the spirit of our new era of universal goals and collaboration and elevate the substance of our resolutions to a higher and more pragmatic level.

In that spirit, we look forward to continuing our work with development partners, the private sector, civil society organizations, and most importantly, with the governments and people of those countries in special circumstances themselves, on their development priorities during the Second Committee, and beyond.

Thank you.