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**STATEMENT
BY
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UNITED NATIONS UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL
AND
HIGH REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES,
LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES
AND SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES
AT THE
FIFTEENTH SESSION OF THE UN HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE
ON SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION**

New York 29 May 2007

Mr. President,

It was in 2003 at this High Level Committee's thirteenth session – the first one after my Office was established – that I made the case for the special focus on the most vulnerable countries in the work of the United Nations for the south-south cooperation. As I speak here this morning at your fifteenth session, it gives me great satisfaction that now the least developed, landlocked and small islands as well as Africa in general have formally been identified by you to receive the special attention that these countries so genuinely deserve. My sincere thanks to the members of this Committee and the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation for that. I am confident, Mr. President, that under your leadership this HLC session would advance the actions needed to provide a proactive direction that this important area of UN's work requires.

Allow me, Mr. President, to commend UNDP under the able leadership of my dear colleague , Kermal Dervis, for the strong efforts they have made to promote South-South cooperation. I should recognize the untiring and enthusiastic efforts of my good friend, the Director of the Special Unit, Yiping Zhou. Efforts by him and his team have helped south-south cooperation gain the international profile and attention it deserves.

Next year would see the three decades of the adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action. The limited focus of south-south cooperation as envisaged then in the context of TCDC and ECDC has seen an enormous expansion both in terms of the concept and the diversity of its activities. The progress report submitted to this session records that the agenda for South-South Cooperation has expanded significantly to include not only economic and technical sectors but also security, good governance, health and the environment. It needs also to be borne in our deliberations that South-South Cooperation is changing the landscape of international relations particularly in trade, financial flows and regional integration. Developing countries have a broad range of areas to act on, from investment and infrastructure to the sharing of technological advances and best practices in development. In many cases, the best lessons in tackling development challenges can only be learnt from other developing countries.

My Office – UN-OHRLLS – is also delighted to find that the report has also made extensive references to the most vulnerable countries and their respective UN Programmes of Action as the focus of south-south cooperation activities in various parts of the world. In this context, I would like to underscore very strongly that if there is any group of countries that the theme of this session - "The Role of the United Nations in Strengthening South-South and Triangular Cooperation" – is most relevant to, it is the most vulnerable countries. The universally-recognized economic, social, environmental and institutional vulnerability of the least developed, landlocked and small islands makes them the most-deserving focus of renewed efforts to advance South-South Cooperation.

Taking into account your last session's decision, it is necessary that the UN

system targets the countries in special need as the primary beneficiary of South-South Cooperation. The Brussels Programme, the Almaty Programme and the Mauritius Strategy all put special emphasis on South-South Cooperation as a means to achieving their objectives. Let also add that triangular cooperation mechanism should pay additional attention to the implementation of these Programmes.

In this context, the progress report records a number of south-south activities supported by the industrialized countries, particularly those by Japan. The role of regional and subregional organizations in advancing South-South Cooperation has also been brought out well in the report. And these organizations which cater to many of the most vulnerable countries need the full support of the United Nations in their activities in this area of significant importance. UN-OHRLLS has also undertaken a series of efforts and activities to advance south-south cooperation. Unfortunately, our contribution for inclusion in the report has not been up to the expectation.

It goes without saying that South-South cooperation is not a substitute for North-South cooperation. Rather, it is complementary to North-South. The United Nations is the best placed among multilateral institutions to play the role that is needed to give the south-south agenda the focus and importance it needs.

It is important for the UN System to respond better to the growing demands for a more effective South-South cooperation - a South-South cooperation that delivers socio-economic benefits to the ordinary citizens of the South. In this context, the initiatives for the proposed Global South Development Forum (GSDF) and the Southern Leaders' Round Table (SLRT) deserve our whole-hearted encouragement and full support. It is therefore important not only to strengthen the institutional mechanisms for facilitating South-South Cooperation, but also to mainstream South-South cooperation throughout the UN System.

I believe that there is a need for greater coherence and coordination in the implementation of multilateral South-South cooperation programmes in order to derive maximum impact from the tremendous increase initiatives undertaken not only by United Nations organisations, but also by Member States and an increasing number of non-State partners, such as the private sector, civil society and informal networks.

Let me conclude by re-emphasizing what I have been saying in this High Level Committee since 2003 because I believe it is as valid now as it was then. Just like North-South Cooperation, South-South Cooperation should keep at its centre the special needs of the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS and the implementation of their respective Programmes of Action.
I thank you, Mr. President.
