## Statement -Belgium

Leave no one behind. 4 words that capture the essence of what the agenda 2030 and the SDGs is all about. 4 words, equally, to summarize the way Belgium has been going about its implementation, centred around an inclusive, participatory and rights-based approach to development.

Belgium has long concluded that in this SDG era, our development cooperation efforts should be concentrated first and foremost with those countries furthest left behind. That is why in 2014 already we pledged to spend at least half of our ODA in LDCs and fragile states. And that is also why 12 of the 14 partners of our development cooperation are LDCs.

Also in the intergovernmental arena, both here in NY and elsewhere, Belgium continues to stand by the LDCs, and we are very happy to continue our role as co-chair of the group of friends of the LDCs.

Efforts to achieve the goals of the Istanbul Programme of Action and those of Agenda 2030 are mutually supportive. Yet, both also share a similar assessment: despite progress, significant gaps do persist between the goals set out and the results achieved on the ground. And the impact of the current COVID-19 pandemic is already reversing the development gains of previous years, with the poorest and most vulnerable being hardest hit.

LDCs are indeed bearing a major brunt of the COVID consequences. Belgium

The past months have made it abundantly clear how closely interconnected the world has become. Global cooperation is essential if we are to overcome the structural challenges faced by the Least Developed Countries. The upcoming LDC-V conference is indeed the opportunity to renew the partnership between the LDCs and their development partners by charting a course towards a smart recovery and sustainable development.