

Statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China by H.E. Mr. Rodrigo Malmierca Díaz, Minister of Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment of the Republic of Cuba, at the opening segment of the Ministerial Meeting on South-South Cooperation: *partnerships for*

In this context, the least developed countries have been particularly hit and have confronted specific difficulties due to structural gaps that exacerbate their vulnerability to external shocks. The LDCs continue to face high dependence on imports, low level of productive capacities, limited fiscal space, the risk of debt distress and limited access to medical supplies, including Covid-19 vaccines which threaten the progress made in the last decade on poverty eradication, enhancing quality education and health systems and in their development agendas.

The implementation of the Doha Programme of Action for the decade 2022 2031 (DPoA), constitutes an opportunity to place the LDCs at the center of international cooperation and foster the prosperity and wellbeing of their population. As it coincides with the remaining years of action to achieve the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs, its implementation will require a robust international cooperation and partnership on the basis of mutual trust and benefit, focusing on the needs of least developed countries.

The Group is convinced that international cooperation among developing countries, in addition to North-South cooperation, is also an effective instrument for optimizing our potential to promote development through sharing of knowledge, ideas, technical advances, skills and expertise across a broad range of sector in our countries.

It is crucial to promote further initiatives on regional and sub-regional cooperation to enhance economic development. At the same time, it is important to increase interregional cooperation and integration in the six areas of action of the DPoA by providing technical cooperation and capacity building.

The South-South Cooperation is a voluntary manifestation of solidarity among peoples and countries of the South and should continue to be guided by the principles of respect for national sovereignty, national ownership and independence, equality, non-conditionality, non-interference in domestic affairs and mutual benefit.

It is important to recall that South-South cooperation is not a substitute for,