Statement delivered by Ms Gayethri Murugaiyan Pillay (Seychelles)

on behalf of the Seven Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Beneficiaries of the United Nations Human Rights Council Voluntary Technical Assistance Trust Fund for participation in the Thirty-Fifth Human Rights Council Session

On the occasion of the Reception hosted by H.E. Mr. Ildefonso Castro, Spanish Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, celebrating the adoption of resolution 34/30 “*Promoting the Voluntary Technical Assistance Trust Fund to Support the Participation of Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States in the Work of the Human Rights Council.”*

Tuesday 13th June 2017, 12.30pm – 1.30pm

Palais des Nations, Geneva

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon.

I am Gayethri M. Pillay from Seychelles and I address you today on behalf of the seven delegates attending the 35th session of the Human Rights Council under the Voluntary Trust Fund to support the participation of SIDS and LDCS in the work of the Human Rights Council.

At the outset, we wish to express our appreciation to His Excellency Mr Castro and Ambassador Menendez for hosting this event and inviting us to say a few words. As Trust Fund beneficiaries, we hope to be a testament to the aims and mandate of Resolution 34/40.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The seven delegates of the Trust Fund hail from the Commonwealth of Dominica, The Gambia, Guinea, Tanzania, Uganda, Sao Tome and Principe, and myself from Seychelles. For five of us, this is our first time to attend a regular session of the Human Rights Council. We are five women and two men; six of us representing African States along-side one Carribean country, and three among us are Small-island Developing States.

We are a diverse group representing varying politicial and socio-economic realities, however together we represent a singular aspirationto further the involvement and participation of our countries in the work of the Human Rights Council, and in doing so contributing towards the realisation of fundamental human rights for all.

For many of our countries, our seats in Room 20 are more often than not left empty. Our voices and unique perspectives are not heard at one of the highest forums for human rights, not because we are unwilling to speak, but rather because our capacity constraints both in Geneva and in our Capitals fuel our inability to do so.

The challenges of human resouce and technical capacity are not an abstentee excuse, but rather our stark reality. To take my own example of Seychelles; although we have had a Permanent Mission in the Commonwealth Small States Offices in Geneva since 2012, this is the first time Seychelles has ever been able to participate in a full session of the Human Rights Council.

Through the support of the Trust Fund, our countries – which include some of the smallest and least developed in the world – have the opportunity to enhance our capacities to engange effectively with the Human Rights Council, and influence decision making processes which at the end of day affect all of us*.*

Our presence at this session would not have been possible without the support of the Trust Fund, and in this view we wish to extend our deepest gratitude to the donors of the Trust Fund. We call on other countries to consider supporting the vital work of the Trust Fund in order for it to be able to fully implement its mandate in a timely manner as entrusted in Resolution 34/40. We also take this opportunity to congratulate and thank the Permanent Mission of Spain for paving the way with their bolstered support of the Trust Fund as announced this afternoon*.*

Ladies and gentlemen,

To conclude, we trust that our participation in this Council session will demonstrate the significant contributions we can make as SIDS and LDCS, and also lend in enhancing the credibility of the Human Rights Council through ensuring the inclusion of *all* voices in it’s dialogues and deliberations.

We look forward to going home and sharing the enriching experiences we will undoubtedly gain during our three weeks at the Human Rights Council.

Thank you, and we wish you a good day ahead.