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Item 10 (a) of the revised provisional agenda

Report by the Chair of the Advisory Body set up in accordance with paragraph 166 of the Bangkok Plan of Action on the implementation of courses by the secretariat in 2015–2016 and their relevant impact; and the appointment of members of the Advisory Body for 2017

Report of the Chair of the Advisory Body for the year 2015–2016, established in the context of paragraph 166 of the UNCTAD X Plan of Action


1. During the forty-seventh session in 2001, the Trade and Development Board adopted a decision to establish an Advisory Body to advise the Secretary-General of UNCTAD on the broad objectives, content and structure of the capacity building courses, in line with paragraph 166 of the Bangkok Plan of Action. You recall that this particular mandate was renewed by the São Paulo Consensus, the Accra Accord and the Doha Mandate, and was most recently reaffirmed in the Nairobi Maafikiano. Additionally, high-level officials expressed appreciation of this programme that targets mid-level government officials. The Policy Capacity-Building Section, within the Knowledge Development Branch of the Division on Technology and Logistics, coordinates these courses within UNCTAD, across geographical regions and with permanent missions of member States based in Geneva and relevant United Nations economic commissions.

2. The Advisory Body for the year 2015–2016, which was formed at the sixty-second session of the Trade and Development Board in 2015, met in June 2016. I will today report on (a) the outcome of the meetings and (b) implementation of the courses held since the previous meeting of the Board and plans for the remaining courses for the current biennium. I will also provide information on (c) the end-of-course evaluations for regional courses held for Africa, Latin America and Caribbean last year and, most recently, countries with economies in transition and developing countries, and the least developed countries of Western Asia; and (d) on the short courses for Geneva-based diplomats in 2015 and early 2016.

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I. Outcome of the Advisory Body meeting in June 2016

3. At the meeting in June 2016, the Advisory Body reviewed the activities of the UNCTAD flagship programme, including curricula content and evaluations of regional courses, in particular of the regional courses for Latin America and the Caribbean and for Asia and the Pacific, as those courses were held after the term of the previous Advisory Body. Additionally, the findings of the initial evaluation for the thirty-fourth regional course for economies in transition were considered. The Advisory Body took note of the multi-year venues in the five developing regions, which is indicative of the extensive political support the programme receives from member States, the main partners of the paragraph 166 programme. I also took note of significant points raised by members of the Advisory Board, as one member State representative indicated that three regional courses per venue, over the duration of five years, might not provide the same opportunity for other countries in a particular region to host this capacity-building course. This issue will be extensively discussed with the designated UNCTAD officials to assess whether the number of regional courses should be limited to fewer than the current three. In this regard, we wish to thank the Governments of Colombia, Mauritius, Oman, Serbia and Singapore for their commitment and substantial support to this flagship programme of UNCTAD. The achievements made under this programme are notable and the evaluations, reported by the recipients and their supervisors, are testaments to that. Feedback and assessments are solicited in a systematic manner. The evaluations, and feedback, of the programme delineate and measure the impact of the UNCTAD courses on policymakers in the five regions. Let me further elaborate.

II. Evaluation of the courses delivered in 2015 and early 2016

4. Mid-level government officials in policymaking who attended the four regional courses held in Mauritius, Colombia and Singapore in 2015 and in Serbia earlier in 2016 overwhelmingly complimented the structure of the course, its focus on national economic policy coordination and its link to development. Overall, the course has given them a better understanding of international economic issues and how their economies fit into the global economy, providing a comprehensive understanding of economic growth trajectories and various aspects that impact developing countries. In this regard, the programme has been able to provide enhanced analytical tools to better understand the efforts required to achieve a greater level of development through sound macroeconomic strategies that improve trade policy formulation. I am also pleased to report that the programme provides analytical vision that shows the implication of a development model in a holistic way such that it can help to develop precise policy proposals, while safeguarding a country's policy space when designing policies. This aspect of policy space was highlighted in module I of the programme curriculum. Overall, the curriculum of this programme is significant as it illustrates a comprehensive approach to consider all economic parameters, including trade, investment, finance, technology and inclusive growth and their interrelatedness in achieving development objectives. The course contributes to policy coherence and conducting national consultation efforts on the national level.

5. I took note of the results of the evaluations conducted by participating member States, who report how they see economic integration enhancing attraction of foreign direct investment and how trade-related development policies can be country-specific, while taking into account the role of finance and technology. Finally, the paragraph 166 course provides a better understanding of the link between development and poverty reduction.

6. Accordingly, the evaluations revealed deepened knowledge on international economic issues and their relationship to development; the course was directly relevant to

the professional duties of participants who reported – following the aforementioned courses – a strengthened ability to apply lessons learned that emerged from the course. Additionally, an increased integration into the organizational structure and political strategy of their departments improved as well, indicating they are now involved in the formulation of trade policies at their respective departments, providing specific advice on trade, investment and financial issues. They have also reported increased integration into decision-making processes. As the programme is embedded in a knowledge-based capacity-building framework, it focuses heavily on sharing and disseminating information with colleagues in the relevant departments or elsewhere in the public sector. The UNCTAD flagship course, aimed at investing in human capital, calls this the multiplier effect. In this regard, I was pleased to note that the majority of supervisors indicated that participants shared extensively the information and knowledge gained with colleagues in their departments and related ones. Significant as well is that all supervisors, across the board, indicated they would recommend other colleagues to participate in paragraph 166 courses.

7. An important element that was also addressed by policymakers is the adequate environment provided for these courses, generating solid debates and discussion sessions, the importance of learning from other countries' experiences and good practices in economic policy development. In this regard, I commend the good quality of experts from UNCTAD, the regional commissions and national experts who guided these policymakers at these courses.

8. The Advisory Body took note that such positive feedback can only be generated via a carefully designed curriculum and its delivery that made a positive impact on the knowledge and skills of policymakers. The involvement of UNCTAD experts and regional commission and national experts, led by the Policy Capacity-Building Section of the Knowledge Development Branch, consistently ensures the qualitative excellence of the unique paragraph 166 regional programme that addresses the challenges faced in achieving trade, investment, finance and technology objectives and particularly how to ensure that development objectives are also secured for developing countries.

9. I must mention another significant point of the curriculum for paragraph 166. During our meeting, one member State representative inquired about the Sustainable Development Goals and whether they had been incorporated into the curriculum. For the thirty-fourth regional course held in Belgrade, UNCTAD notes that in fact the modules incorporated the Sustainable Development Goals, as participants looked at the key challenges of development and transition policies in order to achieve economic and human development and the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as economic growth. Evidently, the UNCTAD curriculum is constantly evolving and adapting to specific contexts and new global benchmarks set at the highest level. As I was presiding over this meeting, it was clear that investing in human capital and building durable strong institutions are among the best approaches to reduce the widening gaps of economic inequalities that persist in our world. Indeed, investing in human capital is one of the main vehicles for achieving economic and political development. Additionally, I want to lay emphasis on the programme's consistent approach in ensuring gender balance on average, as a matter of policy and in advocating for the pillars of programme. This has been yet another benchmark set by the programme over years.

10. As I report to you late in the year, the secretariat has recently delivered another regional course for the Middle East and North Africa, in Oman. This regional course included participants from across the Arab region, with least developed countries and developing countries represented. The demand for this course was apparently higher than at any other time. I am sure my successor for next year's Trade and Development Board will fill you in on these aspects. As for the courses for 2017, three regional courses will be

held: in Mauritius for the Africa region, in Colombia for the Latin America and the Caribbean region and in Singapore for the Asia and the Pacific region.

III. Short courses for Geneva-based delegates

11. I shall now report on the short courses for Geneva-based delegates.

12. The secretariat delivered five short courses for Geneva-based delegates in 2015, and another two in early 2016. The courses dealt with many areas, from the UNCTAD programme on non-tariff measures in world trade and trade logistics, transport, trade facilitation and customs automation, to promoting investment in the Sustainable Development Goals. Earlier this year, in February 2016, two courses were held dealing with developments in international trade and on the use of trade policy instruments, and the imperative of transforming rural economies in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

13. These short courses have been well attended, and it is clear from the evaluations by Geneva-based delegates that they are informative and raise awareness of trade topics useful for the delegates' professional duties. The participants also noted that the choice of topics is relevant.

14. In this regard, I wish to applaud and commend the efforts of the secretariat to ensure that the courses continue to be delivered with a high level of quality, both in substance and in the calibre of expertise. I call upon all members of the Trade and Development Board to continue supporting its commendable efforts. I also call upon members to provide all the support to the secretariat that it takes for this important capacity-building programme to continue meeting the demands of mid-level government officials and policymakers in the areas of trade, finance, investment, technology and development.

15. On a final note, I wish to thank the members of the Advisory Body, namely Argentina, Chile, Cote d'Ivoire, Estonia, France, Indonesia, Oman, Poland and Rwanda, and the country I represent, Panama, as their and our feedback and observations made during the meeting of the Advisory Body were constructive and contributed to the deliberations of the Body, providing the necessary support to the Secretary-General of UNCTAD in the implementation of this important flagship capacity-building programme.

16. In closing, I congratulate His Excellency Mr. Christopher Onyanga Aparr, the Ambassador of Uganda, on his appointment as the new Chair of the Advisory Body, and wish him a fruitful and successful term. I wish for His Excellency to note this significant programme as a channel directly linked to building the capacity of future policymakers based across the globe.
