Report on Activities undertaken by UNCTAD in support of Africa
Trade and Development Board, 7-9 September
Introductory Remarks
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Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to UNCTAD’s Sixty-seventh executive session of the Trade and Development Board. It is a great pleasure to report back on document TD/B/67/2 on the activities undertaken by UNCTAD in support of Africa from May 2019 to March 2020. I do so in my capacity as Director of ALDC, which is responsible for the coordination of Africa-related activities in UNCTAD, and on behalf of all Divisions that have contributed to the activities outlined in the Report.

Before we commence our discussion on UNCTAD’s work programme in Africa, and take stock of what we accomplished on the continent in the past year, let me begin by noting that our work in Africa continues to be influenced by and aligns with the goals set out in Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development, and the development aspirations encapsulated in the African Union (AU)’s Agenda 2063.

Although the document does not cover it specifically, let me remind you that UNCTAD has adapted all of its technical cooperation and research activities to support African countries in their efforts to counteract the negative socio-economic effects of COVID-19. As the Report that will be presented to you and deliberated upon here will illustrate, the activities that we undertook in Africa during 2019-2020, had a significant impact across a broad range of areas, and at the national, regional and continental levels.

I am happy to report that 40.7% of UNCTAD’s total technical cooperation expenditure was directed towards Africa. Much of UNCTAD’s work in Africa over the past year has focused on the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area.
Progress

- UNCTAD’s progress in Transforming African economies during the past year has increasingly focused on the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area and the further growth and influence of Foreign Direct Investment, particularly the growing number of Special Economic Zones on the continent.

  - We have continued to support the negotiations and implementation process of the African Continental Free Trade Area, working towards solutions that are best for governments, businesses and individuals. Examples of UNCTADs work include:

    - Partnering with the African Union to draft technical, transparent, business friendly, rules of origin with special regard to Special Economic Zones (#8).
    - Updating the investment protocol within the agreement to reflect the UNCTAD’s commitment to sustainable development (#9).
    - Contributing to the discussion on the importance of standardization of regulations on products between African Union states, with special regard to pharmaceuticals (#10).
    - Identifying and dismantling non-tariff barriers to trade (#11)
      - For example, the development of an online mechanism where private sector individuals can directly report trade-related obstacles, which allows for data collection and direct contact between complaint and regulator.

- UNCTAD and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) are implementing a UN Development Account Project in 6 African countries (Ethiopia, The Gambia, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria and Togo) to strengthen the capacities of national and regional policymakers and stakeholders to measure and analyze value chains and design services policies aimed at enabling higher integration into global and regional value chains. A train-the-trainers seminar to discuss and validate the methodology for measuring the contribution of services to regional chains was held in Ethiopia, and six national workshops, with a focus on the selected sectors (finance, transport and tourism services) were delivered. Currently the project is undertaking COVID-19 impact assessments on the services sector in 5 out of the 6 project countries.
In addition, increasing and improving investment opportunities in Africa remains a priority, especially given the prevalence of Special Economic Zones.

- **Collecting, analyzing and publishing data** with relation to Foreign Direct Investment in the World Investment Report. (#17).
  - In 2018, Foreign Direct Investment to Africa rose by 11%, making it the fastest growing region in terms of Foreign Direct Investment.
  - Kenya and Nigeria were listed in 2019 among the 20 economies with the most Special Economic Zones.

- **Hosting informational and training sessions** with top African policy makers, and the support of the African Import-Export Bank, to ensure best practice, maintenance and maximum benefit of Special Economic Zones. (#18).

- **Reviewing national investment policies** with regards to how to improve the investment climate, and how-to best tailor policy (#20).
  - In 2019, UNCTAD prepared reviews for Angola, Chad, and Cote d’Ivoire and helped implement recommendations in Kenya and Cabo Verde.
  - As well, continued **capacity building activities** with investment professionals in the Anima investment network, East African Community and International Network of Francophone Investment Promotion Agencies.

**Tackling Vulnerabilities and Resistance Building**

- **UNCTAD seeks to**: reduce commodity dependence and increase value addition in economic activities. (#22).

- **For example, the EU-UNCTAD joint programme on Angola**: UNCTAD has partnered with the EU to identify non-oil exports for Angola. The programme has identified 8 new, green categories for export, then bolstered efforts in mapping value chains and developing action plans for the products. The programme also works to provide training to private enterprises, directly enhancing their prospects for economic growth (#24, #25).
  - Logistical Assistance: This is supported by the **UNCTAD Automated System for Customs Data** (ASYCUDA); which eases the integration process by facilitating trade through time and cost of transport (#30)

● For the AfCFTA to function effectively on the continent, African countries will need to enhance trade facilitation efforts, both between themselves and external partners. UNCTAD supports African capacity-building on trade facilitation at the level of policymaking and programme implementation. For example, in Angola UNCTAD supported national trade facilitation committees through the delivery of training workshops to such committees encouraging and promoting effective public, public–private and civil society partnerships. At national and regional levels, UNCTAD’s Trade Facilitation Empowerment Programme supported the establishment and strengthening of National Trade Facilitation Committees across the continent. The frameworks are central to an all-of-government approach in implementing reforms to facilitate both import and export trade.

UNCTAD’s Activities on Improving Competitiveness and Enhancing Multilateralism

● UNCTAD helps African countries to improve the functioning of their markets through (i). better distribution of responsibility between the state and market, and (ii). harnessing the power of modern communications technology.

  ○ Support for Technology, Science and Innovation through conducting reviews and scheduling consultations of existing national policies, and drafting new policies for inclusive development (#34, #35, #41).

  ○ Enhancing Digital capabilities for trade and financial empowerment- UNCTAD has taken part in developing electronic government and e-trade systems, and promoting e-commerce through the Intergovernmental Group of Experts (#36, #38, #39, #42).

● Deeper Multilateralism - UNCTAD reaffirms its commitment to multilateralism by continuing to engage in partnerships with other international organizations to contribute to Africa’s economic development.
○ UNCTAD is a partner of the **Framework**, which includes the International Monetary Fund, the International Trade Centre, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization. UNCTAD takes the lead in Africa and conducts **Diagnostic Integration Studies (DIS)**. For example, a DIS was completed in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in December 2019, which included an analysis of mining, agriculture, forestry, and trade facilitation.

○ **Cotton by-products initiative**: UNCTAD, the International Trade Centre, and the World Trade Organization have **secured funding** to research the feasibility of cotton by-products. Emerging and new potential cotton by-products include **surgical cotton wool** and **feed for chicken and fish**.

### Empowering Individuals

- Empowering Individuals - UNCTAD believes in the grassroots social and economic change that can arise from focusing on individuals.
  - **Entrepreneurship and Job Training**
    - For example: The **business linkages program** helped rural entrepreneurs in Tanzania improve the quality and consistency of their agricultural products in order to supply them to large processors and exporters (#48).
    - **Train for Trade Program** - in which 285 trade officials from 41 countries were trained in trade and services and merchandise trade (#50).
    - Similarly, developing the digital economy presents significant opportunities for African entrepreneurs.
  - **Encouraging the creative economy**
    - There has been significant growth in the creative economy according to UNCTAD’s second creative economy outlook—providing evidence that the SDG’s can be reached in part by embracing this.
    - UNCTAD collaborated with the **Shap-Shap Association** to showcase the African Creative Economy at Antigel Festival in Switzerland (#49).
  - **Promoting Gender Equality**
UNCTAD developed a teaching package on trade and gender, with a correspondent online course, with topics ranging from shaping an inclusive gender responsive trade policy, the digital economy and the challenge of structural transformation, to entrepreneurship and the SDGs (#54).

Introduction of eTrade for women initiative-- women are encouraged to participate in inclusive development through the digital economy. In February 2020, the first Masterclass was held (#39).

In closing, ladies and gentlemen, we look forward to further deliberations on the Report as well as your contributions on how we can further strengthen our work programme in Africa in response to Agenda 2030 and the AU's Agenda 2063 and in preparation for UNCTAD XV.

I wish you a fruitful and productive meeting. Thank you.