

Opening message of the Secretary General of UNCTAD for the First Meeting of the Joint UNCTAD- Network of Southern Think-Tanks Technical Working Group on Defining, measuring and reporting South-South Cooperation: accounting grants, debt, technical assistance and in-kind support between developing countries, Geneva, 17 December 2015

Distinguished Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to welcome you to Geneva for the first meeting of the Network of Southern Think-Tanks / UNCTAD Technical Working Group on defining, measuring and reporting South-South Cooperation. Unfortunately, I cannot be with you today to open this very important meeting, as I am representing UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon at the Ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organization this week in Nairobi. However, I am very pleased that you are launching today what I hope will prove to be a long and fruitful partnership between NeST, UNCTAD and other relevant partners.

The work you are embarking upon is more important than ever. In today's knowledge and information age and with the call for a Data Revolution to help achieve the United Nations Agenda 2030, the importance of good quality statistics and information is clear. As the report of the United Nations Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development reminds us: "*Data are the lifeblood of decision-making and the raw material for accountability. Without high-quality data providing the right information on the right things at the right time; designing, monitoring and evaluating effective policies becomes almost impossible.*" The success of the Sustainable Development Goals will depend on how statistics and data can support robust impact measurement to deliver better lives for all.

Developing a harmonized conceptual framework for South-South Cooperation and building a public database to make these vitally important data available will make a major contribution to properly recognizing the growing contribution of the South to multilateral cooperation. Harmonizing definitions and concepts and building a single, centralized database to record this generosity will make a necessary and valuable contribution to our knowledge of how the South is helping itself and will showcase this to the world.

The work you are embarking upon is also particularly important and relevant to UNCTAD. The Accra Accord mandates UNCTAD to continue and deepen our supporting role in supporting economic cooperation among developing countries. Of particular relevance for your work, UNCTAD is mandated 'to upgrade data and analytical tools on South-South flows and cooperation'.

I wish you fruitful deliberations and I offer you my solemn assurance that UNCTAD stands ready to assist your important work in any way that we can.