

64TH SESSION OF THE TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD
FRIDAY, 15 SEPTEMBER 2017
OPENING REMARKS BY ISABELLE DURANT, DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL OF UNCTAD

- Sessional Committee II: Economic Development in Africa: Tourism for Transformative and Inclusive Growth (Item 6)
- Sessional Committee I: Contributions of UNCTAD to the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (Item 5)
- Activities of UNCTAD in Support of Small Island Developing States and in Support of Land Locked Developing Countries (Item 10)

Excellencies,

Distinguished Panellists,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- It is a pleasure for me to open today's deliberations. With your indulgence, I will open all three items on the agenda today, at once, as their themes are interrelated.
- The sessions today will review UNCTAD's activities and lessons learned in its assistance to:
 - African countries;
 - Least Developed Countries (LDCs);
 - Land Locked Developing Countries (LLDCs);
 - Small Island Developing Countries (SIDs); and
 - Other vulnerable economies in addressing their trade and development challenges.
- The themes discussed today echo UNCTAD's development vision of *Prosperity for All*, as outlined in the Nairobi Maafikiano, as well as the goals encapsulated in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- They are also aligned with the Istanbul Programme of Action (IpoA), which identified the building of productive capacities as the first priority for action in LDCs, with particular emphasis on: infrastructure, energy, science, technology and innovation, and private sector development.
- We also echo the goals of the Samoa Pathway, where UN Member States pledged "to take urgent and concrete action to address the vulnerability of Small Island Developing States".
- To date, progress towards reaching the goals and targets of the Istanbul Programme of Action has been mixed. On average, GDP of the world's 47 LDCs grew only 3.8 per cent in 2015, the lowest level recorded for the group over the past two decades. Furthermore, the LDCs' growth rates remain far below the 7% target.
- Meanwhile, Small Island Developing States are significantly more vulnerable to external shocks - up to 33 per cent more vulnerable than other developing countries - and they are considerably more exposed to energy price shocks, and climate change effects.
- These countries also face major challenges in mobilizing financial resources, and capacity constraints further hamper development gains on the ground.

- The paramount development goal is therefore resilience-building, with a diverse set of policies needed to support economic diversification, climate adaptation, trade, transportation, employment and productive capacities, among other areas.
- In spite of their need, SIDS receive limited international support, due in particular to the lack of consensus criteria for identifying SIDS.
- UNCTAD continues to lead global advocacy efforts in this area, as well as supporting the resilience-building work of the 28 individual countries on UNCTAD'S "analytical list" of SIDS.
- UNCTAD'S support to SIDS will be detailed in later presentation, but broadly includes:
 - Advocating for consensus criteria for identifying SIDS and raising the visibility of the island vulnerability issue;
 - Identifying special measures that respond to these countries' specific context; and
 - A range of advisory services.
- Let me turn now to the topic of tourism, a multifaceted industry with increasing potential to support economic growth and job creation. In particular, UNCTAD recognizes tourism's important role in the achievement of sustainable development for African countries, including LDCs and SIDS.
- Tourism has the capacity to create jobs and increase incomes, including for women, who are typically better represented in tourism activities than in other sectors. Tourism also has strong spillover effects into other sectors, such as agriculture, further contributing to job creation and poverty reduction. In many African countries, however, links between tourism and other sectors remain weak and underexploited.
- These findings were highlighted recently in UNCTAD's *Economic Development in Africa Report 2017: Tourism for Transformative and Inclusive Growth*.
- Meanwhile, UNCTAD promotes a portfolio of services and capacity building initiatives for the development of tourism in Africa through research, analysis and technical assistance.
- I want to re-iterate that African countries, LDCs, and countries with geographical barriers face a specific set of challenges to escape poverty and embark on a path toward sustainable development. They therefore require innovative assistance that responds to their specific context.
- Multilateral efforts should support sustainable tourism development, and foster innovation in key economic sectors. We should encourage countries to adopt policies that strengthen intersectoral linkages, build productive capacities, boost intraregional cooperation and promote peace.
- There is an urgent need to strengthen partnerships and efforts for development. I am heartened to see the wide range of actors here today who have gathered to do just that.
- Today's Trade and Development Board session is an opportunity to reflect on UNCTAD's experience in helping the world's most vulnerable countries overcome their development challenges, and to foster further action.

I thank you for your attention and I wish you all a productive discussion.