Activities Report Istanbul programme of action (LDCs)

Introduction

- The report before you highlights the main activities of UNCTAD in support of the IPoA between April 2017 and March 2018. I will briefly outline the key sections of the report, which is structured by our main pillars of work: Research and Policy Analysis, Technical Assistance and Capacity-Building and Intergovernmental Consensus-building.

I.   Research and policy analysis

- In terms of Research and policy analysis, UNCTAD has continued to examine the structural development problems affecting LDCs, and to identify policy options for addressing them, with the objective of achieving progress towards the SDGs. Our work in this field during the reporting period is outlined in section I of the report. Particular emphasis was placed on the role of energy in supporting structural transformation, and in harnessing the development benefits of tourism and migration.

- In your agreed conclusions of the last sessions, you noted that the Africa Report provided valuable information on the tourism sector's contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals.

II.   Intergovernmental consensus building

- The next section outlines our work in intergovernmental consensus building. Our activities in this pillar aim at drawing international attention to the development challenges faced by the LDCs, and supporting intergovernmental discussion of and consensus on policies that will allow LDCs achieve progress towards the SDGs.

- In this context, you may recall that during the High-Level Segment of the last session of the Trade and Development Board, UNCTAD organized a special panel discussion devoted to the topic 'Building productive capacities in LDCs and other vulnerable economies: lessons learned'. The panel included the Vice-President of Ghana, the Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission; the United Nations High Representative for the Least

Developed Countries, and highlighted policies and measures to accelerate progress in building productive capacities.

- There were also two Expert Meetings convened to address issues of particular interest to the LDCs.

- UNCTAD further continues to support the deliberations of the Committee for Development Policy. In the reporting period, UNCTAD prepared vulnerability profiles for 6 LDCs: Bhutan, Kiribati, Nepal, Sao Tome and Principe, Solomon Islands and Timor Leste.

III. UNCTAD Technical assistance for capacity building

- The third section of the report provides an overview of the extensive technical assistance activities of UNCTAD in support of the IPoA.

A. Productive Capacities:

- The first priority area for action – productive capacity – is particularly close to our hearts, in light UNCTAD's role in contributing to the development of the concept. Building productive capacities is a key condition for LDCs to diversify their economies and achieve structural transformation. It is therefore an important building block for overcoming commodity-dependence, and achieving sustainable growth, as well as poverty reduction.

- UNCTAD's work in this area consists of further developing the concept, and rendering it more operational. For example, UNCTAD is working to develop a measurable index of productive capacities, which will allow countries to assess their performance over time. In this way, it aims to support evidence-based development policy-making.

- UNCTAD also provided sector-specific support to some countries in building their productive capacities, for example through our work on upgrading and diversifying fisheries exports, which benefited 6 LDCS.

- Other sector-specific assistance focused on some of the components of productive capacities, such as science and technology. Examples include our

STIP reviews, as well as the e-commerce readiness assessments, which were carried out in 4 LDCs. A further 10 assessments are expected to be released this year.

B. Trade and Trade facilitation:

- In the area of trade, our technical assistance focused on assisting LDCs to achieve meaningful market access, by building their negotiation capacities, providing analytical support, and identifying measures to increase trade opportunities in new sectors.

- Our work therefore included assistance to LDCs in multilateral and regional trade negotiations, especially the recently concluded phase 1 of the CAFTA, as well as support to LDCs in the process of acceding to the WTO.

- UNCTAD work also covers trade facilitation, including assisting 15 LDCs in implementing the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. And 38 of the world's 47 LDCs are using UNCTAD's Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA).

Investment and Enterprise Development:

- In the area of investment, UNCTAD aims to assist LDCs in attracting more FDI, and in maximizing the development benefits from these flows. Our work focuses on analyzing the regulatory environment for FDI in LDCs, as well as related policies, and making recommendations for adjusting regulations and policies to strengthen the development dimension of FDI. For example, UNCTAD's Investment Policy Reviews have been prepared for 17 LDCs so far. In the reporting period, UNCTAD published the IPR for The Gambia. Work also commenced on IPRs for Angola and Chad.

- Additionally, UNCTAD's online investment guides seek to raise awareness among the international investors of investment opportunities and conditions in beneficiary countries. Investment Guides have been or are being developed online for 7 LDCs.

- Another dimension of UNCTAD's work in this area is strengthening entrepreneurial capacities, through our EMPRETEC programme. During the

reporting period, UNCTAD provided train-the trainers sessions in the EMPRETEC Centres in The Gambia, Tanzania and Zambia.

Debt Issues:

- UNCTAD's Debt Management and Financial Analysis (DMFAS) Programme is active in 21 LDCs.

- Concrete results include the availability of timely and reliable debt records, which are essential for risk analysis and the elaboration of strategies for ensuring sustainable debt levels.

E. Human and social development:

- UNCTAD also works to ensure that trade and development policies in LDCs contribute to broader human and social development goals.

- One example is the Trade and Gender Toolbox, which provides a framework to evaluate the impact of trade reforms on women and gender inequalities.

- The Secretary-General of UNCTAD launched the Toolbox during the Sixth Global Review of Aid for Trade held at the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Geneva in July 2017.

Good governance:

- Finally, in the area of good governance, UNCTAD supports individual LDCs to strengthen their national statistical capacity to design programmes and policies for sustainable development. For example, UNCTAD has been collaborating with the statistics department of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) to develop harmonized methods for data collection, data processing and dissemination, to provide support in the application of those methods, and to build up a joint statistical database.

And these are only some examples of our work.

In closing, allow me to say that UNCTAD is receiving more and more demands for technical assistance from LDCs. The UNCTAD secretariat stands ready to respond

to these requests to the best of ability, although our capacity to meet growing demand is constrained by available resources.

Thank you very much.