

JUSCANZ Statement

UNCTAD Trade and Development Board (TDB),
General Debate Wednesday, June 26, 2018

Mr. President

Secretary General

Deputy Secretary General

Excellencies

Distinguished delegates

The JUSCANZ countries would like to once again thank Ambassador Badoura for serving as TDB president and for his dedication to UNCTAD, and also congratulate and warmly welcome Ambassador Gaffey in his already tested capacity as TDB president. We stand ready to assist you in the months ahead.

We would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Barbados for hosting UNCTAD 15, and to the UAE for hosting the WIF and eCommerce week Asia. We trust that the co-chairs will deliver very successful events.

We look forward to take part in the process leading up to the Conference, hoping for an outcome that will shape UNCTAD's work in a meaningful manner, not only in terms of framing the substance within a clear mandate but also to take an opportunity to genuinely reflect and deliver a way of working that takes us away from the current, unnecessary polarized dynamics so that we can focus collectively on getting to the results we are all looking for. We continue to believe that preparations for UNCTAD 15 should use time as efficiently as possible without sacrificing necessary substantive debates. We have learned from the lengthy negotiations leading into the previous conference – indeed some of us in the room have vivid memories of long days in Geneva and long nights in Nairobi - and we should take advantage of our experience to craft a better roadmap to UNCTAD 15.

Mr. Chair,

We have just gone through the high-level segment, and would like to briefly comment on a few things. First, we'd like to thank the Secretariat for preparing the background papers which – for the most part – we found to be balanced, objective and helpful discussion starters.

Unfortunately however, these reports did not seem to form the basis of discussions from panellists. And indeed in some cases panellists either focused on issues not mandated for discussions at this TDB (such as illicit financial flows) or presented overall one-sided views on trade and development issues (for

example intellectual property rights). This is a concern we have had previously, for example during last year's TDB discussion on the 2018 Trade and Development Report.

We emphasise the importance of ensuring balance and diversity of views among panellists. From the JUSCANZ point of view, UNCTAD discussions and reports are most useful when based on data and facts, providing an objective forum to engage on challenging trade and development issues. On this occasion, the HLS did not – to the extent that we would like to have seen - provide that forum.

Mr. Chair

We will not surprise anyone in this room by saying that for JUSCANZ countries, how things are done have almost equal weight than what is being done. We want UNCTAD to be able to deliver, through its three pillars, in a meaningful way for developing countries as development is the primary angle of all of UNCTAD's work. When it comes to research and capacity building, this angle is more visible and tangible. When it comes to the intergovernmental processes, then the full membership should find what it needs in terms of substantive discussions.

We continue to implore the Secretariat to facilitate the substantive discussion on the management issues in UNCTAD. Management challenges continue to impede progress towards UNCTAD's mandate and if unaddressed will continue to weaken the organization. We would like this to be treated as part of the family of topics that have populated discussions in board meetings of most other international bodies. We appreciate the efforts from the Chair to renew a discussion on how to define and integrate a management item as part of the work of the TDB. UNCTAD, in all its pillars, should become a learning organization, not only in creating knowledge but also in order to improve on the delivery of its mandate, to not just look at doing more, but to do better. Whether it is at the TDB or elsewhere in the structure of the IGM, the ongoing discussion and reporting on improving standards in management, accountability, and transparency needs to be formalized so that it becomes predictable and we can all prepare for it accordingly.

This is why we think that evaluation and assessment exercises, regardless of who initiates them, are absolutely essential tools to help the entire membership identify and help address the operational challenges that UNCTAD faces. Through these assessments, member states can provide recommendations, ideas, and suggestions on how UNCTAD can deliver results and have greater impact. This goes above funding considerations – it is about adding a tool to our toolbox to allow all of us to help UNCTAD operate better. In this regard we are pleased to see progress on the MOPAN assessment, which is merely a tool in our collective toolbox we can use to improve UNCTAD. It is time to shift our mind set so that such assessments become a constructive, collaborative exercise between UNCTAD's leadership and all member states.

Mr. Chair

We have a few more things we would like to add:

First we are noting that it's been months since the TDB has sent the Working Party Terms of Reference to the UN Controller in New York to have feedback and be able to formalize and finalize its approval. We were hoping to achieve that this winter during the last Executive Session of the TDB. We did not receive feedback in time. It appears it will not happen during this TDB either. We would urge you to follow up on your predecessor's efforts to push for a response from New York and make sure that we are not in a "bottom of the pile" situation. Those terms of reference are one of the few consensus decisions coming from "Phase 2" - we would like to see them finalized.

Second, also as a result of the member-driven exercise to revitalize the intergovernmental process, UNCTAD made a number of changes to the calendar of meetings, including moving the Trade and Development Board in June. Since then, it has been very difficult for the Secretariat to adjust to this new timeframe, particularly when it comes to the publication cycle of the flagship reports that constitute supporting documentation. As a result this TDB, for example, is very condensed and quite light on substance beyond the high-level segment. The Executive Session in the fall will be quite loaded in terms of publications to be discussed and substantive exchanges. So we are wondering if this is an appropriate time to revisit this decision and bring the entire TDB to the fall, which de facto seems to be what is happening.

Third, Member states have repeatedly, either bilaterally or as groups and through various means, requested more information about the results and relevance of travel from the UNCTAD Secretariat, senior staff in particular. We have yet to receive a sufficiently detailed response. We would like to recall the General Assembly Resolution 69/274, requesting the UN Secretary-General to hold managers accountable for the judicious use of travel resources, and Section 3 of ST/AI/2013 which outlines the management oversight and reporting required by all UN bodies to undertake official travel. We would welcome detailed information about the relevance, frequency, costs, and results of travel undertaken by UNCTAD's senior management.

Fourth, we were pleased to hear from the SG on Monday that RBM training has continued and that most staff have received the initial mandatory training. This is a positive step. The remaining challenge is implementation, and we observe that divisions are unevenly integrating RBM into their work. We hope that the implementation of the second extension of UMOJA will help in this matter, so that

UNCTAD has the tools it needs to be able to manage for results as a whole rather than the current fragmented way of operating. The next natural step will be for UNCTAD to develop its risk management strategy at the corporate level, and we are looking forward to hear about this in the near future.

Last, and not least, we would like to highlight the fact that in the fall of 2018 UNCTAD, for the first time, published an overarching gender strategy for the organization. This strategy sets UNCTAD's parity plan for staffing, with annual aspirational targets, as well as the enabling environment that is needed to reach those targets. Beyond staffing, we additionally welcome the sustained efforts to integrate gender considerations into the Secretariat's work. More can always be done, including reprioritization of staff and resources to UNCTAD's trade and gender unit, but these initial efforts are commendable.

We look forward to continuing the discussions in the coming year, formally and informally, and thank you for your attention.