

Trade and Development Board, 66th Session

Agenda item 6 – Contribution of UNCTAD to the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020

27 June 2019

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

UNCTAD has prepared document TD/B/86/2, titled *Activities carried out in the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020*. While it contains a detailed report on UNCTAD's activities, I would just like to highlight a selection of activities and conclusions of our analytical work on the LDCs.

LDCs as a group continue to perform poorly against the goals and targets of the IPoA, and it is unlikely that the last two years will bring a significant shift in progress. UNCTAD contributes to effective responses to these challenges through its integrated treatment of trade, finance, investment, technology and sustainable development to support the accomplishment of the internationally agreed development agendas included in the IPoA.

Research and analysis

The Least Developed Countries Report 2018 states that for LDCs to make progress towards achieving the SDGs, they need to transform the structure of their economy. This in turn requires dynamic entrepreneurship that introduces innovations in spheres such as production, consumption, transport and administration. The report calls this type of entrepreneurship “transformational entrepreneurship”, and suggests policy options to achieve it.

UNCTAD released the 2019 issue of the series *Selected Sustainable Development Trends in the Least Developed Countries*. It highlights the persistently slow development of productive capacities and resource mobilization constraints that have an impact on the capacity of LDCs to boost the investment needed for structural transformation. Moreover, the ongoing weakening of the global economy, together with lingering geopolitical tensions, are likely to slow down LDCs further in their efforts to achieve their development goals.

Consensus-building

UNCTAD held the World Investment Forum 2018 in Geneva, Switzerland. Participants included Heads of State and Government from four LDCs – Bangladesh, Central African Republic, Cambodia and Lesotho –, and a significant number of government ministers. UNCTAD and OHRLS organized a dialogue between ministers and business executives to identify tangible means to strengthen the implementation of the

IPoA, as well as the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024. The ministerial round table on investment served as a platform to link potential investors with government ministers of target countries. Many LDCs participated in the Investment Promotion Conference, which was held in connection with the World Investment Forum of UNCTAD in October 2018.

Technical cooperation

With regard to duty-free and quota-free market access and rules of origin, UNCTAD continues to support LDCs in their negotiations at the World Trade Organization (WTO). A series of executive workshops were held to prepare Geneva- and capital-based delegates for the sessions of the WTO Committee on Rules of Origin. At the request of the secretariat of the African Union Commission, UNCTAD supported the negotiation and drafting of appendix IV of the rules of the origin of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

The European Union–UNCTAD Joint Programme for Angola (Train for Trade II) focuses on the training of national experts and trainers of various public and private stakeholders in trade policy and negotiations, trade finance and logistics, the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, trade facilitation and scoping of non-oil trade opportunities. UNCTAD had trained more than 304 stakeholders.

UNCTAD eTrade readiness assessments help countries take stock of their e-commerce development along seven key policy areas: e-commerce strategy formulation, information and communication infrastructure and services, payment solutions, trade logistics and trade facilitation, legal and regulatory frameworks, e-commerce skills development and access to financing for e-commerce. Between 2018 and early 2019, UNCTAD released 13 country assessments.

In 2018, UNCTAD supported 16 LDCs in relation to trade facilitation, especially through the roll-out of the UNCTAD Empowerment Programme for National Trade Facilitation Committees, including developing road maps for the implementation of trade facilitation. The focus is on helping countries implement the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation and on supporting ratification and notification of obligations according to the Agreement.

In 2018, UNCTAD assisted the regional economic communities of the Tripartite (COMESA, EAC and SADC) to streamline non-tariff measures in Eastern and Southern Africa by enhancing transparency and availability of information on such measures. UNCTAD provides support to the African Union Commission, African regional economic communities and African countries in developing and implementing a framework to report, eliminate and monitor non-tariff barriers and increase regulatory transparency among African countries under the African Continental Free Trade Area.

The Debt Management and Financial Analysis (DMFAS) Programme of UNCTAD continued to lend support to the 21 LDCs that are using DMFAS software to strengthen their capacity to effectively manage central-government and government-guaranteed debt and to achieve sustainable debt levels. The Programme has improved availability of timely, reliable debt records, which are essential for prudent risk analysis and the elaboration of strategies aimed at ensuring debt sustainability.

LDC V

I would like to take this occasion to inform delegations about ongoing preparations for Fifth UN Conference on LDCs. As you may know, LDC V is scheduled to be held in Qatar in 2021 and the preparatory process has started.

UNCTAD intends to put forward to the Conference itself and to the preparatory process the following products which it will have produced by the time of the Conference:

- The Compendium of Policy Options available to LDCs to reach the SDGs
- The LDC Report 2019 on the dynamics of LDCs' dependence on external sources of financing for development;
- The LDC Report 2020;
- The Productive Capacities Index (PCI), which was presented in our publication Sustainable Development trends in the Least Developed Countries – 2019.