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Report by the Chair of the Advisory Body set up in accordance with paragraph 166 of the Bangkok Plan of Action on the implementation of courses by the secretariat in 2017–2018 and their relevant impact; and the appointment of members of the Advisory Board for 2018

Report of the Chair of the Advisory Body for the year 2017–2018, established in the context of paragraph 166 of the UNCTAD X Plan of Action*

1. In accordance with paragraph 166 of the Bangkok Plan of Action, during its forty-seventh session in 2001, the Trade and Development Board adopted a decision to establish an Advisory Body to advise the Secretary-General of UNCTAD on the broad objectives, content and structure of the capacity-building courses of UNCTAD. This particular mandate was renewed by the São Paulo Consensus, the Accra Accord and the Doha Declaration, and reaffirmed in 2016 in Nairobi at the fourteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. The Policy Capacity-Building Section, within the Knowledge Development Branch of the Division on Technology and Logistics, coordinates and implements these courses within UNCTAD, across geographical regions and with permanent missions of member States based in Geneva and relevant United Nations economic commissions.

2. The Advisory Body for the year 2017–2018, which was formed at the sixty-fourth session of the Board held in September 2017, met in February 2018. Today, I will report on the outcome of the meeting, implementation of the courses held since the previous meeting of the Board and plans for the remaining courses for this biennium. I will also provide information on the end-of-course evaluations for regional courses held for Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia and the Pacific and on the short courses for Geneva-based diplomats in 2017 and early 2018.

I. Outcome of the Advisory Body meeting in February 2018

3. At its meeting in February 2018, the Advisory Body reviewed the activities of the UNCTAD flagship programme, including the content of curricula and the evaluations of

* Revised.



regional courses, in particular for Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia and the Pacific. Additionally, the findings of the initial and post evaluations for the thirty-sixth regional course for Africa were considered. The Advisory Body took note of the multi-year venues in the five developing regions and the proposal submitted by Egypt to host the upcoming course for Arab economies (2018–2022). In this regard, the Advisory Body established Egypt as the multi-venue for Arab economies. I also took note of the extensive political support the programme receives from member States, as the main custodians of the paragraph 166 programme. I also took note of significant points raised by members of the Advisory Board. In responding to requests made previously by member States, the Advisory Body also decided to establish an interregional platform for participants from various regions to come together in Geneva for a follow-up training. The programme is currently working on the formula and methodology for this interregional platform. Additionally, the regional courses will be taught over the duration of two weeks instead of three weeks. The curricula will also be revised and updated to incorporate e-commerce and the digital economy. This will be rolled out in the next regional course that will be held in Belgrade for economies in transition of Eastern Europe.

4. For the regional courses held in the previous biennium, we thank the Governments of Colombia, Mauritius, Oman, Serbia and Singapore for their commitment and substantial support to this flagship programme of UNCTAD. We also look forward to receiving proposals from African countries interested in hosting the upcoming regional course that will be held in the first quarter of 2019. A call for proposals was made recently in this regard.

5. The achievements made under this programme are insurmountable and the evaluations reported by the recipients and their supervisors are a testament to that. Feedback and assessments are solicited in a credible matter. The evaluations of and feedback on the programme delineate and measure the impact of these UNCTAD courses on policymakers in the five regions.

II. Evaluation of the courses delivered in 2017

6. Mid-level government officials in policymaking who attended the three regional courses held in Mauritius, Colombia and Singapore in 2017 overwhelmingly complimented the structure of the course, its focus on national economic policy coordination and its link to development. Over all, the course has given them a better understanding of international economic issues and how their economies fit into the global economy, providing a comprehensive understanding of the economic growth trajectory and the various aspects that impact developing countries. In this regard, the programme has been able to provide enhanced analytical tools to better understand the efforts required to achieve a greater level of development through sound macroeconomic strategies that improve trade policy formulation. I am also pleased to report that the programme provides an analytical vision that shows the implications of a development model in a holistic way for developing precise policy proposals, while safeguarding a country's policy space when designing policies. This aspect of policy space was highlighted in module I of the programme curricula. Of significance is also the programme's curricula and linkages to the Sustainable Development Goals. The programme updated the curricula to reflect the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and therefore contributes to policy coherence and national consultation efforts at the national and regional levels.

7. I also took note of the results of the evaluations conducted by participating member States, who report how they see economic integration enhancing foreign direct investment attraction and how trade-related development policies can be country-specific, while taking into account the role of finance and technology. Finally, the paragraph 166 course provides a better understanding of development and trade-related matters.

8. Accordingly, the evaluations revealed a deepened knowledge on international economic issues and their relationship to development. The course was directly relevant to the professional duties of the participants who reported, after the aforementioned editions took place, a strengthened ability to apply lessons learned that emerged from the course.

Additionally, an increased integration into organization structure and political strategy of their departments improved as well, indicating they are now involved in the formulation of trade policies at their respective departments, providing specific advice on trade, investment and financial issues. They have also reported also increased integration in decision-making processes. As the programme is embedded in a knowledge-based capacity-building framework, it heavily focuses on sharing and disseminating information with colleagues in relevant departments or elsewhere in the public sector. The UNCTAD flagship course calls this the multiplier effect, a means of investing in human capital. In this regard, I was pleased to note that the majority of supervisors indicated that participants shared the information and knowledge gained extensively with colleagues in their departments and in related departments. Supervisors, across the board, indicated they would recommend other colleagues to participate in the paragraph 166 courses.

9. Important elements that were also addressed by policymakers are the adequate environment provided for these courses, which generate solid debates and discussion sessions, the importance of learning from other countries' experiences and good practices in economic policy development. In this regard, I commend the good quality of experts from UNCTAD, the regional commissions and national experts who guided these policymakers during these courses.

10. The Advisory Body took note that such positive feedback can only be generated via carefully designed curricula and their delivery, which made a positive impact on the knowledge and skills of policymakers. The involvement of UNCTAD experts, regional commissions and national experts, and the Policy Capacity-Building Section of the Knowledge Development Branch consistently ensures the qualitative excellence of this unique paragraph 166 regional programme that addresses the challenges faced in achieving trade, investment, finance and technology objectives and particularly how to ensure development objectives are also secured for developing countries.

11. I must mention another significant point of the curriculum for paragraph 166. The Advisory Body was informed that the curriculum is consistently revised and updated to reflect the needs and requests. For example, in 2016, it was reviewed to ensure that the formulation of national and international development policies and strategies are placed within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, providing the overall framework for development policies in 2015–2030 era. Additionally, I want to emphasize the programme's consistent approach in ensuring gender balance on average, as a matter of policy, and in advocating for the pillars of programme. This was yet another benchmark set by the programme years ago.

III. Regional courses in 2017

12. In 2017, the UNCTAD secretariat delivered three regional courses for Africa (February–March 2017), Latin American and the Caribbean (July–August 2017) and Asia and the Pacific (November–December 2017). In Mauritius, 24 participants, representing 17 economies, completed the course and are now well initiated in the economic discourse of UNCTAD. The participants were from Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Gabon, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Mauritius, the Niger, the United Republic of Tanzania, Togo and Zimbabwe.

13. For Latin America and the Caribbean, 22 participants from 13 countries were represented: the Bahamas, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. As for Asia and the Pacific, 25 participants from 15 countries participated from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam.

IV. Short courses for Geneva-based delegates

14. I shall now report on the short courses for Geneva-based delegates. The secretariat delivered six short courses for Geneva-based delegates in 2017, and another three in the first half of 2018. The courses dealt with many areas and topics, including trade regulation, investment policymaking for sustainable development, the process and consequences of graduating from the least developed country category, gender and trade, and trade and entrepreneurship. In the first semester of 2018, three short courses were held for Geneva-based diplomats on assessing the e-trade readiness of the least developed countries for the promotion of sustainable development; recent developments in international trade and their implications for the policymaking process; and assessing the progress of the least developed countries towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

15. These short courses have been well attended, and it is clear from the evaluations by Geneva-based delegates that they are informative and raise awareness on trade topics useful for the delegates' professional duties. The participants also noted that the choice of topics is relevant.

16. In this regard, I wish to applaud and commend the efforts of the secretariat to ensure that the courses continue to be delivered with a high degree of quality, both in substance and in the calibre of expertise. I call upon all members of the Trade and Development Board to continue supporting its commendable efforts. I also call upon the members to provide all the necessary support to the secretariat as it continues to take this important capacity-building programme ahead in meeting the demands of mid-level government officials and policymakers in the areas of trade, finance, investment, technology and development. In 2018, two regional courses will be held for mid-level government officials from Eastern Europe and the Middle East and North Africa.

17. On a final note, I wish to thank the members of the Advisory Body, namely Azerbaijan, Canada, Czechia, Ecuador, Guatemala, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Lesotho, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, the Republic of Moldova, the Sudan, Thailand, Uganda and Zambia, as their feedback and the observations made during the Advisory Body were constructive, contributing to the deliberations of the Body, and provided the necessary support to the Secretary-General of UNCTAD in the implementation of this important flagship capacity-building programme.

18. Finally, I congratulate his Excellency Mr. Salim Baddoura, the Ambassador of Lebanon, on his appointment as the new Chair of the Advisory Body and wish him a fruitful and successful term. I wish for his Excellency to note this significant programme as a channel directly linked to building the capacity of future policymakers based across the globe and to extend all the support needed for this programme.
