



European Union

Statement

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Agenda Item 2 - MTR

**Statement by the European Union Delegation to the UN and other
international organisations in Geneva**

Geneva, 1 October 2018

- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -

Item 2: Evaluation and review of UNCTAD implementation of the quadrennial conference outcome (a.k.a. Mid-Term Review of the Nairobi Maafikiano)

Chair, Excellencies, distinguished Delegates,

On behalf of the European Union and its Member States I would like to thank the UNCTAD Secretariat for their **extensive work in analysing the Maafikiano** and including tracking the progress of each of its paragraphs. We recognise that this work began as far back as December 2017, with the publication of the Report “From Actions to Results”, which eventually provided a comprehensive description of the strengthened or new areas of UNCTAD’s work under the Maafikiano.

We commend UNCTAD’s work in harmonising the SDGs and 2030 agenda across its work, by better aligning itself with the rest of the UN system. **Increased synergies between the organisations** of the UN Development Group as well as the enhanced collaboration with WTO have seen substantial progress being made, with UNCTAD assisting over 20 LDCs seeking WTO ascension. UNCTAD’s work on the Enhanced Integrated Framework and the Interagency Taskforce for Financing for Development are good examples of this increased cooperation with other agencies, and we hope that this work will only continue to bring UNCTAD closer to its partner organisations in the future.

We are pleased to see that the work on some paragraphs of the Maafikiano has been extensively addressed or even nearly finalised, namely in the areas of investment promotion, e-commerce, and migration, to name but a few. The research carried out by the different UNCTAD sub-programmes addressing these areas has been substantial, and the flagship publications mostly provided both in-depth analysis as well as actionable policy recommendations for member states and development actors. The creation of the Intergovernmental Expert Group on E-commerce, for instance, which held its first session in 2017, was instrumental in achieving the Maafikiano objectives in 55 (u), and we hope that the agreed conclusions of the group will continue to inform policies and programmes at a global level.

However, we remain concerned about the methodology and preparation of both the background Conference Room Paper (for this agenda item) and the underlying Report “From Actions to Results”. Allow me to highlight a couple of issues here:

STRUCTURE

- Member states had asked for a **“traffic light” system** of analysis, providing a score for each paragraph of the Maafikiano to indicate its level of completion. Instead we

were presented with a document which aimed to calm our worries by highlighting (almost) every operative paragraph as being “on track” for completion. To note: the only two areas of "mixed progress" are the work of the Palestine unit in para 55(dd), which actually lists not a single achievement; and para 100(q) on special sessions which are meant as a tool for members rather than a task for the Secretariat... In our view, it is not a useful framework for stakeholders' analysis to state that 99% of one's work in "on track" without providing quantifiable data to support that claim.

- Indeed, the "on track" optimism by the Secretariat seems unwarranted, especially considering the outcomes of the previous session of this TDB. The Revitalisation of the Intergovernmental Machinery only produced a “small package” outcome, which we felt fell short of the “deepened” and “rebranded” image of the organisation envisioned by the Maafikiano – and if I may add, some groups were more open and willing to engage and embrace change for the better than others.

ANALYSIS

- While UNCTAD's Secretariat recognised challenging global contextual factors such as the crisis of multilateralism, growing trade hostilities, and reduced financing for UNCTAD's development work (in its assessment of the implementation of the Maafikiano), **there has been little analysis of the direct implications of UNCTAD's work over the past 2 years on the global environment, or vice versa these circumstances on UNCTAD's work.** Which sub-programmes will be the most affected? Which UNCTAD projects will have to modify their operations? Will certain projects have to close? And more broadly: which challenges do we face and what recommendations can be drawn? We request that the Secretariat get back to us on these questions within the course of the discussion today.
- In comparison, the 2010 MTR documents were more detailed, better structured in presenting the findings in the annex, and showed more of a way forward in terms of recommendations (*see TD/B/57/7 and /Add.1*).
- Furthermore, given that the Maafikiano calls for the “strengthening” of only a few specific areas of work that existed prior to 2016, it is difficult to assess whether these areas have truly been “strengthened” or have simply continued as before like others. We would request, in this regard, that the Secretariat elaborate on the areas of work that were strengthened, preferably by quantifying what has been done.
- If the operational paragraphs of the Maafikiano are to be properly achieved, there must be **recognition of the challenges and barriers** facing their implementation, in order to **formulate a strategy** to move forward, to make UNCTAD more efficient and effective in carrying out its mandate. This session should be the place for discussion and interaction between Secretariat and member states in order to draw up agreed

conclusions on this agenda item – without embarking on an "interim mandate" which reiterates or alters the spirit of the Maafikiano; a task which was not facilitated by the mostly factual presentation by the Secretariat.

MANAGEMENT & BUDGET ISSUES

- Mr Chair, the Maafikiano also stipulates the need to **strengthen "efficiency and effectiveness"** across the organisation in order to deliver better services. The background note does not refer to these challenges. Shortcomings were raised in countless discussions with stakeholders in fora like the Extended Bureau during the past 2 years – not least on the persistent late delivery of documentation for substantial agenda items. There remains a need for a regular exchange on management issues, both through a standing item on management at the annual session of the TDB and through the reinstatement of regular management briefings.
- Striving for improved delivery requires learning from past experience, for example evaluation results. We request the Secretariat to clarify in what way **results of evaluations were taken into account** for the specific work of the evaluated sub-programmes (and on the project level). The added value of such an exercise seems critical in a mandate as comprehensive as the Maafikiano, especially considering the focus on Results-Based Management that is present in the document. While RBM has been incorporated into UNCTAD's technical cooperation activities, we reiterate the need to streamline Results-based Management across all of UNCTAD's work. Further, we would like to request additional information on the status and progress of the work of UNCTAD's RBM task force, and recall the need for regular briefings for member states on this.
- Regarding technical cooperation, we note with concern that **funding for the UNCTAD Trust Fund decreased by 12% in 2017**, while overall ODA globally increased. This phenomenon should, in our view, should trigger a thorough analysis by the Secretariat of the underlying reasons – the EU and its MS look forward to discussing this issue at the next Working Party on technical cooperation.

GENDER FOCUS

- Further, **questions of gender mainstreaming persist**. The flagship publications all include a chapter or some mention to gender. However, it seems like some publications mention gender simply to "check the gender box" rather than to provide a comprehensive effort to achieve Sustainable Development Goal No. 5 on gender equality. This sentiment is echoed by the evaluations of UNCTAD sub-programmes, which recognise the lack of substantial progress in achieving gender equality in both UNCTAD projects as well as the organisational structure itself. While the UNCTAD Gender Toolbox for trade and development has been seen as an

excellent tool for mainstreaming gender into public policy, UNCTAD has not published anything on mainstreaming gender into **macroeconomic policy** since 2015 and we would like to encourage the organisation to keep this in mind when approving the focus for its upcoming research and flagship reports. The Maafikiano has been heralded as giving "UNCTAD the strongest mandate on gender" ever, but most mentions of gender fall outside of the operative paragraphs. Thus, we would request clarification on the implementation of all the gender-related paragraphs in the Maafikiano during our further discussion today.

CONCLUSION

- Chair, In conclusion, we expected **a more in-depth analysis from the Secretariat to inform our discussion** during this session and would have liked to have received a comprehensive list of outstanding issues and “lessons learned” from these past two years. What's next? How do the findings of this MTR feed into the upcoming work of UNCTAD? How will outstanding questions be addressed? If these questions remain unaddressed, we would need to consider discontinuing the MTR exercise in the future.
- Rather, to render a midterm review a beneficial exercise, we need to ensure it adds value through analysing strengths as well as weaknesses in the implementation of the mandate and work programme, by enabling a discussion between the Secretary General and Member States on this analysis and by answering questions that may come up over the course of that discussion.
- We look forward to further discussions with the Secretary General to address Member States’ concerns and appreciate, in advance, the answers to the questions posed in the course of our statement.