

## **Trade and Development Board**

Sixty-fourth session

Geneva, 11–22 September 2017

Agenda item 16 (a)

# **Report of the Chair of the Advisory Body for the year 2016–2017, established in the context of paragraph 166 of the UNCTAD X Plan of Action**

1. This report provides a review of the activities under the paragraph 166 programme for 2016 and early 2017 and their impact. It will first provide a historical narrative of how the programme was established. A report on the outcome of the Advisory Body meeting held earlier this year will follow.

2. During the 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, in line with paragraph 166 of the Bangkok Plan of Action. This particular mandate was renewed by the São Paulo Consensus, the Accra Accord and the Doha Mandate, and was most recently reaffirmed in Nairobi at the fourteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. Additionally, support is consistently echoed, with high-level officials expressing appreciation of this programme that targets mid-level government officials. 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.

3. The Advisory Body for the year 2016–2017, which was formed at the sixty-third session of the Trade and Development Board, met in April 2017. I will today report on (a) the outcome of the meetings and (b) implementation of the courses held since the previous meeting of the Board and plans for the remaining courses for the current biennium. I will also provide information on (c) the end-of-course evaluations for regional courses held for countries with economies in transition and for developing and least developed economies of the Arab region and Africa; and on (d) the short courses for Geneva-based diplomats in 2016 and early 2017.

## **Outcome of the Advisory Body meeting in April 2017**

4. At the meeting in April, the Advisory Body reviewed the activities of the programme, including the curricula content and the evaluations of regional courses, in particular of the regional courses for Eastern Europe, the Arab region and Africa. Additionally, the findings of the initial and post evaluations for the thirty-fourth and thirty-fifth regional courses for economies in transition and the Middle East and North Africa were considered. The Advisory Body took note of the multi-year venues in the five developing regions, which is indicative of the extensive political support the programme receives from member States, who are its main custodians. I also took note of significant

points raised by members of the Advisory Board; and one member State representative expressed interest in hosting upcoming courses for his particular region. In this regard, we wish to 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 for receiving proposals from Arab countries interested in hosting the upcoming regional course, which will be held towards the end of 2018. A call for proposals was made recently in this regard. The evaluations, and feedback solicited of participants, measure the impact of the UNCTAD courses on policymakers in the five regions. Let me further elaborate.

## **Evaluation of the courses delivered in 2016 and early 2017**

5. Mid-level government officials in policymaking who attended the three regional courses held in Serbia, Oman and Mauritius in 2016 and earlier this year overwhelmingly complimented the structure of the course, its focus on national economic policy coordination and its link to development. Overall, 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 analytical vision that shows the implication of a development model in a holistic way in order to develop 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 curriculum. The programme's curricula and its linkages to the Sustainable Development Goals are of significance. The curricula of the programme have been updated to reflect the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and the programme contributes to policy coherence and conducting national consultation efforts at the national and regional levels.

I 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 the link between development and poverty reduction.

Your Excellencies,

6. Accordingly, the evaluations revealed deepened knowledge on international economic issues and their relationship to development. The course was directly relevant to the professional duties of participants, who reported – following the aforementioned courses – a strengthened ability to apply lessons learned that emerged from the course. Additionally, the course resulted in an increased integration of participants into the organization structure and political strategy of their departments. The recipients of the course also indicated they were involved in the formulation of trade policies at their respective departments, providing specific advice on trade, investment, and financial issues. Similarly, they have also reported increased integration into the decision-making processes. As the programme is embedded in a knowledge-based capacity-building framework, it focuses heavily on sharing and disseminating information with colleagues in the relevant departments or elsewhere in the public sector. The UNCTAD flagship course calls this the multiplier effect, aimed at investing in human capital. In this regard, I was pleased to note that the majority of the supervisors indicated that participants shared extensively the information and knowledge gained with colleagues in their departments and related ones.

Significant as well is that all supervisors, across the board, indicated they would recommend other colleagues to participate in paragraph 166 courses.

7. An important element that was also addressed by policymakers is the adequate environment provided for these courses, generating solid debates and discussion sessions, as well as 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 in these courses.

Your Excellencies,

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

9. I must mention another significant point of the curriculum for the paragraph 166 course. The Advisory Body was informed that the curricula was updated in 2016 to ensure the formulation of national and international development policies and strategies were placed within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, providing the overall framework for development policies for 2015–2030. Additionally, I want to lay emphasis on the programme's consistent approach in ensuring gender balance, as a matter of policy, and in advocating for the pillars of programme. This has been yet another benchmark set by the programme over years.

10. As I report to you now, the secretariat has recently delivered another regional course for Latin American and the Caribbean in Medellín, Colombia, which will be elaborated upon at the next session of the Trade and Development Board. In 2016, two regional courses were held in Serbia and Oman. Earlier this year, a regional course was held in Mauritius for African economies. The thirty-fourth, thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth regional courses on key issues on the international economic agenda concluded in Belgrade on 3 June 2016, Muscat on 27 October 2016 and Mauritius on 3 March 2017 were successful. For Eastern Europe, 17 participants, predominantly from the public sector, participated in this course designed for countries with economies in transition. The participants represented 12 countries from Eastern Europe: Albania, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Estonia, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, the Republic of Moldova, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Ukraine.

With regard to the thirty-fifth regional course for Arab economies, 22 participants completed the course. The course was conducted in a joint collaboration with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry of Oman in Muscat. Participants were predominantly mid-level government officials from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, Tunisia, Yemen and the State of Palestine.

During the reporting period, and in early 2017, the thirty-sixth regional course on key issues on the international economic agenda, held from 13 February to 3 March 2017, included 17 African economies, with 24 participants completing the course who are now well inducted in the economic discourse of UNCTAD. Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Gabon, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Mauritius, the Niger, Togo, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe were represented.

## Short courses for Geneva-based delegates

11. I shall now report on the short courses for Geneva-based delegates.
12. The secretariat delivered six short courses for Geneva-based delegates in 2016 and three in the first half of 2017. The courses dealt with many areas, from the UNCTAD programme on non-tariff measures in world trade and trade logistics, transport, trade facilitation and customs automation, to promoting investment in the Sustainable Development Goals, in addition to the criteria for graduating from least developed country status, among other issues.
13. 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 of trade topics that are useful for the delegates' professional duties. Participants also noted that the choice of topics was relevant.
14. 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 level 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 members to provide all support to the secretariat as it takes this important capacity-building programme forward to continue meeting the demands of mid-government officials and policymakers in the areas of trade, finance, investment, technology and development.
15. On a final note, I wish to thank the members of the Advisory Body, namely the Central African Republic, Ecuador, Estonia, Ethiopia, France, Guatemala, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Morocco, Oman, Panama and Poland, and the country I represent, Uganda, for the feedback and observations made during the Advisory Body, which were constructive and contributed to the deliberations of this Body, by providing the necessary support to the Secretary-General of UNCTAD in the implementation of this important flagship capacity-building programme.
16. Finally, I congratulate His Excellency Mr. Tudor Ulianoschi, the Ambassador of the Republic of Moldova, 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.

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