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NOTIFICATION

Multi-Year Expert Meeting on Promoting Economic Integration and Cooperation

Second session

Taking stock of the contribution of effective forms of cooperation to the Millennium Development Goals and their evolution in the area of trade and development

Geneva, 19–20 May 2014

The Multi-year Expert Meeting on Promoting Economic Cooperation and Integration will open at 10 a.m. on Monday, 19 May 2014, in room XXVI of the Palais des Nations.

Background and purpose of the meeting

The Millennium Declaration was unanimously adopted by the United Nations in September 2000, committing to reach eight goals by 2015. Known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), these objectives have become the yardstick by which current international development efforts are to be measured.

Many effective forms of cooperation have taken place to date in support of the Goals. In the areas of trade and development, the MDGs, in particular Goal 8, contain relevant targets and indicators. The main targets include a non-discriminatory international trading and financial system, market access for the least developed countries (LDCs), enhanced debt relief for the heavily indebted poor countries, scaling up of official development assistance for poverty reduction and development, access to new technologies for development, and strategies for decent and productive work for women and young people. There is widespread agreement that the MDGs have placed broad-based poverty reduction at the centre of the development agenda. With regard to the actual achievement of the different targets, however, the evidence is uneven, across both goals and countries.

The second session of this multi-year expert meeting will explore progress made in achieving the MDGs to date, with particular attention to Goal 8, and will propose ways to further strengthen international cooperation to reach the targets. Experts are expected to bring to the meeting their own perspectives and to highlight specific issues in connection with their own areas of expertise.

The main objectives of this expert meeting are as follows:

- Examine whether, and to what extent, the MDGs are on track and look at the key challenges that remain to be addressed;
- Discuss the contributions of international cooperation to the achievement of MDGs, with particular attention to those provided by growing South–South cooperation;

- Analyse the role of multilateral and regional development banks in supporting the MDGs and the extent to which traditional sources of finance, along with innovative financial mechanisms, help bridge the funding gap for the MDGs;
- Highlight the multiple linkages between trade (and multilateral trade agreements) and the MDGs;
- Discuss how building productive capacities, in terms of job creation and technology, can help achieve the MDGs.

The meeting will be structured around four sessions:

The opening session will take stock of progress made to date on the various MDGs and address some of the key challenges that are still unresolved.

The second session will tackle financial issues and look at the role played by the international financial system in supporting or not the MDGs. The achievements and shortcomings of official aid and international efforts on debt reduction will also be discussed.

The third session will endeavour to shed some light on the nexus between trade and the MDGs and discuss the key issues involved in harnessing trade for economic and social development.

The final session will focus the link between the MDGs and productive capacities, in particular human capital and technology. Discussion will centre on how to develop new capacities while fully exploiting existing ones.

Participation

UNCTAD member States are requested to nominate experts to participate in the meeting at an early date, and not later than 5 May 2014. Experts will contribute in their personal capacity. They are expected to have proven expertise in the subject and may be selected from government institutions, academia, the private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Experts may also be invited as resource persons. Specialized agencies and intergovernmental bodies wishing to participate in the meeting, as well as NGOs in the general category, and those in the special category wishing to participate as observers, are requested to inform the UNCTAD secretariat of the names of their representatives by 5 May 2014.

Financial assistance

Depending on the availability of funds in the Trust Fund for Financing the Participation of Experts at the time of nomination, funds may be allocated to finance the participation of a limited number of officially nominated experts from developing countries, including LDCs and countries with economies in transition. Governments requiring funding are therefore invited to clearly request this in their letters of nomination. It should be understood that funds currently available in the dedicated trust fund are very limited (up to a total of three experts for each meeting), and nominations shall be considered based on that availability. The decision as to which experts should receive financing will be based on the direct involvement and expertise of the nominated experts on the principle of equitable geographical representation and on the needs of beneficiaries, particularly LDCs. Changes in the experts nominated will be considered as new nominations.

Nominations with requests for funding should be received no later than 14 April 2014 and should be accompanied by the following information about the nominee:

- (a) Curriculum vitae;
- (b) Mailing address;
- (c) Telephone and fax numbers;
- (d) E-mail address;
- (e) Name of a contact person in the respective permanent mission in Geneva.

Once the list of experts to be financed has been completed, all travel arrangements will be made in accordance with United Nations rules and regulations – that is, the use of the least-costly fare will be applied.

Background documents and contributed papers

The provisional agenda and annotations for the meeting will be circulated. To facilitate the discussion, the UNCTAD secretariat will submit background documents. These documents and further information about the expert meeting will be available in due course on the UNCTAD website (www.unctad.org), under the heading “Meetings”. An annotated outline of the meeting is attached. Experts are encouraged to prepare and submit in advance brief papers related to their studies, findings and/or country’s experience. These papers will be made available to the meeting in the format and language in which they are received.

Logistics

The meeting will take place at the United Nations Office at Geneva, Palais des Nations. Simultaneous translation will be provided in the six official languages of the United Nations.

Participants are requested to collect their badges at the United Nations Security Service, Pregny Gate, 14 avenue de la Paix. The Security Service is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Because of the security measures in force, participants are strongly advised to arrive before 9 a.m. on the first day to complete their entry procedures in good time. Passports or equivalent national identity cards will be required. Please note that taxis are not allowed to enter the grounds of the Palais des Nations and that luggage may not be brought into the buildings unless the Security Service grants special clearance. Participants should then proceed to Building E. At the reception desk, please ask for directions to room XXVI.

Further information and contact details

Nominations and related communications concerning representation at the meeting should be sent to the UNCTAD secretariat, Intergovernmental Support Service, Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10; fax: +41 22 917 0214; e-mail: meetings@unctad.org.

All other enquiries should be addressed to Mr. Piergiuseppe Fortunato, Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland; fax: +41 22 917 0044; e-mail: piergiuseppe.fortunato@unctad.org or nathalie.bois@unctad.org.

(signed)

Mukhisa Kituyi
Secretary-General of UNCTAD

31 March 2014

Taking stock of the contribution of effective forms of cooperation to the Millennium Development Goals and their evolution in the area of trade and development

Annotated outline

Session I. Opening ceremony and introduction to the expert meeting

Many different effective forms of cooperation have taken place to date in support of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In the areas of trade and development, the MDGs, in particular Goal 8, contain relevant targets and indicators. The opening session of this expert meeting will take stock of the results since the beginning of the decade and address some of the key challenges that are still unresolved. It will cover the following points:

- What has been achieved through the MDGs and what remains to be addressed;
- The contributions of different forms of cooperation to the achievement of the MDGs;
- Going beyond the MDGs in the post-2015 agenda and the challenge of inequality.

Session II: International finance, debt and the Millennium Development Goals

The international financial system and how it evolved since the beginning of the decade have had an important bearing on the MDGs. Also, there are a few sources of external finance that low-income countries can realistically be expected to draw on to bridge the MDG funding gap. These are mainly foreign direct investment (FDI) and official flows – concessional loans, aid in the form of grants and debt reduction. The challenge is to fashion all these towards meeting the MDGs. The second session of the expert meeting will look at the role of the international financial system in supporting, or not, the MDGs, and discuss the achievements and shortcomings of official aid and international efforts on debt reduction.

In particular, contributions will focus on the following points:

- Critically examining the role of the international financial system, with a focus on its strengths, weaknesses and challenges going forward, including re-regulation of private capital flows;
- Assessing official development assistance and comparing traditional North–South flows with emerging donors’ financial assistance;
- Efforts of debt reduction and the contributions of UNCTAD in the area of debt management in support of the MDGs and beyond.

Session III. Trade and the Millennium Development Goals

In the last two decades, revolutionary advances in information and communications technology, coupled with a gradual reduction in natural and man-made trade barriers, have allowed an unprecedented increase in trade flows. The benefits of this enormous boost, however, have been uneven, and their impact on the MDGs remains unclear. A key issue for LDCs is limited market access. This session will shed some light on the nexus between trade and MDGs and explore ways of harnessing trade for economic and social development.

In particular, contributions will focus on the following points:

- Assessing the multilateral trading system and the need of LDCs for a fairer system: Can we do more? And how?

- Assessing Bali: What implications for LDCs?
- Enhanced Integrated Framework: Taking stock of past experiences and recent contributions of UNCTAD.

Session IV. Building productive capacities to achieve the Millennium Development Goals

Providing finance and harnessing the trade system are not enough to guarantee the achievement of MDGs or to move towards an effective post-2015 development agenda. It is also necessary to develop productive capacities in terms of human capital and technology and fully exploit existing ones to ensure social and economic progress in developing economies.

The closing session of the expert meeting will be devoted to a discussion of some of the following topics:

- Towards full employment in the developing world: The key challenges;
- Technological transfer and technology diffusion in poor economies;
- Official development assistance geared towards enhancing productive capacity and the role of emerging economies.