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## Activities undertaken by UNCTAD in support of Africa

### Report by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD

#### *Summary*

This report covers the activities undertaken by UNCTAD in support of Africa from May 2020 to March 2021. It describes the impact that the work of UNCTAD has had on development in Africa in the following areas: transforming economies; tackling vulnerabilities and building resilience; improving competitiveness; enhancing multilateralism; and empowering people and investing in their future. Impact is achieved under the three major pillars of the work of UNCTAD, namely, research and policy analysis, intergovernmental consensus-building and technical assistance. This report provides a non-exhaustive list of examples of how UNCTAD is delivering results in Africa. In 2020, 38.94 per cent of the total national, regional and interregional project expenditure of UNCTAD was directed towards Africa, amounting to \$13,670,071 (provisional).



## I. Introduction

1. This report documents activities undertaken by UNCTAD in support of Africa from May 2020 to March 2021. It provides examples of the impact that the work of UNCTAD has had on development in Africa in the following areas: transforming economies; tackling vulnerabilities and building resilience; improving competitiveness; enhancing multilateralism; and empowering people and investing in their future.

## II. Highlights

### A. Major events

2. UNCTAD is the United Nations body mandated to assist developing countries, including member States in Africa, in harnessing international trade and its interrelated areas, such as science, technology and innovation, development finance and investment, as a means to achieve sustainable development and the Sustainable Development Goals. UNCTAD aims to build the resiliency of countries in Africa by strengthening their capacity to engage more fully in international trade and to respond to and recover from global economic shocks such as those brought about by the coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. The UNCTAD commitment to achieving prosperity for all manifests in Africa through a range of activities, including convening events to engage stakeholders in discussing specific drivers of social and economic development and sharing experiences and lessons learned.

#### 1. Launch of the UNCTAD Productive Capacities Index

3. The online portal for the Index includes publications, manuals, resources and tools that will allow policymakers to measure their country's performance in achieving their national development goals and ability to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Following the first proposal of the concept in *The Least Developed Countries Report 2006: Developing Productive Capacities*, in 2020, UNCTAD finalized the composite multidimensional global Productive Capacities Index, which allows countries to benchmark and assess their levels of productive capacities over time. The Index was launched on 8 February 2021 and an Index score has been calculated for 193 economies, including all countries in Africa, based on the 46 indicators across the eight categories of the Index. *UNCTAD Productive Capacities Index: Methodological Approach and Results* provides further details. Dedicated capacity-building training activities were provided to statisticians in Botswana, Namibia and Rwanda and helped to sensitize national statistical authorities as to how to use the Index in policy formulation and implementation. In this regard, for example, the sixth and seventh conferences of the Economic Policy Research Network have been dedicated to the theme of fostering productive capacities and structural transformation in Rwanda. Finally, UNCTAD has launched case studies in the Central African Republic, Chad, Nigeria and Togo based on a detailed examination of their performance as measured by the Index and its eight categories.

#### 2. Panel discussion: Tackling illicit financial flows for sustainable development in Africa

4. This high-level discussion, held in October 2020 with remote participation and moderated by the Director of the Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes, aimed to equip Governments in Africa with the knowledge of how to identify and evaluate risks associated with illicit financial flows and solutions to curb such flows and redirect proceeds towards the achievement of national priorities and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, drawing on the findings in *Economic Development in Africa Report 2020: Tackling Illicit Financial Flows for Sustainable Development in Africa*. Participants included, as panellists, the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, the Commissioner for Economic Affairs of the African Union Commission and the Executive Secretary of the Economic

Commission for Africa; and, as speakers, the Secretary-General of the East African Community, the Director General of the Intergovernmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa and the Director of Finance, Investment and Customs of the Southern African Development Community. The discussion highlighted that in the aftermath of the pandemic, countries in Africa will need to intensify their resource mobilization efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

## **B. UNCTAD Regional Office for Africa**

5. Since 2015, the Regional Office has played a key role in facilitating and coordinating technical assistance from UNCTAD to the African Union Commission and its member States, regional economic communities and other key stakeholders and partners in Africa. In 2020, the Regional Office worked in collaboration with the African Union and the Economic Commission for Africa on drafting the Assessing Regional Integration in Africa publication on services trade liberalization and integration under the African Continental Free Trade Area; the Regional Office and the Division on International Trade and Commodities provided technical support to the process. In December 2020, the Regional Office, in collaboration with the African Union, the Economic Commission for Africa and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, delivered coaching and capacity-building sessions for over 100 young women entrepreneurs on opportunities under the African Continental Free Trade Area. The sessions created awareness of the opportunities and the risks that women entrepreneurs might face in the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area, in particular during and in the aftermath of the pandemic.

## **C. Tracking and monitoring the impact of the pandemic on the continent**

6. **Response and recovery: Mobilizing financial resources for development in the time of COVID-19.** UNCTAD leads this United Nations Development Account project, conducted in cooperation with the Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. To rapidly develop effective domestic policy responses to the pandemic, developing countries require a detailed understanding of how global macroeconomic developments are likely to affect their economies. Based on the UNCTAD global policy model, the project includes updated analyses of the global macroeconomic environment in 2020–2022 to inform domestic policy responses in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania; and proposals for capital account management and macroprudential policy design in Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa and Zambia. It will also provide an assessment of the financial conditions in selected developing country regions.

7. **Expert meeting on the protocol on investment and COVID-19: Potential risks and possible solutions.** UNCTAD contributed to this expert meeting organized by the African Union, at which discussions were centred on the pandemic and its relation to the risk of a potential rise in investor-State dispute settlement cases in Africa. The meeting, along with a series of discussions, led to the adoption of a declaration on the risk of investor-State dispute settlement with regard to pandemic-related measures, which will help to ensure that Governments in Africa have the policy space needed to respond to the pandemic without the risk of costly legal challenges from foreign investors.

8. **Investment promotion and facilitation and the pandemic.** UNCTAD supports investment promotion activities in many countries under the New Partnership for Africa's Development strategic framework, including the least developed countries. In 2020, UNCTAD continued its capacity-building activities for investment promotion officials and policymakers and its advisory services to investment promotion agencies, notably under the East African Community, the Southern African Development Community and the International Network of Francophone Investment Promotion Agencies. A regional webinar titled "Towards post-COVID-19: Investment promotion agencies adapting to the new

normal”, organized in collaboration with the East African Community and the Southern African Development Community, brought together over 90 participants from 18 countries in Africa and allowed for the exchange of agency experiences in response to the pandemic and the sharing of best practices to improve future agency operations and strategies in the region. In 2020, UNCTAD continued its deployment of business facilitation tools through its programme of online electronic government (e-government) systems, namely, e-regulation, e-registration and trade portals, in several countries under the New Partnership for Africa’s Development framework, thereby helping to improve their business climates.

9. **Research on e-commerce and the pandemic.** UNCTAD consulted e-commerce businesses and policymakers in developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, to understand the magnitude of the impact of the pandemic in the context of their efforts to enhance e-trade readiness; and to identify key trends and challenges faced by e-commerce businesses and in public and private policy responses to the crisis. *COVID-19 and E-Commerce: Impact on Businesses and Policy Responses* was launched in November 2020 at a webinar attended by more than 250 participants, who shared successful experiences that contributed to fostering an enabling environment for e-commerce.

10. **Transport and trade connectivity in the age of pandemics.** Under this United Nations Development Account project, in collaboration with the five regional commissions of the United Nations, UNCTAD aims to help developing countries address the trade and transport challenges resulting from the pandemic. UNCTAD conducted an assessment of the immediate impacts of the pandemic on the maritime transport sector and trade, including maritime trade flows, ship calls and liner shipping connectivity, in the first half of 2020, including in Africa, and published the main findings in *COVID-19 and Maritime Transport: Impact and Responses*. The study also detailed some of the key responses and adjustments made at the port level and by other stakeholders across the maritime supply chain to cope with the disruption and maintain business continuity.

11. **Trade facilitation and the pandemic.** Since the outbreak of the pandemic, UNCTAD has worked with countries in Africa to ensure the implementation of trade facilitation tools, with a view to alleviating the negative impacts on national, regional and global value and supply chains, including the UNCTAD 10-point action plan to strengthen international trade and transport facilitation. UNCTAD issued best practices and several analyses of good trade facilitation practices in times of pandemic and worked with several subregional and regional organizations such as the East African Community to promote and implement trade facilitation regulations and tools that have assisted in facilitating trade during the pandemic. UNCTAD developed the rapid scan initiative, which provides countries with an assessment of and recommendations on their preparedness for crisis management in the field of trade facilitation, as well as capacity-building.

### III. Outcomes and impacts of UNCTAD activities in support of Africa

#### A. Transforming economies

12. UNCTAD undertook a range of activities to support member States in Africa in transforming their economies, creating jobs, reducing poverty, accelerating sustainable development and facilitating the region’s integration into the global economy. UNCTAD conducts activities to help countries in Africa harness domestic and foreign investment as means to catalyse structural transformation in their economies.

13. ***World Investment Report 2020: International Production Beyond the Pandemic.*** The report notes that despite the immediate downward prospects for foreign direct investment to Africa, some mitigating factors may limit the extent of the decline and help initiate a recovery, including implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement and the conclusion of its protocol on investment; and deepening State-backed investment initiatives from developed and emerging economies. UNCTAD provides countries in Africa with capacity-building and technical cooperation support across a range

of dimensions related to investment for development. Over the reporting period, building on *World Investment Report 2020*, UNCTAD delivered a series of regional webinars on special economic zones that provided an overview and international perspective of the challenges faced by special economic zone regimes during the pandemic.

14. **Investment policy reviews.** To support developing countries in their efforts to diversify their economies, attract higher levels of foreign direct investment and promote sustainable development, UNCTAD conducts investment policy reviews, which are diagnostic studies of the legal, regulatory, institutional and operational environments for investment. The reviews encourage official development assistance and investment in countries in which needs are greatest. Over the reporting period, UNCTAD completed three reviews in Africa, for Angola, Côte d'Ivoire and Seychelles, which were complemented by several follow-up activities to benefit several economies in Africa for which reviews had previously been conducted. In response to a recommendation from a previous independent evaluation, UNCTAD has developed an online platform to enable beneficiary countries to report on when a recommendation in an investment policy review has been implemented and how this has been done, thereby enabling the provision of timely and relevant policy advice and support to countries. To date, Burkina Faso and Seychelles have taken steps to use the platform.

15. **International investment agreements.** UNCTAD continued its support to countries in Africa in the reform of the international investment agreement regime through research and policy analysis, consensus-building and technical assistance activities. UNCTAD support to continental integration under the African Union is noteworthy in this regard. Support was provided to the African Union, the Economic Commission for Africa and other stakeholders on the draft of the protocol on investment of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement. In 2020, several countries in Africa revised their international investment agreement policies by amending or terminating outdated treaties, drafting new model agreements and engaging in regional agreements to promote responsible and sustainable investment. UNCTAD held meetings with relevant stakeholders in Egypt and Morocco on their new bilateral investment treaty models.

16. ***Economic Development in Africa Report 2020: Tackling Illicit Financial Flows for Sustainable Development in Africa.*** The report adopts a multidisciplinary methodology to address the relationship between illicit financial flows and the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in Africa. Its inclusive approach integrates a gender lens and highlights multiple vantage points, from civil society to firms doing business in Africa. Building on established measures of illicit financial flows, new insights are provided into country estimates of trade misinvoicing on the continent, highlighting the specific characteristics of mineral commodities. Finally, the report contends that combating illicit financial flows through tangible and coordinated actions at the global level and within Africa presents an opportunity to rekindle confidence in the effectiveness of multilateralism.

17. **Non-tariff measures.** Under its support programme to eliminate non-tariff barriers, increase regulatory transparency and promote industrial diversification under the African Continental Free Trade Area, UNCTAD works with the African Union and the secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area on the implementation of annex 5 on non-tariff barriers of the protocol on trade in goods of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement, including the development of an online mechanism for reporting, monitoring and eliminating non-tariff barriers. UNCTAD has extended its support in this context to all member States of the African Union and States Parties to the Agreement. States Parties are required to establish national focal points and national monitoring committees as institutional structures for the elimination of non-tariff barriers (article 6 of annex 5). In January 2020, the online mechanism became fully functional and open to the above-mentioned States and regional economic commissions that had nominated their focal points, had established their monitoring committees and could institutionally address and resolve any reported non-tariff barriers (see box 1).

Box 1

**African Continental Free Trade Area: Non-tariff measures**

In 2020, UNCTAD continued to support the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area through the operationalization of the online mechanism for reporting, monitoring and eliminating non-tariff barriers. With the assistance of UNCTAD, to date, 44 of the 54 member States of the African Union that have signed the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement have appointed national focal points on non-tariff barriers. In addition, to advance the effective and efficient resolution of non-tariff barriers, in June 2020, national focal points were trained in the use of the system and, in October–December 2020, awareness-raising efforts were conducted through several private sector workshops and a social media campaign. In 2020, UNCTAD supported 12 member States of the African Union in increasing regulatory transparency on non-tariff measures by collecting regulations from these States. In 2021, the transparency initiative will cover a further 10 countries and assist countries in collecting and disseminating comprehensive information on all currently applied trade-related and official government regulations, including all sanitary and phytosanitary standards and technical product requirements. The initiative will benefit government officials in domestic and international policy coordination, researchers and private sector traders. Twenty-two member States of the African Union have already participated in the initiative and the data are available on various websites, including the UNCTAD global database on non-tariff measures.

*Source:* UNCTAD.

18. **Debt Management and Financial Analysis System (DMFAS).** This programme continues to support countries in Africa in public debt management. Debt management offices in 29 ministries of finance or central banks in 23 countries in Africa used the DMFAS debt management software to manage their central government and government-guaranteed debt. With UNCTAD support, countries progressed in debt reporting and debt analysis, with 14 countries in Africa producing debt statistical bulletins and 11 countries producing debt portfolio reviews, thereby enhancing debt data transparency. Over the reporting period, almost 90 per cent of countries in Africa supported by DMFAS reported effectively to the World Bank debtor reporting system. Although 11 countries have up-to-date procedural manuals, operational risk management continues to be a challenge in most countries.

19. **Sustainable freight transport.** As part of its work on transport and transit corridors, UNCTAD, in collaboration with the Islamic Development Bank, has been supporting the promotion and commercialization of the trans-Saharan road corridor, which comprises six countries, namely, Algeria, Chad, Mali, the Niger, Nigeria and Tunisia. UNCTAD conducted a substantive analytical assessment of the corridor, highlighting performance; challenges and obstacles undermining operation; and potential solutions. UNCTAD continued its collaboration with the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority to support the implementation of its green freight programme.

20. **Trade facilitation.** In 2020, UNCTAD work on trade facilitation in Africa focused on capacity-building and technical assistance in the implementation of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation of the World Trade Organization and subregional and regional trade facilitation commitments, including assistance in support of national trade facilitation committees. UNCTAD provides assistance in the implementation of trade facilitation obligations under the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement and subregional agreements such as the Agreement Establishing a Tripartite Free Trade Area among the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the East African Community and the Southern African Development Community; and works with the Economic Community of Central African States and the Economic Community of West African States to assist in the implementation of trade facilitation. To improve the efficiency of national trade facilitation committees, UNCTAD began the development and roll-out of the reform tracker, a management tool that aims to provide such committees with an information technology-based solution for implementing and tracking work in and the results of trade facilitation

reforms. Implementation of the related UNCTAD empowerment programme in various countries in Africa has been funded through support from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the European Union, the African Development Bank and Trade Mark East Africa. The implementation of trade information portals helps to meet obligations under article 1 of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation and transparency provisions in the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement and subregional trade facilitation commitments. UNCTAD has assisted in advancing trade facilitation transparency in several countries in Africa through the implementation of such portals.

21. **Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA).** Since the inception of this programme, its projects have been designed to assist beneficiary States in reforming their customs regimes, procedures and systems in line with international standards and best practices. The programme has broadened its *raison d'être* to include assistance to partner government agencies in automating trade facilitation procedures. The programme has been participating in the implementation of customs-centred single-window systems and the development of stand-alone solutions with partners. Over the reporting period, 37 economies in Africa were using ASYCUDA systems. In 2020, the programme collaborated in the development of an automated system for the African Trade Observatory to extract trade data from the ASYCUDA system for customs to be provided to the Observatory and the International Trade Centre. In addition, the programme and the Economic Community of West African States developed an interconnected system for managing goods in transit to automate regional transit procedures, which was first tested in Mali and Senegal. The number of transit documents processed using ASYCUDA and the interconnected system for regional transit procedures in the Abidjan-Ouagadougou corridor had increased year-on-year by 111 per cent by September 2020, to 3,123.

22. **Short courses on key issues on the international economic agenda.** Over the reporting period, UNCTAD delivered five short courses for the Geneva-based permanent missions of countries under the New Partnership for Africa's Development strategic framework. These courses provided the latest insights into UNCTAD research on trade, development issues and pandemic responses, ranging from topics on investing in the Sustainable Development Goals to trade policy towards gender equality and harnessing blockchain technology, among others. In September–November 2020, approximately 35 delegates from Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi and Sierra Leone attended the following three short courses: Investing in the Sustainable Development Goals: The role of diplomats; new instruments, approaches and frameworks in trade policy towards gender equality and women's economic empowerment; and competition and consumer protection policies for inclusive and sustainable development. Two new courses were delivered in February and March 2021.

23. **Examining road transport services in Kenya: A case study for the tea value chain.** Under a United Nations Development Account project on trade in services in Africa, UNCTAD and the Economic Commission for Africa commissioned this study in collaboration with the Ministry of Industrialization, Trade and Enterprise Development of Kenya. Upon request by the Ministry, a workshop to review and validate the study took place in Nairobi in November 2020, with physical and remote participation, offering a platform to discuss the key findings and policy recommendations, with a view to optimizing transport services in the tea sector. The project aims to strengthen capacities to measure the value added generated in selected services sectors and supporting policy frameworks to maximize their contribution to regional and national value chains, with the objective of contributing to sectoral policymaking and with a view to better supporting the resilience of the services sector in the beneficiary countries. The project supports Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria and Togo in undertaking sectoral pandemic impact and response studies.

## **B. Tackling vulnerabilities and building resilience**

24. UNCTAD assists countries in Africa in reducing the vulnerability of their economies to commodity dependence and seeking opportunities to increase value addition in their

economic activities based on commodities. UNCTAD provides guidance on how to harness trade as a tool for structural transformation and how to improve trade policy regimes to boost their competitiveness and facilitate their integration into regional and global value chains.

25. **Development policies for sustainable economic growth in Southern Africa.** Under this United Nations Development Account project aimed at building capacity in certain countries in the region, namely, Mauritius, Mozambique, South Africa, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia, UNCTAD supported the formulation of policies on diversification and structural transformation. One of the main outcomes of the project, conducted in cooperation with several Governments and key international partners, was the adoption of an official outcome document that endorsed a series of specific policy measures needed to promote regional value chains in the region and the launch of a new industrial policy strategic plan in Mauritius. UNCTAD continued efforts to help sustain the industrialization strategy of the Southern African Development Community by strengthening key regional value chains and fostering industrial policy coordination.

26. **Developing integrated programmes to alleviate binding constraints to development by fostering structural transformation, building productive capacities and enhancing investment opportunities and linkages with China.** UNCTAD began implementation of this project under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Sub-Fund, the objectives of which are to articulate the binding constraints to trade, transport and structural transformation in selected economies in Africa and match these with engagement from China; and to identify sectors with the potential for accelerated growth and transformation. The project is to be implemented in 2021–2023, with a budget of over \$1 million, in Angola, Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda and Zimbabwe.

27. **Nutraceuticals study.** UNCTAD launched this study to explore the potential of nutraceuticals and bioprospecting in supporting export diversification and value addition in Ethiopia and Mauritius. The study will explore how these countries can better harness their biodiversity and traditional knowledge about health foods to create jobs, expand exports and achieve inclusive growth.

28. **Teaching package on trade and gender.** The objective of this distance learning initiative is to equip policymakers, academics and civil society in developing countries with analytical tools to analyse the two-way relationship between trade and gender and to produce gender-aware policy, research and advocacy. In March–May 2020, UNCTAD delivered the online course on trade and gender in English and French; 73 of the 123 participants were from Africa. Over the reporting period, UNCTAD developed a thematic teaching module and a related online course on the gender-related impacts of technological upgrading in agriculture. In collaboration with the secretariat of the Enhanced Integrated Framework, in July 2020, UNCTAD developed new teaching material on trade and gender issues in the least developed countries.

29. **Global initiative towards post-pandemic resurgence of the microenterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises sector.** The objective of this multi-agency United Nations Development Account project is to strengthen the resilience of such enterprises in mitigating the social and economic impacts of the pandemic. In October 2020, under the project, UNCTAD launched the second phase of its capacity-building activities with regard to women small-scale and informal cross-border traders in Malawi, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. Special attention was paid to the latest developments under the African Continental Free Trade Area and to pandemic-related rules. Training was delivered in local languages and copies of the Empretec manual on entrepreneurship adapted for a low-literacy audience were made available, as well as a small-scale trader's guide with excerpts in local languages, namely, Bemba, Chichewa and Swahili. Project activities were conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Trade of Malawi, the Trade Development Authority of the United Republic of Tanzania and the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry of Zambia, as well as cross-border trade associations.



30. **European Union–UNCTAD joint programme of support for Angola: Train for Trade II, 2017–2021.** Over the reporting period, more than 30 activities were implemented under this programme with the objective of promoting the sustainable diversification of the economy and exports of Angola. Most training activities were held online due to the pandemic. Activities are detailed by component in box 2.

Box 2

**European Union–UNCTAD joint programme of support for Angola: Train for Trade II, 2017–2021**

**Commercial diplomacy.** Training and technical support was facilitated in negotiating techniques, focusing on the negotiations of the European Union–Southern African Development Community economic partnership agreement. Capacity-building in rules of origin and intellectual property rights related to the agreement are ongoing.

**Creative economy.** A draft report was developed on cultural and creative industries in Angola, paving the way for a creative economy strategy. A multiministerial public sector working group and private sector counterpart were established to oversee development of the sector. Focused training packages are in development.

**Empretec.** The training of trainers was facilitated, involving a networking event for small and medium-sized enterprises trained by Empretec, focusing on mitigation strategies against external shocks such as the pandemic. A study for a national entrepreneurship strategy was finalized and a related workshop organized with stakeholders in Angola. Discussions on cooperation modalities were facilitated by Empretec, with the National Institute for Support to Microenterprises and Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, and workshops were implemented under the leadership of national certified trainers through video links to international master trainers.

**Foreign direct investment promotion.** A review of international investment agreements concluded by Angola resulted in recommendations disseminated at an event held with the Government. Other work included a strategy for investment promotion in the agriculture sector, on coffee and tropical fruits; and a webinar for Angola and investment promotion agencies in the East African Community and the Southern African Development Community.

**National green export review.** A webinar on honey production and exports was organized with the facilitation of sectoral experts from Brazil. Technical partnerships were formed with sectoral experts in the region.

**Trade facilitation.** An online trade facilitation course was provided to the national trade facilitation committee, to help maintain knowledge built to date through the delivery of training under the UNCTAD empowerment programme for national trade facilitation committees.

**Transport and logistics.** A series of practical on-the-job-training webinars and technical advice was provided to ministries on the development of public–private partnership projects on trade logistics infrastructure.

The end-of-programme targets on the number of people trained have already been exceeded, as 1,376 individuals have been trained under Train-for-Trade II and 30 individuals have been trained as trainers. In addition, 60 per cent of planned policy documents and reviews have been completed. The logical framework and other documents of the programme have been reviewed to better capture the innovative results being achieved. Success in implementation has led to additional investment in the programme by the European Union of close to \$1 million, with complementary new workstreams developed on capacity-building to meet international standards, training in farming as a business and further support to commercial diplomacy. New project documents and budget allocations were approved by the steering committee of the programme in December 2020.

*Source:* UNCTAD.

31. **Capacity-building in and technical assistance on competition and consumer protection in Portuguese-language countries.** This project, which has benefited from voluntary contributions from Portugal, aims to address requests received from Timor-Leste and from Portuguese-language countries in Africa on law and policy reform and capacity-building in the areas of competition and consumer protection. Some activities were delayed due to the pandemic but were launched by end-2020 and events on competition and consumer protection policy are planned for 2021, engaging representatives from all beneficiaries, with the involvement of the competition and consumer protection authorities of Brazil and Portugal and the secretariat of the Community of Portuguese-Language Countries.

32. **South–South integration and the Sustainable Development Goals: Enhancing structural transformation in key partner countries of the Belt and Road Initiative.** UNCTAD is implementing this project under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Sub-Fund, the objectives of which are to build capacity in partner countries in the key policy areas of investment, trade, finance, debt and technology, by indirectly learning from development experiences in China and by directly drawing from existing institutional capabilities in China. In this regard, UNCTAD has provided in-depth analysis, for example of strategic debt sustainability and debt management in Ethiopia.

### C. Improving competitiveness

33. UNCTAD supports countries in Africa in improving their competitiveness by assisting them in improving the functioning of markets in Africa, enhancing the efficiency of their State apparatus and achieving a better distribution of functions between States and markets. UNCTAD assists countries in Africa in creating a favourable environment to benefit from opportunities created by information and communications technology and in using such technology to promote trade through e-commerce.

34. **Intellectual property for development.** In 2020, UNCTAD continued to provide technical input on key intellectual property rights issues under the African Continental Free Trade Area. Upon request by the secretariat of the East African Community, UNCTAD shared its expertise in intellectual property, investment and pharmaceutical production with the East African Legislative Assembly at a meeting on the pharmaceuticals bill. UNCTAD also delivered several training workshops in Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and the East African Community that focused on investment incentives for the local production and sustainable supply of antibiotics. In November 2020, UNCTAD attended the first meeting of the Technical Working Group on Intellectual Property under the African Continental Free Trade Area, held in Addis Ababa.

35. **Global cyberlaw tracker.** This is the first global mapping of cyberlaws that tracks the state of e-commerce legislation in the field of e-transactions, consumer protection, data protection and privacy and cybercrime, showing progress made in the adoption of legislation and any remaining gaps. In Africa, in recent years, there has been significant progress in the adoption of relevant legislation.

36. **Intergovernmental Group of Experts on E-Commerce and the Digital Economy.** The fourth session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts was held in October 2020 and focused on digital platforms and value creation in developing countries and the implications for national and international policies. More than 50 participants from 25 countries in Africa attended the session, to discuss policy-relevant topics to maximize the development gains from e-commerce and the digital economy and address associated challenges.

37. **eTrade for Women initiative.** This initiative aims to empower women in the digital economy and to build more inclusive and enabling policy and regulatory environments. To deliver on its objectives, it focuses on three dimensions, namely, capacity-building, community-building and policy dialogue. In 2020, an online master class was held in July for Anglophone Africa and activities were initiated for the eTrade for women community, a network of women digital entrepreneurs, in Francophone Africa.

38. **E-commerce strategies.** Following the finalization of an eTrade readiness assessment in 2020, Benin will pursue efforts to use digital transformation to accelerate development, economic diversification, job creation and trade. A report to assist Botswana in developing its national e-commerce strategy was validated in November 2020 at a workshop hosted by UNCTAD and the Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry of Botswana. An eTrade readiness assessment was conducted in Côte d'Ivoire in 2020. UNCTAD developed a national e-commerce strategy for Kenya with the Communications Authority; the strategy formulation process takes a whole-of-government approach to addressing relevant issues across the policy spectrum. Upon request by the Ministry of Trade and Industry of Rwanda, UNCTAD drafted a national e-commerce strategy in consultation with public and private stakeholders, funded by the United Kingdom; the strategy will be launched in 2021. UNCTAD and the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States will develop a regional e-commerce strategy, which requires establishing coordination mechanisms to ensure coherence in the involvement of the Commission and all 15 member States.

39. **Follow-up and implementation support on e-trade readiness.** In 2020, UNCTAD conducted a comprehensive review of the implementation of recommendations in 18 countries and, in November 2020, published *Fast-Tracking Implementation of eTrade Readiness Assessments*. Among the eight countries in Africa reviewed, namely, Burkina Faso, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Senegal, Togo, Uganda and Zambia, the report highlights several successfully implemented recommendations. A series of workshops were scheduled for the first quarter of 2021 on stakeholder engagement and capacity development to fast-track e-trade readiness, to focus on project priorities at the national and/or regional levels in 14 eTrade readiness assessment beneficiary countries in Africa.

40. **UNCTAD eWeek 2020.** Due to the pandemic, UNCTAD organized this event for the first time with remote participation, offering 14 high-level and substantive webinars attended by more than 2,000 participants from 134 countries. Representatives from 32 countries in Africa attended and contributed to the thematic sessions.

41. **Science, technology and innovation policy capacity-building.** Through its long-standing science, technology and innovation policy review programme, UNCTAD helps countries shape science, technology and innovation policy in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. Given the difficulties due to the pandemic, UNCTAD implemented certain mitigation measures, such as hosting meetings with stakeholders in beneficiary countries with remote participation. Over the reporting period, UNCTAD undertook the following policy reviews: Botswana, commencing mid-2020, to be finalized by August 2021; Ethiopia, report published March 2020; Uganda, report published October 2020, with agreement with the Government of Uganda to implement follow-up activities; Zambia, commencing late-2019, to be finalized by May 2021. UNCTAD offers beneficiary country policymakers training in science, technology and innovation and the Goals. For example, six government officials from Angola participated in a series of pilot online training courses in November–December 2020, co-led by UNCTAD and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization under the inter-agency task team of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism. Developing countries should enhance scientific research to reap the potential of science, technology and innovation. In this regard, UNCTAD and Okayama University, Japan, launched a young female scientist programme in November 2020, focusing on Botswana, Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia and Madagascar.

## D. Enhancing multilateralism

42. **Assistance to the West African Economic and Monetary Union.** In 2020, UNCTAD conducted the second voluntary peer review of the competition law and policy of the Union and launched the report in October at the Eighth United Nations Conference to Review All Aspects of the Set of Multilaterally Agreed Equitable Principles and Rules for the Control of Restrictive Business Practices. The report provided several recommendations for institutional and legal reform to improve the effectiveness of the competition regime of the Union and to strengthen its collaboration with the competition regime of the Economic Community of West African States. UNCTAD assisted the Union in the preparation of a

draft merger regulation, starting in 2019 and concluding in July 2020 with a workshop to validate the draft. The adoption of this regulation will equip the West African Economic and Monetary Union and its eight member States with an appropriate regulatory and institutional framework to effectively assess mergers in their jurisdictions. Collaboration with the West African Economic and Monetary Union to establish statistical tools for the measurement and analysis of trade in services will help its member States in the formation of policies in the domain of services, tailored to the social and economic development goals of the countries. In May 2020–April 2021, the project included the following activities by UNCTAD: signing of a memorandum of understanding with the Central Bank of West African States to develop a methodology for freight costs; signing of a memorandum of understanding with Senegal to pilot, before its deployment to other States in the region, an information technology statistical system that States can use to compile and disseminate statistics; and finalization of the system.

43. **Assistance in the Middle East and North Africa.** Under a memorandum of understanding, UNCTAD, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia aim to promote effective competition policies in the region. In July 2020, a webinar was held with stakeholders, at which representatives from competition authorities in the region discussed the challenges faced during the pandemic and the measures taken by the authorities to protect and promote competition. The webinar illustrated the role of regional and international organizations and how they can support competition authorities in adjusting to new challenges. The second joint competition forum for the Arab region was held in March 2021, hosted by the Competition Authority of Egypt.

44. **Collaboration on applying a gender lens to the work of the World Trade Organization.** In May 2020, UNCTAD co-organized a webinar in this regard with the International Trade Centre and the World Trade Organization, to help Governments integrate gender issues into trade policies, programmes and negotiations. Participants in the webinar included participants from the UNCTAD online course on trade and gender, including from Africa. The webinar was part of a series of initiatives linked to the Joint Declaration on Trade and Women’s Economic Empowerment on the Occasion of the Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization in Buenos Aires in December 2017. Proponents are discussing the possibility of further mainstreaming gender issues in the work of the World Trade Organization as a natural progression of their work under the auspices of the Declaration.

45. **Collaboration on climate change issues.** In 2020, UNCTAD collaborated with the International Maritime Organization as an independent expert reviewer of various impact assessments submitted to the Organization that included proposals for short-term measures to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions in shipping. UNCTAD noted whether the assessments were comprehensive enough and whether they took due consideration of the specific needs of small island developing States and the least developed countries. The eighth session of the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Transport, Trade Logistics and Trade Facilitation was held in October 2020 and focused on climate change adaptation for seaports in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, providing a forum for discussion on this topic that could help inform upcoming intergovernmental meetings and processes. The session was well attended by participants from Africa, with more than 30 participants from over 20 countries.

46. **Support in multilateral trade negotiations.** UNCTAD continued to provide technical support to developing countries and groupings in their engagement in multilateral and regional trade negotiations and the implementation of the resulting trade agreements. Technical support was provided to the Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles and Zimbabwe in preparation for deepening negotiations in the areas of trade and sustainable development and rules of origin under the European Union–Eastern and Southern Africa economic partnership agreement. An UNCTAD, European Union and United Nations Industrial Development Organization project to support Mozambique in implementing safeguards under the economic partnership agreement will be conducted in 2021–2023.

47. **Support in the implementation of trade and services policies.** UNCTAD launched several technical cooperation projects in support of trade policy formulation and

trade negotiations, in particular addressing accession to the World Trade Organization, including an Enhanced Integrated Framework and United Nations Development Programme project in support of accession by South Sudan. UNCTAD continued to support member States in their operationalization of the Agreement on the Global System of Trade Preferences and efforts to revitalize the system as a unique platform for South–South cooperation. In the area of services, UNCTAD collaborated with the African Union in discussions on how to support the formulation and implementation of trade and services policies. In September 2020, the African Union Commission participated in the eighth session of the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Trade, Services and Development, at which discussions addressed the implementation of the protocol on services of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement.

48. **Creative economy programme.** In the framework of resolution 74/198 of the General Assembly on the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development, 2021, UNCTAD organized a trade policy dialogue to discuss how creative industries could contribute to inclusive global economic recovery, by exchanging policies and strategies implemented by Governments and on the best use of digital platforms. In 2021, UNCTAD set up collaborations with 11 other United Nations entities to lead the preparation of a creative economy outlook publication, elaborating in particular how resolution 74/198 is aligned with and advances the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In addition, UNCTAD elaborated a road map of joint collaborations and activities to be implemented in 2021 to celebrate the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development.

## **E. Empowering people and investing in their future**

49. **Entrepreneurship.** UNCTAD advocacy work in support of development in Africa includes support in enterprise development and the UNCTAD Entrepreneurship Policy Framework continues to be leveraged for the development of targeted national entrepreneurship strategies. In 2020, two webinars were held to formulate a consensus-based approach on developing a national entrepreneurship strategy in Angola. Over the reporting period, UNCTAD provided assistance to 15 Empretec centres in Africa and training of trainer and master class sessions on modernized Empretec methodology were held in Lagos, Nigeria, for all Empretec centres in Africa.

50. **Collaborations on gender equality and trade.** In cooperation with the Economic Commission for Africa and the Economic Commission for Europe, UNCTAD is pioneering the measurement of gender in trade, with conceptual work begun by UNCTAD in 2018. In May 2020, UNCTAD, with the European Commission, the International Labour Organization and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, published the policy brief “Gender and trade: Assessing the impact of trade agreements on gender equality”. In June 2020, UNCTAD published the policy brief “Making trade agreements work for gender equality: Data and statistics”.

## **IV. Final remarks**

51. Better statistics and greater data quality, as well as automated systems for customs data, are essential for good policy analysis. In this regard, the Productive Capacities Index allows policymakers to measure their country’s performance in achieving their national development goals and ability to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The composite multidimensional global Index allows countries to benchmark and assess their levels of productive capacities over time. In addition, ASYCUDA projects aim to assist countries in reforming customs regimes, procedures and systems in line with international standards and best practices and ASYCUDA assists government agencies in automating trade facilitation procedures. In addition, UNCTAD has collaborated with the West African Economic and Monetary Union to establish statistical tools for the measurement and analysis of trade in services that will help member States formulate policies in the domain of services, tailored to the social and economic development goals of the countries.

52. This report highlights the importance of collaborative work by UNCTAD with United Nations entities, international organizations, representatives from ministries and stakeholders in delivering technical assistance to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. UNCTAD continues to deepen its cooperation with international organizations to enhance the development of a coherent approach to trade and development assistance in Africa. For example, in December 2020, UNCTAD collaborated with the African Union, the Economic Commission for Africa and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women to deliver coaching and capacity-building sessions for over 100 young women entrepreneurs on opportunities under the African Continental Free Trade Area; and in 2020, UNCTAD, with representatives from ministries and stakeholders, launched several capacity-building and technical assistance activities in countries in Africa.

53. The pandemic shows the importance of flexibility in planning programmes in response to a crisis. During the pandemic, UNCTAD has delivered its services in a flexible manner, including by shifting to delivery through the use of online platforms. Despite travel restrictions, UNCTAD continued to support development projects in Africa and, in 2020, UNCTAD provided services to almost all countries in Africa. For example, in June, UNCTAD contributed to the expert meeting organized by the African Union on the protocol on investment and COVID-19, at which discussions were centred on the pandemic and its relation to the risk of a potential rise in investor-State dispute settlement cases in Africa.

54. Investment is key to development and, in this regard, in 2020, UNCTAD delivered a wide range of services to countries in Africa in the field of investment and enterprise. UNCTAD provides countries in Africa with capacity-building and technical cooperation support in investment for development. UNCTAD also supports the development of international investment regime policies through research and policy analysis and consensus-building and technical assistance activities.

55. Regional integration and addressing non-tariff barriers are key to boosting African trade for development. UNCTAD works with the African Union and the secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area on the implementation of annex 5 on non-tariff barriers of the protocol on trade in goods of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement, including the development of the online mechanism for reporting, monitoring and eliminating non-tariff barriers. In 2020, UNCTAD supported 12 member States of the African Union in increasing regulatory transparency on non-tariff measures by collecting regulations from various countries.

56. Digitalization in trade is important in development and, in this regard, UNCTAD supports countries in Africa in strengthening readiness to engage in and benefit from e-commerce and the digital economy. Related activities and events include sessions of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on E-Commerce and the Digital Economy, the eTrade for all initiative, research on e-commerce and the pandemic and *The UNCTAD B2C[Business-to-Consumer] E-Commerce Index 2020: Spotlight on Latin America and the Caribbean*.

## V. Financial resources committed to Africa

57. In 2020, 38.94 per cent of the total national, regional and interregional project expenditure of UNCTAD was directed towards Africa, amounting to \$13,670,071 (provisional). This proportion is the lowest since 2015.