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Report by the Chair of the Advisory Body set up in accordance with paragraph 166 of the Bangkok Plan of Action on the implementation of courses by the secretariat in 2020–2021 and their relevant impact; and the appointment of members of the Advisory Body

Report of the Chair of the Advisory Body for the year 2020–2021, established in the context of paragraph 166 of the UNCTAD X Plan of Action

1. During its forty-seventh session in 2001, in line with paragraph 166 of the Bangkok Plan of Action, 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 capacity-building courses. This mandate was renewed by the São Paulo Consensus, the Accra Accord and the Doha Declaration and, in 2016, reaffirmed in Nairobi at the fourteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. The Policy Capacity-Building Section/P166, within the Knowledge Development Branch of the UNCTAD Division on Technology and Logistics, leads, coordinates and implements these courses across geographical regions, with relevant United Nations economic commissions, and the permanent missions of member States based in Geneva.

2. The Advisory Body for the year 2020–2021, which was formed at the last session of the Trade and Development Board, met once in May 2021. I will today report on (a) the outcome of the meeting; (b) implementation of the short courses held in 2020–2021; (c) the end-of-course evaluations for the short courses; and (d) the plans for the remainder of the year, including upcoming regional and short courses, and related matters.

I. Outcome of the Advisory Body meeting in May 2021

3. During its meeting, the Advisory Body reviewed the activities of the flagship programme of UNCTAD during the reporting period. The curricula for regional courses illustrate the formulation of development policies and strategies, within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, the programme was further developed to incorporate perspectives on resilience in responding to multiple economic shocks. To mitigate the impact of the coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, strengthening the overall framework for development policies by adding a component on resilience is essential to provide policymakers with tools for stronger policy formulation. The training includes a number of

lectures on economic, trade and finance theories and their relevance to policy development, the role of investment and technology, and detailed case studies and lessons learned from previous policy decisions. It is designed to promote critical thinking, with emphasis placed on policy design, coherence, coordination, implementation and measurement. Central to the programme are simulation exercises, examinations and critiques of best practices in policy development, group work and debates.

4. In this regard, the Advisory Board took note of the proposals submitted for hosting the regional courses for the economies of Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean. The members also took note of the current multi-year venues in the five developing regions, reviewed the criteria required for hosting and expressed their satisfaction with all the proposals submitted. Based on the discussion that ensued regarding the merits and benefits that could be generated from hosting courses in each region, a consensus was reached that Argentina will host the courses for Latin America and the Caribbean and Pakistan will host the courses for Asia and the Pacific. Under the UNCTAD multi-year venue agreement, each country will host three editions of the regional courses. Therefore, the Advisory Body established that:

- The Foreign Service Academy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan will become the multi-year venue over five years in the Asia and the Pacific region.
- The University of Buenos Aires, School of Economic Sciences, will become the multi-year venue over five years in the Latin America and the Caribbean region.

5. As the Chair of the Advisory Body, I requested the secretariat to deliver the decision to the parties involved, according to the usual mode of operation.

6. As illustrated during the meeting of the Advisory Body, the UNCTAD regional courses in multi-year venues continue to be an innovative way of raising support, gaining experiences from various economies and enhancing bilateral cooperation at the country level. This was evident from the proposals received. The contribution of national experts in shedding light on national and regional experiences is of significance to the programme's curricula in enhancing knowledge and boosting human capital among policymakers.

7. During the Advisory Body meeting, I also took note of the extensive political support the programme receives from member States. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2020–2021, the programme had significant achievements: it conducted a survey of 200 of its alumni on their careers and perspectives during the pandemic, and how COVID-19 impacted their professions, which generated a 40 per cent response rate. The survey findings will inform future research and feed into a curriculum for a forthcoming e-learning course on building resilience that will also target policymakers in various capitals of the five developing regions.

8. The programme supports collaboration at all levels – national, regional and international – for its client base of UNCTAD member States and their policymakers at relevant public institutions, as well as Geneva-based delegates. In particular, UNCTAD collaboration with United Nations economic commissions brings into the curricula regional perspectives by highlighting the economic challenges faced and zooming in on countries' experiences in the various regions.

9. This brings me to the next point on the short courses.

II. Implementation of the short courses held in 2020–2021

10. I shall now report on the short courses for Geneva-based delegates. In 2020–2021, the secretariat delivered seven short courses, which continued to update Geneva-based delegates on recent UNCTAD research on interrelated development, economic and trade matters, incorporating the COVID-19 pandemic and its ramifications. In cooperation with several UNCTAD divisions, these short courses proved useful and beneficial to Geneva-based delegates. A total of 191 delegates attended these courses, of which 40 per cent were women. The short courses were:

- Investing in the Sustainable Development Goals: The role of diplomats (18 September 2020).
- New instruments, approaches and frameworks in trade policy towards gender equality and women's economic empowerment (13 October 2020).
- Competition and consumer protection policies for inclusive sustainable development (13 November 2020).
- UNCTAD *Review of Maritime Transport 2020* and key trends in ports and shipping in times of the COVID-19 pandemic (2 February 2021).
- Harnessing blockchain for sustainable development: Prospects and challenges (4 March 2021).
- The UNCTAD Productive Capacities Index: A new tool for policy formulation in developing countries (16 April 2021).
- Services value added in exports: Policies for development (7 May 2021).

11. For the first short course on 18 September, 24 delegates attended, representing Algeria, Bahrain, Cabo Verde, the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Ecuador, Haiti, Jordan, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Malta, Morocco, Oman, Panama, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Sierra Leone and the Syrian Arab Republic.

12. For the second short course on 13 October, 14 delegates attended, representing Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Ethiopia, Finland, Haiti, Kenya, Morocco, Panama, the Russian Federation and the State of Palestine.

13. For the third short course on 13 November, 26 delegates attended, representing Ethiopia, Finland, Haiti, Hungary, Jordan, Lebanon, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Morocco, Myanmar, Panama, Turkmenistan and the State of Palestine.

14. For the fourth short course on 2 February, 28 delegates attended, representing Afghanistan, Armenia, Bangladesh, China, Colombia, the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Denmark, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Hungary, India, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Lesotho, Mongolia, Nepal, the Russian Federation, the Sudan, Togo and Yemen.

15. For the fifth short course on 4 March, 35 delegates attended, representing Afghanistan, Angola, Colombia, the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Czechia, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, Lesotho, Mongolia, Morocco, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Togo, Viet Nam, Yemen and the State of Palestine,

16. For the sixth short course on 16 April, 35 delegates attended, representing Afghanistan, Angola, Armenia, Bahrain, Bhutan, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Ecuador, Gabon, Gambia, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, Lesotho, Malta, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Nepal, Oman, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen.

17. For the seventh short course on 7 May, 29 delegates attended, representing Algeria, Cabo Verde, the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Gabon, Iceland, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Malta, Mongolia, Nepal, the Netherlands, the Niger, Panama, the Russian Federation, Slovenia, the Sudan, Togo, Viet Nam and the State of Palestine.

18. The short courses provide a platform where UNCTAD experts are given the opportunity to present their recent research to delegates, while the comments and questions from delegates provide relevant input and generate potential research topics for UNCTAD work. This informs dialogue between UNCTAD researchers and Geneva-based representatives of member States, bridges the knowledge gap and ensures information-sharing. These sessions are, on average, well attended, based on the figures I just reported, and provide a forum for delegates. In 2020–2021, the impact of the pandemic was incorporated into all the themes addressed in UNCTAD short courses, whether held in a hybrid, face-to-face or remote format.

III. The end-of-course evaluations for the short courses

19. The evaluations conducted by Geneva-based delegates indicate that they are informative and raise awareness on development, economic and trade topics useful for the delegates' professional duties. The participants noted that the choice of topics is relevant. They also noted that the presentations are comprehensive and interrelated and contribute to the formulation of policy measures. Furthermore, the short courses identify challenges developing countries face and are consistently linked to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals.

20. 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 terms of substance and in the calibre of expertise. I call upon all members of the Trade and Development Board to continue supporting these commendable efforts. I also call upon the members to provide all the necessary support to the secretariat as it takes on this important capacity-building programme to continue responding to the needs of delegates, mid-level government officials and policymakers in the areas of trade, finance, investment, technology and development.

IV. Plans for the remainder of the year, including upcoming regional and short courses

21. I wish to inform you that the programme will hold another four short courses in the third quarter of 2021. In total, the UNCTAD secretariat will deliver eight short courses, in contrast with the usual six they deliver on an annual basis.

22. In addition, two regional courses are planned for 2021, for the economies of Eastern Europe and the Arab region. Twenty-five participants were selected to take part in the regional course for Eastern Europe and economies in transition. With the challenges posed by the pandemic, they all completed the e-learning introduction module in 2020 and will soon take part in the regional course. The participants, both policymakers and academics, represent 10 countries: Albania, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Russian Federation, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Of the participants, 52 per cent are women.

23. Your Excellencies, additionally, previous evaluations by the alumni of this programme illustrated increased integration in decision-making processes. As the programme is embedded in a knowledge-based, capacity-building framework, it heavily focuses on sharing and disseminating information with policymakers and government officials in relevant departments. It was also reported that deepened knowledge on development and economic matters was acquired. The content of the regional courses was relevant to the professional duties of the participants, who indicated a strengthened ability to apply the lessons learned that emerged from the course. The majority of alumni participants, who responded to the survey in the first quarter of 2021, indicated that the knowledge they had gained from previous UNCTAD regional courses was useful to them in formulating policies in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This included, among others, the areas of policies on trade in the post-pandemic era, improving analysis and statistics sources, trade negotiations and trade facilitation and logistics.

24. Sharing and disseminating knowledge they gained from previous courses was also emphasized as one of main strengths of the programme. In this regard, I was pleased to learn that many of the supervisors who provided feedback indicated that the participants shared the knowledge gained with colleagues in their departments and related ones. Supervisors also indicated they would recommend the UNCTAD paragraph 166 courses to other colleagues.

25. In terms of their institutions, the participants had also reported increased integration.

26. Your Excellences, the Advisory Body took note that such positive feedback can only be generated through carefully designed curricula and delivery, which led to this positive impact on the knowledge and skills of policymakers. To this end, the involvement of

UNCTAD experts, regional commissions and national experts, and the Policy Capacity-Building Section of the Knowledge Development Branch, consistently ensures the quality and excellence of the paragraph 166 regional approach. Its holistic approach addresses the challenges faced by developing economies in achieving development, in general, and in particular trade, investment, finance and technology objectives. In this regard, let me extend the appreciation of the Advisory Body to the member States that are the hosts in the current cycle: Egypt, Kenya and North Macedonia.

27. Additionally, and during my tenure as Chair of the Advisory Body, UNCTAD had several achievements, including the establishment of multi-venues for Latin American and the Caribbean and for Asia and the Pacific, an increased number of short courses for Geneva-based delegates, developing additional curricula, and integration of the economic, environmental and social consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic across its global curricula. My successor will chair the meetings for the deliberations on future matters related to this programme.

28. On a final note, I wish to thank the members of the Advisory Body, namely Albania, Belgium, Cameroun, Czechia, Djibouti, the Dominican Republic, France, Kenya, Myanmar, Oman and Pakistan, as their feedback provided during the Advisory Body was constructive and contributed to the deliberations of this Body, in providing the necessary guidance and support to the Acting Secretary-General of UNCTAD in the implementation of this important flagship capacity-building programme and laying the way forward.

29. Finally, I congratulate Her Excellency Ms. Maimuna Kibenga Tarishi, Ambassador of the United Republic of Tanzania on her appointment as the new Chair of the Advisory Body and wish her a fruitful and successful term. I would ask Her Excellency to note this significant programme of building the capacity of future policymakers across developing regions and to extend all the support needed for the implementation of this important mandate.
