



European Union

Statement

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Opening Statement

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Madam President, dear Secretary General, Excellencies, distinguished Delegates,

I am honoured to be able to address you here today, on behalf of the EU and its Member States, reacting to the outlined vision for UNCTAD. We find it of utmost importance to have a strategic re-think within any organization when important milestones are passed, as in this case the Bridgetown Covenant.

Let me note at the outset, dear Secretary General, that we fully endorse your vision and welcome the leadership and the responsibility you have demonstrated since your appointment last September. In this sense, we look forward to the consideration of the Annual Report during the regular Board session in June, which is to focus on the results achieved, using a clear set of indicators and including recommendations for future adjustments, as specified in the Bridgetown Covenant.

In two years' time, UNCTAD will have reached a noteworthy anniversary – 60 years of its existence. This is our opportunity, or even an obligation, to strengthen UNCTAD's role in the multilateral system, maintaining the 2030 Agenda central to our efforts. Building on the UNCTAD 15 outcome, we need to ensure that its contributions are up to date, coherent, relevant and with consensus building objectives at its core.

The EU and its Member States have consistently recognised the value of UNCTAD's work; but also pointed to existing challenges. Our commitment is well evident by our group's regular participation in intergovernmental meetings, but also by being the biggest and a reliable contributor to UNCTAD's extra-budgetary resources and to the funding for Junior Professional Officers. On the other hand, the focus of our involvement and of our financial contributions – which largely coincides with the one of the broader membership contributions – indicates the differences in the perceived value of specific areas of UNCTAD's work. This dichotomy was also noticeable during this week's Working Party session and will likely be visible again when considering the different reports during this ongoing Board executive session.

Returning to your presented vision, dear Secretary General... Making climate and environmental protection, as well as gender issues and human rights, central to the work carried out by UNCTAD, is instrumental for ensuring sustainable and inclusive results. Combining these essential elements with a support towards the new, service-based and

digital economy, is a focus emanating clearly from the Bridgetown Covenant. We, therefore, strongly support you, dear Secretary General, in focusing UNCTAD's work towards these objectives. In particular, we encourage focusing resources in support of these objectives in the African Continental Free Trade Area, as well as in the LDCs, SIDS and LLDCs.

We also support your plans on the various management and organisational aspects. This is an important first step that could be instrumental for overcoming certain obstacles that limit UNCTAD's ability as an influential and consensus building actor across the entire spectrum of its operations. It should be emphasised, however, that for this to truly materialise, experts across the membership will also need to perceive a true value from their engagement. To this end, synergies and complementarities, rather than duplication of work, will need to be pursued decisively. While at the same time, the focus on UNCTAD's comparative advantage will need strengthening. Conversely, potentially less-performing avenues of work will require a critical assessment.

Dear Secretary General, Madam President, Excellencies,

The EU and its Member States remain firmly committed to the objectives of UNCTAD. Delivering on the 2030 Agenda requires a strong UNCTAD that can bring to light aspects relevant to the trade and development agenda of developing countries. However, to effectively do so, UNCTAD must operate as a coherent and complementary stakeholder of the entire multilateral system.

We believe that the outlined vision of the Secretary General introduces changes that go in the right direction. We stand ready to partner with all member countries and with the Secretariat, to constructively deliver on this vision and implement the Bridgetown Covenant effectively.

Thank you.