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NOTIFICATION

Expert Meeting on the Impact of Access to Financial Services, including by Highlighting Remittances on Development: Economic Empowerment of Women and Youth

Geneva, 12–14 November 2014

The Expert Meeting on the Impact of Access to Financial Services, including by Highlighting Remittances on Development: Economic Empowerment of Women and Youth will be held on 12–14 November 2014 in room XXVI of the Palais des Nations, Geneva. It will commence at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, 12 November.

Background and purpose of the meeting

In many developing countries, lack of access to financial services as well as high transaction costs often pose significant challenges to people living in poverty. As the international community is set to define post-2015 development frameworks for sustainable development, financial inclusion has become an important international policy agenda since it has the potential to contribute to poverty reduction and economic and social development, as well as to financial stability.

The objective of the expert meeting is to identify national policies and practices that support improved financial access for the unbanked, particularly women and youth, with a focus on measures to record remittances through formal channels and improve data on these inflows. It also aims to provide a platform for public–private sector dialogue and cooperation on increasing access to financial services, including remittances.

A multitude of factors contribute to the reasons for a lack of access to financial services – physical, economic, regulatory and cultural. The poor, women, youth, rural populations and those engaged in informal economies are particularly severely affected. The use of new technology and innovative business models that help overcome barriers to access could contribute to improved inclusion. As highlighted by major international summits and platforms, such as the United Nations high-level dialogue on migration and development, remittances could be turned into a promising source of demand for financial services and contribute significantly to financial inclusion. This will require reducing transaction costs of remittance transfer so as to ensure facilitated, safer and speedier transfer, including through the development of new financial products. Governments have an important role in implementing well-designed comprehensive policies. These include setting up sound regulatory frameworks and providing incentives for extending the supply and affordability of services, as well as by creating an expanded demand for financial services, such as through financial education and consumer empowerment.

The objectives of the expert meeting will be pursued through experts' presentations, an exchange of experiences and lessons learned, and interactive debate. The issues that experts will address will include the following:

- (a) The impact of financial access on small and medium-sized enterprises, microenterprises and individuals with special attention to women and youth;
- (b) Means of improving access to financial services and reducing their transaction costs, including making remittances faster, safer and more secure, and means of maximizing their development impact;
- (c) Policies and regulations that support financial inclusion through new technologies such as mobile money schemes;
- (d) Policy reform which may ease the cost and complexity of access to financial services;
- (e) Trade and competition policy options in financial and telecommunication services to improve financial access;
- (f) Facilitation of the development of public-private partnerships to address financial access.

Participation

Experts, who will participate in the meeting in their personal capacities, are expected to have proven expertise in access to financial services and remittances, reduction of their transaction costs, financial inclusion through new technologies or in regulatory, trade and competition policies regarding financial inclusion and access to financial services. The meeting may also be of interest to experts from research institutions, civil society and the private sector, whose focus is on financial inclusion, access to financial services, remittances and related new technologies such as mobile money schemes.

Member States of UNCTAD are requested to inform the secretariat of the names of their participating experts at an early date and not later than **5 November 2014**. Specialized agencies and international and regional intergovernmental bodies wishing to participate in the meeting, as well as non-governmental organizations 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 November 2014**. There is no limit to the number of experts, including from Governments, who can participate in the meeting. Participants who wish to be panellists should contact UNCTAD no later than 15 October 2014.

Experts are encouraged to prepare and submit to the meeting brief papers (5–12 pages) related to one or more of the issues contained in the provisional agenda, which will be available on the UNCTAD website. These papers will be made available to the meeting in the form and language in which they are received. They should be sent in advance of the meeting to the coordinators in the UNCTAD secretariat whose contact details are provided in this notification.

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 and countries with economies in transition. Governments requiring funding are therefore invited to explicitly 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 two 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, in particular, least developed countries. Changes in the experts nominated will be considered as new nominations.

Nominations with requests for funding should be received no later than **15 October 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 finalized, 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

The provisional agenda for the meeting, together with the secretariat's annotations thereto, will be circulated as document [TD/B/C.I/EM.6/1](#). In order to facilitate the discussion, the UNCTAD secretariat has prepared an issues note, which will be circulated as document [TD/B/C.I/EM.6/2](#).

Logistics

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

Upon arrival, participants are requested, before entering the Palais des Nations, to collect their badges at the United Nations Security Service, Pregny Gate entrance, 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. in order to complete entry procedures in good time and proceed to the meeting in the E Building (Bâtiment E) of the Palais. Participants are requested to carry a passport or similar national identity card with them. Taxis are not allowed to enter the grounds of the Palais des Nations, and visitors will therefore be dropped off at the entrance gates. Furthermore, **luggage may not be brought into the buildings unless the Security Service gives special clearance.**

Nominations and enquiries

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, Switzerland; fax.: +41 22 917 0214; e-mail: meetings@unctad.org.

Registration should be completed online by using the following link: [Expert Meeting on the Impact of Access to Financial Services](#). All other enquiries should be addressed to the coordinators in the substantive divisions, tel.: +41 22 917 5866, +41 22 917 4893, +41 22 917 5526 or +41 22 917 5640; fax.: +41 22 917 0044; e-mail: mina.mashayekhi@unctad.org, taisuke.ito@unctad.org, bruno.antunes@unctad.org or aurangzeb.butt@unctad.org.

(signed)

Mukhisa Kituyi
Secretary-General of UNCTAD

30 September 2014