

**Multi-year Expert Meeting on Investment, Innovation and Entrepreneurship for Productive Capacity-building and Sustainable Development**

**11<sup>th</sup> session (30 September – 02 October 2024)**

**Monday, 30 September 2024**

**10:00 – 10:30**

**Introductory remarks by Nan Li Collins**

**Director, Division on Investment and Enterprise**

**UN Trade and Development**

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen:

It is a great privilege to welcome you all to the eleventh session of the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Investment, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship for Productive Capacity-building and Sustainable Development. Allow me to also thank our Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Pedro Manuel Moreno, for his introduction.

Over the next two days, we will delve into discussions about the role of business development services in supporting micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and start-ups on their journey towards growth and sustainability. We will examine which models and policy approaches can be most effective in this respect.

Our exchange will be enriched by the experiences and best practices shared by different countries. To facilitate the discussions, the Secretariat has prepared a background note titled “Business development services for conducive business ecosystems in support of sustainable development” – Document TD/B/C.II/MEM.4/31.

Distinguished delegates,

MSMEs play a critical role in improving economic, social, and environmental conditions in our economies, including through job creation, the implementation of sustainable business models and practices, and the diffusion of innovation and technologies. Their success, however, hinges on the

presence of a supportive ecosystem that is both inclusive and capable of providing effective, accessible services in an ever-evolving environment.

This requires the provision of Business Development Services.

Business Development Services aim to enhance the competitiveness and sustain the growth of enterprises by boosting their productivity, improving their operations and strategic planning, and creating a more conducive business environment through policy advocacy and infrastructure development.

MSMEs are diverse with varying needs, and Business Development Services offer a broad range of support that can be tailored, particularly for necessity-driven entrepreneurs, micro-enterprises, and those created by vulnerable groups such as women, youth, or migrants. These services include training to upgrade managerial and technical skills, providing information for accessing international markets, offering financial advice, facilitating networking opportunities, and providing infrastructure-related services such as incubators and technology centres – all of which are key components of entrepreneurship policies.

Effective BDS ecosystems often require the involvement of multiple stakeholders, each playing complementary roles to address the diverse needs of entrepreneurs and MSMEs. Our research has identified several best practices, which have enabled governments to leverage existing resources and develop successful alternative models in developing countries. I am pleased to see that experts from countries that have successfully developed such models are participating in this meeting to share their experience.

By providing such tailored support, Business Development Services can play an important role in contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

This is why policy action is required. Policy makers play a key role in facilitating the development of a comprehensive and diversified range of business development services and delivery mechanisms.

Distinguished delegates,

In light of the current global context, business development services must continue to transform and adapt the scope of their intervention and methods of work. In the aftermath of the pandemic,

entrepreneurs and MSMEs continue to face multiple challenges due to recurrent shocks, disruption in supply chains, sustainability imperatives, and the effects of climate change. Additionally, rapid technological developments, the need to accelerate the energy transition, the search for solutions to environmental and climate crises, and the emergence of new critical skills create new challenges and opportunities for business development services providers.

In this respect, governments can develop strategic partnerships with the private sector, business associations, specialized institutions, academic and research institutions, to upgrade their business support ecosystems and guide businesses through these transitions.

As alluded to by our Deputy Secretary-General, UN Trade and Development has been at the forefront of initiatives aimed at fostering a landscape where entrepreneurship thrives on the bedrock of innovation, and where enterprises are resilient and primed for the future.

Through initiatives like the Empretec programme, UN Trade and Development has nurtured entrepreneurship by leveraging global networks to share knowledge and foster skills development among emerging entrepreneurs across diverse economic landscapes and geographies.

We are particularly proud of the latest development of services which has allowed MSMEs and start-ups to tackle the most recent challenges they face. One such initiative is The Square for Global Goals. Launched by UN Trade and Development in 2023, the initiative connects start-up founders and CEOs from emerging economies with a global network of peers, trainers, mentors, investors and industry experts, aiming to bolster technology-driven start-up ecosystems and promote entrepreneurship for sustainable development.

Additionally, UNCTAD's digital government platforms for business facilitation helps streamline enterprise creation and operations. In Colombia, for instance and to help addressing environmental challenges, the programme is piloting an emissions registry to allow firms to calculate and report emissions in compliance with local legislation designed to meet commitments under the Paris Agreement.

We also support MSMEs through our programme on accounting and sustainability reporting, with a view to address the challenges posed by the sustainability drive.

Distinguished delegates,

Throughout the coming days, we will reflect on key aspects of business development services across several panels.

In the first panel, experts will discuss the future of businesses, exploring how they see the business landscape evolving, the new business models that may emerge in the next decade, and the role of global connectivity in creating new entrepreneurial opportunities.

The second panel will focus on the role of MSMEs and startups in economic development and strategies for sustainable business development systems.

The third panel, which will take place tomorrow morning, will present experiences addressing new developments such as the sustainability drive, and the digital and green transitions.

We will then move to the fourth panel which will focus on innovation and how businesses can be made future-proof through upskilling and reskilling.

We will conclude this expert meeting with a brief showcase of the UN Trade and Development's Empretec programme.

Throughout the discussions, our esteemed experts will engage with a series of questions laid out in the background note prepared by the Secretariat.

I look forward to our discussion on effective policy interventions and hearing your insights on how to leverage the sustainability drive to foster resilient and agile businesses. I am confident that we will successfully identify strategies that not only address the current context but also anticipate future challenges and opportunities.

I would like to reaffirm UN Trade and Development's commitment to assisting member states in crafting entrepreneurial ecosystems where MSMEs and start-ups are recognized as crucial partners in the drive towards the achievement of the SDGs. Our Empretec programme will continue to provide key support to the further development of effective business development services and networks.

It is now my pleasure to introduce our distinguished keynote speaker, Professor Vanina Farber, Professor of Social Innovation and Dean, IMD EMBA programme.

Thank you.