

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

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Special session**

Geneva, 17 June 2014

Opening Plenary

Speaker: European Union

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European Union

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

Trade and Development Board

Special Session

Statement by

H.E. Ms Mariangela ZAPPIA

Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the European Union

Geneva, 17 June 2014

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EU Statement

Mr UN Secretary General

Ms Vice-President of the Swiss Confederation

Mr UNCTAD Secretary General

Mr President,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

Mr President,

The European Union and its Member States would like to congratulate UNCTAD for its Fiftieth Anniversary and to convey our best wishes to the people who have been working and cooperating with UNCTAD along these years for their commitment, support and inspiration to carry out the mandate of the organisation.

Between UNCTAD and the EU and its Member States, there is a long history of fruitful cooperation. Our joint work in the field extends to technical cooperation and policy dialogue. We share a forward-looking focus and a desire to respond to new and emerging challenges.

Brief historical outline

In 1964 when the first United Nations Conference on Trade and Development was held in Geneva, there was a slogan: ‘trade, not aid’. UNCTAD emerged to address those specific challenges faced by many developing countries who, at that time, were not members of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

Mandate

UNCTAD was established as an organ of the General Assembly and among its principal functions was mandated to promote international trade, to formulate principles and policies on international trade and related problems of economic development; to initiate action for the negotiation and adoption of multilateral legal instruments in the field of trade; and to be available as a centre for harmonizing trade and related development policies of governments and regional economic groupings.

Following the successful Ministerial Conference, UNCTAD XIII, in 2012, UNCTAD remains the focal point in the United Nations for the integrated treatment of trade and development, and interrelated issues in the areas of finance, technology, investment and sustainable development. The European Union and its Member States consider that UNCTAD should focus within its mandate and existing resources on issues where it has a comparative advantage and where it can produce most benefits to its members and complement activities of other relevant organizations. In our opinion UNCTAD's mandate, with its three pillars – research, technical assistance and consensus-building –, coupled with its universal membership provides a valuable forum for continuous and comprehensive 'development dialogue'.

UNCTAD's mandate echoes a change which many of us are making in our development policy agendas from focusing on the "enabling environment", with attention for health and education, towards more support for "trade and private sector development" as a solid foundation for economic development and poverty reduction.

UNCTAD can play a crucial role in helping developing countries identify comparative advantages in productive sectors, diversify their economies, develop and open their markets, promote trade facilitation and regional economic integration and explore the different options for structural transformation. It should also foster entrepreneurship, competitiveness, good governance, women economic empowerment, interaction between FDI and local productive capacities as well as the integration and upgrading of developing countries in Global Value Chains.

UNCTAD should also continue to support countries with economies in transition in addressing their specific trade and development challenges.

UNCTAD's three pillars

The European Union and its Member States acknowledge UNCTAD's research outputs and, at the same time, continue to encourage the organisation to focus their research activities into areas where it can provide a real added value. Concerning the capacity building arena, we believe that the organisation will benefit from prioritizing and modernising their assistance activities which may result in producing more efficiency gains. We estimate that the quality of the debates in the consensus building area may improve when linked with the discussion of the ministerial

conferences; and we also stress the importance of establishing internal synergies among these three pillars.

Mr President,

I would like to elaborate on a number of points of importance to the EU and its Member States:

Investment

The EU and its Member States appreciate the important investment policy analysis provided by UNCTAD. We stress the importance of UNCTAD continuing to work to identify key barriers to investment and assist developing countries to improve their performance in attracting private domestic and foreign investment. In this spirit, we look forward to the forthcoming World Investment Forum in October.

Africa and the LDCs

Intra-African trade plays a key role in the economic development of Africa and for sustained economic growth. Private sector, infrastructure, regional integration and political stability have a crucial role to play in boosting intra-African trade. We encourage UNCTAD to continue its research and analysis on Africa's development issues and to strengthen efforts to enhance the impact of its activities.

We also invite UNCTAD to continue paying particular attention to the needs of Least Developed Countries (LDCs). As in other developing countries, the economic growth in the LDCs has tended to become less effective in terms of employment generation and as LDCs are facing demographic challenges in the incoming years, it is essential to ensure enough quality jobs for the young population.

Improve UNCTAD Management and Administration

The European Union and its Member States stress the importance of management and administrative improvements in order to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of UNCTAD's activities within available resources. We support the efforts undertaken by the SG in this regard with a view to enhancing the relevance and impact of UNCTAD's work. We encourage UNCTAD, in the lead up to 2016, to focus on the principles of transparency and accountability and invite the Secretariat to monitor the implementation of their work plan within the context of the follow-up process of the Management and Administration Review.

UNCTAD in the UN dimension

We support the UN Delivery as One initiative and stress the importance of cooperation between UNCTAD and other UN entities. In order to ensure a coherent treatment of issues and approaches, UNCTAD's activities should not overlap with, and be consistent with the work of other

international organisations, including UN regional commissions, ITC, WTO, World Bank, IMF and OECD, ensuring close cooperation with them.

Mr President,

The EU, as the world's trading partner, the largest donor of development assistance and the biggest contributor to multilateral trade-related assistance programmes, jointly with its Member States, reiterate their commitment to development partners. We remain committed to empowering developing countries to lift themselves out of poverty and we are keen to continue our cooperation with UNCTAD in the years to come. We would like this organisation to enhance its visibility and to focus in the areas within its mandate promoting the successful integration of the Developing Countries in global trade and ensuring sustainable development, so as to achieve **The Future We Want**.

I thank you for your attention.