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Actions carried out and/or planned by UNCTAD to support States in the recovery of their trade and industries after overcoming the pandemic

Statement by the European Union Delegation to the UN and other international organisations in Geneva

Geneva, 3 July 2020

- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -

Mr President, Secretary General, Excellencies, distinguished Delegates,

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

I would first like to **thank the Secretary General for presenting us what UNCTAD can and is doing to help countries overcome this historic crisis**. We look forward to continue this exchange in September. We also welcome the comprehensive note on the matter that UNCTAD is preparing for October, even if an earlier availability would be welcome, given the urgency of the situation.

Hearing what the organisations are doing for their member States is a crucial part of the transparency and accountability process. In this sense, allow me to **express our disappointment that we had to wait almost four months since the WHO declared the pandemic, to hear from the Secretary General on how UNCTAD is adjusting its work to the ongoing turmoil**.

COVID-19 pandemic has caused and continues to cause major distress around the globe. The immediate human health and life concerns have been exacerbated by the massive direct and indirect effects on our social and economic wellbeing. Making the matter worse, the negative impacts of this pandemic are hitting the most vulnerable the hardest.

Building back better, therefore, cannot be just a new slogan. It is a must if we are to get back on track for the 2030 Agenda and for the Paris Agreement – a track on which we were arguably falling behind already before the pandemic hit. To do so, we all – developed and developing countries, private and public stakeholders – must ensure an effective use of our scarce resources. We must focus and ensure complementarity of our actions.

In addition to our substantial internal action, **the EU and its Member States, i.e. “Team Europe”, stepped up globally**. Together with financial institutions, we launched what is now a 36 billion euro package to support our partner countries to combat the pandemic and its consequences. In May we launched a pledging initiative that raised almost 16 billion euros for diagnostics, treatments and vaccines for all who need them around the globe.

UNCTAD should play an important role in building back better. But to be an effective part of the multilateral rebuilding efforts, UNCTAD must focus its resources based on a critical assessment of its added value.

Crosschecking with UNCTAD's mandate, two key issues arise: **digitalisation and sustainability.**

The pandemic overwhelmingly demonstrated the value of digital connectivity. **UNCTAD needs to redouble its efforts and resources on bridging the digital divide,** thus helping developing countries to participate effectively in the global digital economy.

The pandemic also highlights the importance that recovery efforts are consistent with long-term sustainability. Sustainability that encompasses enhanced resilience, inclusiveness, circularity, viable value chains and low emissions agenda. **UNCTAD must ensure that their trade and investment support activities are focused, coherent and place such long-term sustainability at their core.**

As highlighted by many recent studies, women and girls are disproportionately impacted by the crisis. However, they will also be the backbone of the recovery. UNCTAD must play an active role in **ensuring that the recovery actions are not gender blind.**

The EU and its Member States will, together with developing countries, work to build back better and greener, and provide global support for these efforts. I trust that we will also be able to count on UNCTAD to refocus its resources and accompany us all on our shared path towards the 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement.

Thank you.