

**Opening remarks by Ms. Mina Mashayekhi, Officer-in-Charge, DITC**  
**Multi-Year Expert Meeting on Trade, Services and Development**  
**18 July 2017**

Excellencies  
Distinguished Panellists  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, I am pleased to welcome you to this ninth edition of the Multi-Year Expert Meeting on Trade, Services and Development.

This Expert Meeting forms an integral part of UNCTAD's longstanding and comprehensive work on services economy and trade, through which we seek to help countries seize development opportunities arising from the sector for sustainable and inclusive development.

Let me recall the Nairobi Maafikiano, adopted at UNCTAD 14 in 2016, called upon UNCTAD to "(c)ontinue and reinforce its work on trade in services, services data and statistics and analysis of trade and services for development (55 (n))." It also mandated UNCTAD to "(c)ontinue and further enhance its work on infrastructure services and support developing countries in the establishment of policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks that contribute to infrastructure development (76 (t))."

This Multi-year Expert Meeting, which finds its origin in 2009 and thus we count this year its 9<sup>th</sup> edition, has provided a unique platform for us to develop an extended network of experts and partnerships to improve our understanding on this critical issue on today's economic policy agenda - namely, services economy and trade - and generate policy insights to support countries' efforts to formulate and implement suitable national policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks, and engage in international trade, negotiations, trade agreements and cooperative frameworks. The platform has served for policy recommendations, members' exchanging experiences and lessons learned to enhance the contribution of services to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to ensure coherence between services and trade in services and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Based on the TDB Decision this year, we have decided to focus on the role of services in promoting economic transformation and sustainable development, with particular attention to infrastructure services such as financial, energy, telecommunications and ICT and transport services.

As you know, the services sector has expanded to become a defining feature of the modern economy. In developing countries, the services sector already represents more than half of output, almost half of employment and a third of their trade in value-added terms. The services sector is the main source of employment since the early 2000s and is likely to create the bulk of new jobs. Trade in services has been more dynamic and more resilient than trade in goods.

The services sector plays a catalytic role in triggering and accelerating structural transformation, a process whereby productive resources shift to those sectors where productivity grows at a faster pace and the structure of national economy changes, so that the economy as a whole gains with larger production possibilities and higher technological capability. The process is a key ingredient for long-term economic development.

This implies that the services sector, and trade in services, can act as an essential catalyst and powerful enabler of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Indeed, many goals and

targets under SDGs presume efficient and equitable provision of essential and infrastructure services, ranging from education services to financial services through ICT, telecommunication and transport services.

Harvesting the services sector's potential to induce growth and support SDGs however requires robust policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks, as the operation of the services sector can be conditioned by the regulatory environment and technological developments surrounding the sector. International trade can strengthen services sectors and enhance this potential for a services-led pro-development economic adjustment. It is therefore crucial to address domestic-supply constraints and to achieve coherence between several policy areas, as well as between these areas and trade liberalization.

In this context, deliberations from previous sessions of this Multi-Year Expert Meeting have pointed to policy recommendations and areas for further research. For instance, we have found that the process of devising an adequate policy, regulatory and institutional framework, should start with an assessment of services sector performance and establishing a strategy for services sector development trade. In this context, UNCTAD's Services Policy Reviews provide a useful tool for countries to review and assess their services economy and trade and to develop best fit policies and regulations and a sound institutional framework.

Through Services Policy Reviews, which is an essential component of UNCTAD's toolbox on services economy and trade, we at UNCTAD seek to support policymakers and regulators in assessing the potential of services productive capacities and trade and the robustness of regulations and institutions. The Reviews identify constraints and opportunities for the development of the services sectors and provide options for policy options and practical solutions to improve services performance. In the past five years, we have conducted Services Policy Reviews with an enhanced methodology, and helped the beneficiaries to develop national and regional strategy, including for Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Colombia, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Angola, Lesotho, Namibia, Rwanda and Uganda, as well as for ECOWAS region.

Let me conclude by thanking you all for your participation and contribution to the discussion. This Multi-year Expert Meeting is part of UNCTAD's services toolbox, together with the Global Services Forum. It is my sincere hope that the discussions over the next three days will allow us to examine what it takes to trigger structural transformation and draw a broad roadmap for countries to reach this important milestone as they strive to attain sustainable and inclusive development.

I wish you success in your deliberations. Thank you.