

AMBASSADE DU TOGO
*Mission Permanente auprès de l'Office des Nations Unies,
de l'Organisation Mondiale du Commerce et des autres
Organisations Internationales à Genève*



REPUBLIQUE TOGOLAISE
Travail- Liberté-Patrie

66TH SESSION OF THE TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD

25 June 2019, Geneva

**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY TOGO ON BEHALF OF THE
AFRICAN GROUP DURING THE HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT**

ITEM 2- C:
***Digital development : Opportunities and
challenges***

Mr. President,
Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD,
Excellencies, Distinguished delegates.

Mr. President,

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the African Group. The Group fully associates itself to the statement delivered by the distinguished Ambassador of Ecuador on behalf of G.77 and China. The Group also thank Ms. Isabelle Durant, Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD for her opening remarks. We equally appreciate all the panelists for enriching the TDB and delegates with the products of their research and incisive analysis.

Mr. President,

2. The African Group would like to commend UNCTAD for the detailed background notes provided for this agenda item. We concurred that, while recognizing the beneficial aspect of digitalization like the reduction in transaction costs for businesses, facilitation of access to new customers, both in domestic and foreign markets, enhancing the productivity of enterprises and offer new opportunities for entrepreneurship, innovation and job creation, overcoming barriers to expansion, extending the reach and impact of frontier technologies, we should at the same time take account of the risks and destructive aspects of application of digital technologies. These include the potential to further widen the existing digital divide, job losses, growing income inequality, greater concentration of market power and wealth, negative impacts on the bargaining power of users, consumers and workers, the loss of privacy, legal, regulatory and ethical challenges, risk of sovereign data misappropriation etc.

3. The African Group also agreed with the view expressed that as more and more people use new applications and devices, data have become a critical development resource. The ability of countries to access, collect and refine digital data increasingly determine the effectiveness with which frontier technologies can be deployed to support the Sustainable Development Goals. UNCTAD should therefore endeavor to further examine the role of data in the development of the

digital economy and proffer policy options for developing countries on data management, protection and ownership.

4. Paragraph 55 (U&V) of the Nairobi Maafikiano mandated UNCTAD to assist developing countries in addressing the challenges and opportunities inherent in digitalization of their economies. Thus African countries are looking up to UNCTAD to fulfil this mandate by providing research based policy options on all aspects of the digital economy through the rapid roll out of its e-readiness assessment reports, ICT Policy Reviews and other practical technical assistance measures.

5. I thank you.