



European Union

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66th session of Trade and Development Board

24-27 June 2019

Item 3 – General Debate

On behalf of the European Union and its Member States

Geneva, 26 June 2019

- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -

UNCTAD

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Mr President, Secretary General, Excellencies, distinguished Delegates,

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

First of all, the EU and its Member States commend UNCTAD for its valuable work on sustainable development and inequality reduction. Inequality is indeed a central aspect of the 2030 Agenda and we welcome UNCTAD's important contributions on this matter. Even though the international community has achieved a lot on creating a more inclusive global society, many challenges remain ahead, in particular with regard to inequality within countries, gender inequality and the lack of equal opportunities for all. We all have to maximize our efforts to set the world on a more sustainable and equitable path. As the UN's focal point for integrating sustainable development into the international trading system, UNCTAD can and should play an active and re-vitalized role in this process.

Overcoming persistent inequalities is among the EU's key priorities, as highlighted in the European Consensus on Development. We continue to be the world's biggest and most open market for developing countries and remain the leading ODA donor in the world, accounting for 57% of total global assistance. Moreover, with our new *Digital4Development Strategy*, we have aligned our development cooperation with the digital era. We are convinced that if implemented in an inclusive manner, digitization will be **the** most powerful force of progress in the years to come, lifting millions out of poverty, boosting job creation, and empowering women and girls across the world.

We appreciate the high-quality work of UNCTAD, particularly in the field of digital economy, e-commerce, MSMEs and investment. We are committed to support and advance UNCTAD's work on these cross-cutting issues. However, to fully deliver on the 2030 Agenda, UNCTAD needs to ensure inter-divisional coordination, coherence and

consistency across the organization. We regret that the background papers for the HLS of the TDB differed considerably from each other, especially in terms of tonality, structure, length and policy recommendations. We would request that this issue be solved until the next session of the TDB.

In this context, we would like to reiterate our long-standing concerns on UNCTAD's internal governance, efficiency, transparency and accountability. We have voiced these concerns repeatedly in all of UNCTAD's major governing bodies, fully in line with the Maafikiano mandate which in Para. 14(d) notes the importance of enhancing the institution's efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability. We regret that we continue to see major room for improvement on all of these issues. Here, we welcome the internal audit that the OIOS conducted on UNCTAD's ISS in the past year. We urge the Secretariat to ensure effective and swift follow-up measures on the policy recommendations of the OIOS, most of which are due already next week.

Chair, distinguished delegates,

As the UN Secretary General's *Seventh Progress Report on the Accountability System in the UN Secretariat*¹ notes, transparency and accountability are the essential guidelines for the entire UN system and ensure mutual trust among its stakeholders. We would thus like to express our disappointment – as we have done previously – that the Secretariat's commitment to foster accountability and internal governance does not meet our expectations. In particular, the Secretariat's mid-term review report on the implementation of the Maafikiano mandate lacked details and could have applied a clearer methodology that allows for explanations of discrepancies or remaining challenges. The Secretariat has failed to finalize two flagship reports on Digital Economy and Economic Development in Africa that would have contributed greatly to our substantive discussions. This comes along with improvable performance of the Intergovernmental Support Service which could be strengthened in terms of quality, timeliness and relevance. We are convinced that regular and more frequent briefings on management would facilitate an ongoing and positive exchange with the Secretariat on

¹ <https://undocs.org/en/A/72/773>

these topics. For a stronger impact in the UN system, UNCTAD must enhance its internal governance first.

Finally, Chair, allow me a few words on **the way forward**. At a time where the UN Development System is in the process of a substantial reform, making it more transparent, responsive and accountable,, UNCTAD needs to continuously adapt to ensure its relevance. Restoring trust and accountability is of particular importance. For this, we believe that UNCTAD is in need of institutional reform.

Less than one and a half year before the 15th Ministerial Conference, UNCTAD is thus at an important crossroads. We need to define a collective, forward-looking and pragmatic vision for the organization. UNCTAD is indeed a crucial institution for tackling the challenges ahead, in particular by providing a platform for constructive dialogue between the developing and the developed world. But to maximize the institution's potential, it needs to overhaul its internal mechanisms, procedures and rules. The EU expects the SG to lead these efforts, respond to Member State's expectations, and bring more executive direction. For such discussions to bear fruit, and ensure the further strengthening of the organisation, the full, dedicated and active support and involvement of member states is essential.

Thank you.