



European Union

Statement

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

68th session of the Trade and Development Board

21 June – 02 July 2021

Agenda Item 2.1

High Level Segment

**Extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures: Preparatory meeting on
the road to UNCTAD 15 and LDC5:**

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Trade and Development

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

FINAL

Geneva, 21 June 2021

- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY –

Mr President, acting Secretary General, Excellencies, distinguished Delegates,

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

It has been year and a half since the first news of a virus spread around the world and the first death related to the outbreak was reported. Fast forward 18 months, and the world registered almost 180 million cases and 3.8 million deaths. While the global economy appears to be finally on a fragile recovery, there are massive differences between different regions, further compromising our shared objectives of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement.

As the pandemic hotspots were jumping from one region to the next before hopping back, it became very clear that we can only address this challenge together. As devout multilateralists, loyal to the rules and principles underpinning it, the EU and its Member States invested heavily in strengthening multilateralism so that we come out of this crisis stronger together.

Far from trying to be exhaustive, allow me to highlight three areas that we consider of utmost importance for building back better and greener.

First, we need to bring the pandemic under control in each and every part of the world. From the very early days of the pandemic, the EU and its Member States demonstrated our commitment to contribute to a multilateral solution to the pandemic. We financed heavily the research and development of the vaccine, investment that is benefitting the entire world. We played a leading role in setting up, and remain one of the leading donors, of the COVAX Facility. COVAX Facility is the best vehicle to ensure a global, fair and equitable distribution of the vaccines, and one that limits attempts of vaccine diplomacy or geopolitics. And, as demonstrated by undisputable facts, we remain one of the main global vaccine providers, exporting as many vaccines as administering internally, while remaining committed to the principles of transparency and accountability.

Second, we must ensure socio-economic resilience and recovery, in particular for those hardest hit by the pandemic. Here again, the EU and its Member States stepped up to the challenge. Despite the strained public finances due to the record economic downturn inside the EU, we increased our Official Development Assistance by 15%, cementing

ourselves as the leading provider of development aid. We mobilised a global recovery package of over €40 billion to address the health and humanitarian needs in our partner countries, and support their socio-economic recovery. Well aware of the strain the pandemic caused on public finances and on debt situation in developing countries, we remain firm supporters of the Debt Service Suspension Initiative and the Common Framework for Debt Treatments to address debt vulnerabilities on a case-by-case basis, as well as of the new allocation of Special Drawing Rights. It is crucial to enable the efficiency of these measures, notably through increased transparency, private creditors' participation, and the inextricable link between fiscal space and the possibility for countries to focus on achieving the SDGs and the goals of the Paris Agreement.

And last, to respond successfully to global crises, threats and challenges, the international community needs an efficient multilateral system, founded on universal rules and values, and with the UN at its core. The EU and its Member States, as the largest donors to the UN system, to the Bretton Woods institutions, and many other international fora, are strongly committed to modernise the multilateral system and reinvigorate the various organisations (including UNCTAD), making them "fit for purpose". With transparency, accountability and efficiency, key underlying principles of the reform.

The advances on the three mentioned fronts – far from being exhaustive – demonstrate that multilateralism, despite its many challenges, still works.

UNCTAD, with its many reports and technical assistance, played an important role in identifying and confronting many of the challenges arising from the pandemic. We believe it can, and should, do even more, focusing its work where the needs are highest.

As already set out in the 14th Conference in Nairobi in 2016, UNCTAD needs to strategically position itself by using its comparative advantage, differentiate its work from other organisations in a complementary fashion and revitalise the existing intergovernmental machinery. This is even more crucial today. The ongoing extraordinary times call upon us, the membership, to ensure that UNCTAD delivers on these orientations through concrete extraordinary measures. The ambition of the UNCTAD XV outcome document rests on our ability to define such extraordinary measure.

Thank you