



European Union

Statement

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

FINAL

Geneva, 22 June 2021

- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY –

Mr. President, Excellencies, distinguished Delegates,

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

The EU and its Member States would like to commend UNCTAD for its valuable work on the trade and development nexus, supporting developing countries to benefit from global economic integration. Through its three pillar approach, UNCTAD carries out numerous activities that are recognized for their value by beneficiaries and donors alike. The importance of many UNCTAD's well thought and result oriented actions have become even more evident during the global efforts to face and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. In this sense, we would like to especially commend the work done in the areas of digital economy, e-commerce, MSMEs, trade facilitation, investment, competition and consumer protection, and gender, as well as the underlying statistical work.

During almost six decades of its existence, UNCTAD delivered considerable results – be it on a macro and on multilateral level, or on more micro and on regional, national and local level. Today, with less than a decade left on the SDG clock, UNCTAD's relevance might be greater than ever.

However, despite many very commendable and consensually endorsed products, the overall role of UNCTAD within the multilateralism has been somewhat lagging behind over the past years. Indeed, UN membership decided to address certain issues in other fora, although some might still consider these of central UNCTAD relevance. Some UNCTAD products remain on the margins of multilateral discussions due to the perceived one-sided or partial analysis. And at times UNCTAD proceedings feed into further membership divisions, rather than build intergovernmental consensus. The observed result has been, on one hand, partial disengagement of membership from some activities and, on the other hand, resource undernourishment of many highly relevant activities.

With UNCTAD XV Conference in October, the appointment of Rebeca Grynspan as UNCTAD's new SG, and following more than two decades of calls for revitalizing the organization, UNCTAD finds itself at a crossroad. We believe that the Conference outcome and the actions over the subsequent months will determine whether UNCTAD can reclaim its role in the UN system, or potentially lock itself in further inertia. Considering the commitment demonstrated by our negotiators for the Conference outcome, we believe in the former.

The EU and its Member States, as the largest contributor to the UN system, to the Bretton Woods institutions, and many other international fora, as well as the largest donor of development aid and a key trading partner and investor for most developing countries, remain strongly committed to modernise the multilateral system. And we believe UNCTAD should be part of this modern, inclusive and accountable multilateral system of tomorrow. Our calls to UNCTAD revitalization are, therefore, not addressed to changing the mandate or resources at UNCTAD. It is rather a call to bring back the value of UNCTAD, and focus resources on areas with clear added value and results for the beneficiary countries.

Dear Excellencies, distinguished Delegates, Colleagues,

Through its thematic priority setting, the EU and its Member States are spearheading a green, digital, just and resilient global recovery. Our Global Recovery Initiative is working to provide debt relief and sustainable investment for the SDGs. We have put in place programmes that will scale up private investments to help fill the SDG financing gap. Our future cooperation efforts place digitalization at the heart of sustainable recovery. All these, and more, coincide closely with many areas of UNCTAD's work mentioned in the beginning of this intervention and which are consensually praised by the membership.

We believe that the Ministerial Conference in October can be a turning point for UNCTAD, and provide membership's guidance to UNCTAD's work to focus on the areas of its comparative advantage and greatest added value for the developing countries.

Thank you.