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Activities undertaken by UNCTAD in support of Africa

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

FINAL

Geneva, 24 June 2021

- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY –
Mr. President, Excellencies, distinguished Delegates,

On behalf of the European Union and its Member States, I would like to thank the Secretariat for this year’s report on UNCTAD’s broad range of activities in support of Africa, carried out between May 2020 and March 2021. We note with appreciation UNCTAD’s multi-faceted work consisting of research, policy analysis and recommendation, intergovernmental consensus-building and technical assistance, across a wide variety of topics pertaining to UNCTAD’s mandate.

We particularly welcome UNCTAD’s support to African countries in identifying and implementing policies required for their structural transformation, diversification and integration into regional and global trading patterns. Indeed, in addition to the various technical trainings and capacity building activities, reviews of national investment, ICT or STI frameworks and issued policy recommendations, as well as the work on e-Commerce and digital economy, and competition law and consumer protection, can be crucial components that help developing countries better reap the benefits of globalisation.

It is especially encouraging to see the follow up work being done on the uptake and the value of these issued recommendations, such as the online platform to report on the implementation of investment policy recommendations or the Fast-Tracking Implementation of eTrade Readiness Assessments. Such activities are at the core of the sought Result Based Management and we wish to call upon UNCTAD, in line with the UN-wide commitment on RBM, to strengthen such approach across all of its activities. In this sense, the value of this report would be significantly improved, were it to include a valuation of the referred activities, in addition to listing and describing them.

We would also like to highlight the importance of the actions carried out in the response to the pandemic. The various activities that targeted trade, investment and business facilitation, such as e-government services or efforts to enhance e-trade readiness, deserve to be commended. Likewise, initiatives to support MSMEs or those promoting women entrepreneurs, are instrumental for ensuring a broad-based recovery and building long term resilience. These are the type of concrete, value added activities, where UNCTAD’s resources and comparative advantage are put to best use.
Continuing on UNCTAD’s comparative advantage, we should also refer to the DMFAS programme. In light of the increased pressures of the high debt levels, DMFAS programme provides essential transparency and minimises operational risks, thus supporting developing countries in their debt management. This programme is an important complement to the activities carried out by the IMF and the WB, as well as to the ones elaborated by the G20, such as the DSSI and the Common Framework for Debt Treatments. EU and its Member States recognise the value of, and are important contributors to, the DMFAS programme, and call upon UNCTAD to focus its work on debt issues in a complementary manner to the work done by the mentioned central debt fora.

The report also lists various activities with an important gender equality component. We would like to commend UNCTAD for this valuable work. Indeed, as noted by various reports of different UN entities (including UNCTAD), women have been disproportionately hit by the pandemic. But at the same time, sustainability and resilience of the recovery will depend on our ability to ensure their inclusion, keeping in mind the rising population and the double burden of women. We simply cannot afford to leave half of the world’s population behind.

EU and its Member States, as the largest and a consistent provider of development aid, remain committed to support UNCTAD’s activities that build on its comparative advantage. Some of these contributions, albeit not a comprehensive list, are clearly reflected in the report. For instance, based on the successful evolution and evaluation of the comprehensive Train for Trade programme for Angola, the EU stepped up with additional resources.

We note, however, that last year, UNCTAD’s expenditure on projects in support of Africa, in absolute and in relative terms, has fallen to its lowest levels since 2015. Given that the majority of LDCs are in Africa, and that the 2030 Agenda and the Nairobi Maafikiano call for focus on those furthest behind, could the Secretariat explain the negative trend in expenditures for projects in Africa observed since its highest levels in 2016?

Africa is our neighbour and close partner. We are committed to accelerate our financial efforts in favour of sustainable and inclusive growth model, led by Africa’s dynamic private sector. The recently announced Team Europe initiative in support of Africa’s
recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic\textsuperscript{1}, will invest in more resilient African health systems and local vaccine production, and boost young entrepreneurship and small businesses, which are the backbone of the African economy.

As the largest donor and investor in Africa, we will continue to support African countries in building resilience and reaching the SDGs.

Thank you.

\textsuperscript{1} https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/jp_21_2543