

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

Trade and Development Board

73 session

(14 – 25 September 2026)

EU statement (check against delivery)

Agenda Item 8: UNCTAD contribution to the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (TD/B/73/4)

Mister President, Excellencies, distinguished Delegates,

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

We thank the Secretariat for the report on UNCTAD's activities in support of the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries. We welcome the breadth of UNCTAD's work across its three pillars of research and policy analysis, intergovernmental consensus-building and technical cooperation.

The report demonstrates the value of this work in addressing some of the structural constraints facing LDCs, including limited productive capacities, weak export diversification, infrastructure gaps, trade and logistics barriers, digital divides and vulnerability to external shocks. We particularly welcome the report's emphasis on targeted, demand-driven and results-oriented support, as well as its recognition that international cooperation needs to be accompanied by enabling domestic policies and strong national ownership.

The European Union and its Member States remain steadfast partners of LDCs. Our cooperation is rooted in shared priorities, mutual accountability, human rights, gender equality, the rule of law, country ownership and sustainable development.

The EU support to LDCs has been translating in trade preferences, substantial climate finance and capacity-building interventions. The *“Everything But Arms”* initiative continues to provide duty-free, quota-free access to the EU market for LDCs, supporting their integration into international trade. We also attach importance to ensuring a smooth transition for countries graduating from LDC status, in line with the objective highlighted in the report of avoiding abrupt disruptions and addressing post-graduation vulnerabilities.

We appreciate the concrete examples given by the report in regard to how UNCTAD is helping translate these objectives into action.

We welcome, first, UNCTAD’s continued work on trade facilitation and customs automation. As of early 2026, 38 of the 44 LDCs were operating or implementing ASYCUDA, with concrete improvements in paperless clearance, national single windows and transit systems. We particularly note and welcome the regional transit solution in Central Africa, funded by the European Union, as an example of practical cooperation to improve trade connectivity and reduce barriers to regional commerce.

Second, we welcome UNCTAD’s work to strengthen productive capacities and economic diversification. Its support to countries including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zambia, Cambodia and Senegal show how policy advice can help countries move towards higher-value activities, strengthen industrial policy and build more resilient economies. The report’s work on critical minerals is particularly relevant in this context, as diversification and greater value addition can help LDCs capture a larger share of the benefits of their natural resources.

Third, we welcome UNCTAD’s efforts to advance digitalisation. Support to countries such as Mauritania, Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands in developing e-commerce policies and data protection frameworks, alongside broader work on measuring the digital economy, can help LDCs participate more effectively in regional and global digital markets and ensure their independence and safety in the digital realm.

Fourth, the EU welcomes UNCTAD's work on investment facilitation and business environments. The report highlights practical digital solutions that simplify procedures and improve transparency and predictability for investors. We note in particular the EU-funded support in Angola to implement the Sustainable Investment Facilitation Agreement through the simplification and digitalisation of investment procedures.

Finally, we welcome UNCTAD's support for sustainable and resilient trade, transport and production systems. Its work on maritime transport, multimodal corridors, sustainable freight and port management is particularly important for LDCs facing high connectivity costs and geographic constraints. We also note the work on sustainable manufacturing, including waste management, wastewater treatment, textile traceability and emissions reduction, which demonstrates how trade and development objectives can be pursued alongside environmental sustainability.

These examples illustrate why effective multilateral cooperation matters. They also demonstrate the importance of combining policy analysis, consensus-building and practical technical assistance. At the same time, the report makes clear that the challenges remain substantial. LDC growth remains below the 7 per cent target of the Doha Programme of Action; debt vulnerabilities, limited fiscal space, trade tensions, climate-related shocks and declining development finance continue to constrain progress.

In today's reality of resources scarcity, this gap calls for a stronger focus on implementation, impact and coherence. Official development assistance, of which the EU is the biggest contributor remain indispensable, particularly for LDCs and the most vulnerable. At the same time, we need to use public resources strategically and catalytically, helping countries mobilise additional investment, strengthen institutions, develop productive capacities and create decent jobs, while respecting national ownership. This is also the approach underpinning the European Union's Global Gateway strategy: mobilising public and private investment around partner-country priorities. The objective is not to create parallel structures, but to contribute to coherent, sustainable and mutually reinforcing development efforts.

As we look towards the Midterm Review of the Doha Programme of Action in Doha in 2027, the EU believes that our collective priority should be to translate commitments into measurable results. In this regard, we welcome the report's call for strengthened collective action, more predictable financing and coordinated, targeted and demand-driven support.

The European Union will continue to work with LDCs, UNCTAD, the wider United Nations system, international financial institutions, development partners, civil society and the private sector to advance the full, effective and timely implementation of the Doha Programme of Action.

Looking ahead, our focus must remain firmly on implementation and impact: stronger productive capacities, better trade and investment opportunities, greater resilience, and ultimately better outcomes for the people of Least Developed Countries.

I thank you.