

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

Trade and Development Board

Seventy-second session

(14-25 September 2026)

EU statement (check against delivery)

16 September, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

Item 7- Plenary: Activities undertaken by UNCTAD in support of Africa (TD/B/73/3)

Mister President, Excellencies, distinguished Delegates,

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

We thank UNCTAD for its comprehensive report on the activities undertaken in support of African countries. The EU welcomes UNCTAD's continued efforts to foster sustainable and inclusive development, economic integration, productive capacities and resilience across the continent.

This work aligns with our longstanding partnership with Africa, rooted in the African Union-European Union 'Joint Vision for 2030', re-affirmed at the 7th AU-EU Summit in Luanda in November 2025), and the implementation of the African Union Agenda 2063. It also aligns with the *Organisation of African, Caribbean, and Pacific States* (OACPS)-EU Agreement (so called Samoa Agreement), notably its Africa protocol.

We also note the significant share of UNCTAD technical cooperation expenditure directed towards African countries in 2025. We welcome this commitment and encourage the continued attention to women and youth as well as to persons with disability.

The EU remains Africa's first trading partner (with 32.7% share and a trade in total goods amounting to 356 billion EUR in 2025), leading foreign investor (with a total FDI stock in Africa increased to EUR 251 billion in 2024) and first development ally (with biggest ODA spending, together with its Member States). Our commitment is reflected in the Global Gateway Africa-Europe Investment Package, aiming to mobilise more than EUR 150 billion in investments in

Africa by 2027. Through Team Europe initiatives, the EU, its Member States and European financial institutions work together to support concrete and transformational projects jointly identified with our African partners in priority areas such as transport, energy and digital, health, education and research.

Global Gateway strategy follows a *“360-degree approach”*: infrastructure investments in key economic sectors always come along with soft components supporting governance reforms for an enabling environment as well as TVET and skills development. These elements are essential for investments to deliver lasting impact and strengthen resilience to external shocks. This is an area where UNCTAD’s work can provide important added value. Through data, analysis and technical assistance – including through programmes such ASYCUDA, trade readiness assessments, vulnerability profiles and productive capacity assessments – UNCTAD helps countries strengthen their integration into regional and global markets, diversify their economies and build more resilient value chains.

This has also been a year of fast developments in the digital domain, which risk widening the digital divide, particularly in Africa. The EU has established bridging the digital divide and strengthening secure digital connections between Europe and Africa, as well as across Africa, as a priority. Under Global Gateway, the EU is investing in secure digital connectivity between Europe and Africa and across the continent, while supporting regulatory frameworks that foster trusted and inclusive digital transitions. The EU Tech Business Offer further connects African priorities with European companies, innovators, investors and financing institutions, helping to turn digital ambitions into viable investments. For Global Gateway investments to deliver their full impact and flourish sustainably, they need to be underpinned by appropriate market conditions and enabling regulatory frameworks that support investment, competition, innovation and long-term private-sector engagement. UNCTAD’s expertise in trade, investment, competition and regulatory frameworks can make an important contribution in this regard.

The EU also appreciates UNCTAD support to African countries in harnessing regional integration through the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement. As a long-standing

supporter of economic integration in Africa, the EU contributes actively, since its entry into force, to the implementation of the *African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)* through a dedicated Team Europe Initiative worth EUR 1.2 billion. It includes the European Commission and eight EU Member States (Denmark, Germany, Ireland, France, Netherlands, Portugal, Finland and Sweden), and encompasses more than 80 programs at continental, regional, and national levels. This is complemented by institutional support to the AfCFTA Secretariat, with a 55 million EUR Technical Assistance Facility. The EU support to AfCFTA is a joint bet for the long term, aiming for intra-African trade to flow mostly free across borders, which is already showing first signs of concretisation. The EU experience of customs union and single market can also be mobilised for the effective implementation of the AfCFTA. This is why the EU and the AU, including the AfCFTA Secretariat, have set up the High-Level dialogue on economic integration and trade to accelerate cooperation and experience sharing on priority areas, including trade and investment policy

Finally, let me stress that the EU counts on UNCTAD to continue its support to African countries in a targeted and effective manner, and do so in coordination and partnership with other relevant organisations, particularly within the UN. This is needed to make sure that the efforts are complementary and rationalised towards avoiding duplication and increasing effectiveness and impact towards the achievement of the SDGs.

In this framework, the EU stands ready to deepen its partnership with UNCTAD and African countries to advance sustainable, inclusive, and resilient development across the continent.

Thank you, Mister President.