

**Presentation by H. E. Mr. Refiloe Litjobo, Chairman of the Investment,  
Enterprise and Development Commission at its tenth session, 3-7  
December**

**Reporting at the Trade and Development Board Executive Session  
4-6 February 2019**

Mr. President,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I have the honor to report on the work of the Investment, Enterprise and Development Commission at its tenth session, which took place from 3 to 7 December 2018. In line with the format set up by the Accra Accord (paragraph 205), the first three days of the Commission focused on the substantive items of the agenda. Informal consultations then led to the adoption of an agreed outcome. The Commission successfully completed its work, and I am pleased to present to the TDB Executive session the report of the Investment, Enterprise and Development Commission and its outcome document as contained in document TD/B/C.II/40.

The Commission reached consensus on agreed recommendations addressed to the Secretariat and, under agenda item 3, endorsed the agreed conclusions and approved the future work agenda of its subsidiary body, the Intergovernmental Working Group of Experts on International Standards of Accounting and Reporting. It also took note of the Report of the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Investment, Innovation and Entrepreneurship for Productive Capacity-building and Sustainable Development in its sixth session (TD/B/C.II/MEM.4/18).

In accordance with the decision of the Trade and Development Board of 26 June 2018 and under Item 4, the Commission considered two themes “Investment and Entrepreneurship for Development” and “Science, Technology and Innovation for Enterprise Development”.

**Under agenda Item 4,** the Commission organized a high-level panel of permanent representatives to discuss the follow-up to the World Investment Forum 2018. This event responded to the need, expressed at the Closing Ambassadors' Roundtable, for continued engagement at the level of permanent representatives through the establishment of a platform connecting all Geneva-based international organizations, the private sector and civil society on issues related to Sustainable Development Goals' financing and investment.

Stressing the relevance, success and impact of the Forum as an inclusive platform for addressing key and emerging challenges for sustainable development, panelists highlighted the key role of the biennial event in unlocking financing for sustainable development through investment and entrepreneurial activities.

Acknowledging the importance of continuous dialogue between the international community and private businesses on investing for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, the meeting underscored the important role of the Ambassadors' Roundtable and encouraged the UNCTAD secretariat to take concrete steps, in consultation with member States, in order to facilitate such a process.

**Under the same Agenda Item 4,** the Commission deliberated on the Investment Policy Reviews of Cabo Verde and Lebanon, both presented at the highest level. Receiving the review of Cabo Verde, the Minister of State, of Parliamentary Affairs and of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Sports commended the role of the investment policy review as a strategic document that would guide policy reforms and assist the country in reaching its objectives, notably in terms of sustainable and inclusive economic growth, as well as job creation. The commitment of the government to implementing the recommendations was reiterated.

Similarly, the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the Office of the United Nations at Geneva and President of the Trade and Development Board of UNCTAD endorsed the review recommendations on behalf of his Government and stressed their value for the design of national policies. Congratulating Cabo Verde and Lebanon for the successful intergovernmental deliberation of their investment policy

reviews, the Commission acknowledged the role of the reviews and their follow-up implementation as an essential tool to support the progress of countries towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

**Under Agenda Item 5**, the Commission considered science, technology and innovation for enterprise development. The discussions on key issues for energizing a development- and Agenda 2030-oriented Science, Technology and Innovation policy proved to be informative and engaging. Three specific concerns were raised and merit singling out. First, increasing international and domestic mobilization of resources towards STI-led development was a fundamental prerequisite for successful policy implementation. Secondly, policy needed to address the creation and nurturing of government-firm-academia-SDG linkages within national innovation systems. Finally, leveraging digital entrepreneurship was of paramount importance in establishing a path towards progress on the SDGs.

The presentation of experts highlighted a number of policy issues. The first one was the need to understand and embrace emerging technologies. The main enablers for emerging technologies were increasing investments and improvement in tertiary education, the positive attitudes towards technology among youth, strengthening of the private sector, and a growing export potential for digital technologies and entrepreneurs. Among hindrances we could count a general fear of change, a lack of human competencies, inflexible and uncompetitive markets, outdated regulatory policies, and a general lack of finance and investors.

One solution for the issues at hand was to develop support for high-growth industries and firms. The main challenges here were dealing with technology risks and regulatory barriers. However, great opportunities would be availed with well-placed policies enabling learning and accumulating productive competencies and taking advantage of clustering that enable knowledge spill overs. This was closely related to developing policies that meet the needs of start-ups in the digital economy. Key challenges included the availability of high-value added support services, investment in quality physical infrastructure (ICT, energy). Opportunities were to be found in greater support for innovation in traditional sectors using digital technologies, rather than for pure IT firms (e.g. agri-ICT, health-ICT, etc.). Finally, in order to improve efficiency and effectiveness of various policy

propositions, it would be worthwhile to consider support for digital platforms, beyond support for particular firm or industry ventures, as key enablers. Here, the main challenges were fragmentation of the national innovation ecosystem and a lack of vertical integration and value chain approach to industrial development. Major opportunities lied in developing online marketplaces for existing producers and merchants and focusing on financing and enabling exports.

The discussion of the Commission asserted and reconfirmed that STI were indispensable in order to achieve inclusive and sustainable development. A number of positive cases from Africa were encouraging and showed that opportunities were at hand, while challenges faced by policymakers were shared by all stakeholders – not only by government policymakers. Emerging technologies were a mindset challenge, as well as a socio-economic and technical challenge, and required an attitude change, as just noted, equally and among all stakeholders. The development of an international enabling environment for STI was needed, including support for better STI policy-making and cooperation with development partners. IN this regards, UNCTAD's STI policy work, e-Trade Readiness Assessments and the organization of Africa eCommerce week were important inputs to this process. Furthermore, UNCTAD's support was critically required in capacity-building for technology transfer and related STI issues.

I would commend UNCTAD on its work on three pillars that advanced the STI policy agenda. The Commission appreciates the research outputs in the Technology and Innovation Report 2018, which looked at harnessing frontier technologies for development and looks forward to the Digital Economy Report 2019 which will, no doubt, follow on some of the themes and challenges.

The technical cooperation work of DTL has received a broad acclaim. The Commission is content to hear that, on the Digital economy, ICT policy reviews were advancing (Egypt completed, 4 countries under work); Rapid E-commerce assessments were conducted in 15 countries. E-commerce and collaboration on the E-Trade4All platform has expanded to 31 of partners. We welcome progress on STI policy technical work which was performed through partnerships with the Government of China (two workshops with 32 policymakers from 16 countries trained) and through partnerships with UN agencies and development

partners. We take note that STI policy reviews were being implemented in two African countries and several others were in the pipeline.

Regarding consensus building, the Commission takes note of UNCTAD/DTL's support of the UN CSTD which, in its current session, is considering role of STI in building resilient societies and the effect of rapid technological change on achieving the SDGs as current themes. We commend UNCTAD/DTL's on an excellent eCommerce week in April 2018, the fourth of its kind, and welcome the development of a new regional dimension in the form of the first Africa E-Commerce week held in December 2018. Finally, the Commission is content to know that UNCTAD/DTL had an active contribution to discussions about technology at the General Assembly and that it is actively engaged in various inter-agency fora including the 3rd Multi-stakeholder STI Forum and the TFM IATT.

In addition, and in its opening session, the Commission was briefed on the latest developments in trends and policies in the area of investment and enterprise for development, as well as current trends in science, technology and innovation for development. At its closing session, delegates were briefed on the progress made in promoting and strengthening synergies among the three pillars of UNCTAD's work in the areas of investment and enterprise development and science, technology and innovation.

In concluding my report on the work of the tenth session of the Commission, I'd like to put on record my sincere appreciation and thanks to all member States that contributed immensely to the success of this meeting.

Mr. President, may I present to the Board the report of the Commission and the outcomes of its tenth session for necessary action.

Thank you, Mr. President.