



United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

Distr.: General
5 March 2021

Original: English

Trade and Development Board
Trade and Development Commission
Twelfth session
Geneva, 17 February 2021

Report of the Trade and Development Commission on its twelfth session

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, 17 February 2021

Contents

	<i>Page</i>
I. Action taken by the Trade and Development Commission at its twelfth session.....	2
A. Reports of expert meetings	2
II. Chair's summary	3
A. Reports of expert meetings	3
B. Progress report on promoting and strengthening synergies among the three pillars	4
III. Organizational matters	6
A. Opening of the session.....	6
B. Election of officers	6
C. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.....	6
D. Adoption of the report of the Commission to the Trade and Development Board	7
 Annex	
Attendance.....	8



Introduction

The twelfth session of the Trade and Development Commission was held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on 17 February 2021, with physical and remote participation.

I. Action taken by the Trade and Development Commission at its twelfth session

A. Reports of expert meetings

(Agenda item 3)

1. The Trade and Development Commission, at a plenary meeting on 17 February 2021, considered agenda item 3.

(a) Reports of the multi-year and single-year expert meetings

(i) *Multi-year Expert Meeting on Commodities and Development*

2. The Chair of the twelfth session of the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Commodities and Development presented the report.

3. The Trade and Development Commission took note of the report, as contained in document TD/B/C.I/MEM.2/51.

(ii) *Multi-year Expert Meeting on Trade, Services and Development*

4. The Chair of the eighth session of the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Trade, Services and Development presented the report.

5. The Commission took note of the report, as contained in document TD/B/C.I/MEM.4/24.

(iii) *Multi-year Expert Meeting on Enhancing the Enabling Economic Environment at All Levels in Support of Inclusive and Sustainable Development, and the Promotion of Economic Integration and Cooperation*

6. On behalf of the Chair of the fourth session of the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Enhancing the Enabling Economic Environment at All Levels in Support of Inclusive and Sustainable Development, and the Promotion of Economic Integration and Cooperation, the Vice-Chair-cum-Rapporteur presented the report.

7. The Commission took note of the report, as contained in document TD/B/C.I/MEM.8/12.

(iv) *Multi-year Expert Meeting on Transport, Trade Logistics and Trade Facilitation*

8. The Chair of the eighth session of the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Transport, Trade Logistics and Trade Facilitation presented the report.

9. The Commission took note of the report, as contained in document TD/B/C.I/MEM.7/24.

II. Chair's summary

A. Reports of expert meetings

(Agenda item 3)

1. Under this item, the Trade and Development Commission considered four reports.

(a) Reports of the multi-year and single-year expert meetings

(i) *Multi-year Expert Meeting on Commodities and Development*

2. The representative of one regional group emphasized the importance of work on economic diversification in the lead up to the fifteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XV), to help developing countries break away from commodity dependence. The representative of another regional group noted the importance of resilient supply chains for commodities in ensuring supply in moments of crisis and highlighted the importance of including all stakeholders in value chains, to promote transparency in value chains and address corruption. In addition, the representative of another regional group highlighted the existing inequality in digital access and the importance of international cooperation in achieving comprehensive and inclusive digitalization.

(ii) *Multi-year Expert Meeting on Trade, Services and Development*

3. The representative of one regional group highlighted the need to consider work on support for developing countries in pursuing services-enabled productivity and resilience in the lead up to UNCTAD XV. The representative of another regional group, recognizing the important contribution of services such as tourism and aviation, and the negative consequences of the coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, welcomed support from UNCTAD towards policies and capacity-building programmes that could support the recovery of such industries. In addition, the representative of another regional group noted the importance of UNCTAD work on services and digital transformation, in particular capacity-building activities for experts in the Middle East and North Africa.

(iii) *Multi-year Expert Meeting on Enhancing the Enabling Economic Environment at All Levels in Support of Inclusive and Sustainable Development, and the Promotion of Economic Integration and Cooperation*

4. The representative of one regional group noted that the issues that had been discussed during the fourth session could be further addressed in the lead up to UNCTAD XV, taking into account the consequences of the pandemic. The representative of another regional group emphasized the need to support developing countries in their efforts to achieve an appropriate transition to a low-carbon future. In addition, the representative of another regional group noted the need for global investment that promoted development and that, in that regard, debt servicing and debt relief were crucial.

(iv) *Multi-year Expert Meeting on Transport, Trade Logistics and Trade Facilitation*

5. The representative of several regional groups noted the useful analysis provided by UNCTAD and encouraged the continuation of exchanges to inform national and international-level approaches to addressing climate change-related issues, as well as highlighting that the analytical work of UNCTAD reflected in the *Review of Maritime Transport* had served as a useful source of information that had enriched discussions at the Multi-year Expert Meeting. The representatives of several regional groups highlighted the vital and interconnecting role of maritime transport in trade and the global economy and noted the important challenges that the effects of climate change posed to maritime supply chains, transport infrastructure, operations and services, with the potential for wide-ranging economic costs and trade-related repercussions. They underscored the pressing need and importance of adaptation and climate-related resilience-building for ports and other critical coastal transport infrastructure, in particular in small island developing States, which faced

urgent, and in some cases existential, challenges. Further, the maritime transport sector, in addition to undertaking climate change adaptation efforts, needed to work towards fulfilling its responsibility with regard to climate change mitigation and moving ahead with decarbonization, while also ensuring progress with trade facilitation reforms and efforts. The representative of another regional group underscored that work by UNCTAD with regard to climate change adaptation and resilience-building for key transport infrastructure would be important in the post-UNCTAD XV period.

B. Progress report on promoting and strengthening synergies among the three pillars

(Agenda item 4)

6. The UNCTAD secretariat presented overviews of work conducted under the three pillars of work of research and analysis, consensus-building and technical cooperation.

Presentation of the activity report of the Division on International Trade and Commodities

7. The UNCTAD secretariat presented the work of the Division on International Trade and Commodities under the three pillars, executed despite the unprecedented challenges posed by the pandemic and the ongoing liquidity crisis facing the Organization. The division had proven flexible, effective and adaptable in delivering its work programme. Among the work highlighted were efforts in the areas of trade analysis; competition and consumer protection; trade, gender and development; trade negotiations; trade and the environment; and commodities. The division had made swift changes to continue to deliver on activities to member States through accessible digital platforms and to produce timely analysis on the effects of the pandemic in key economic sectors. Within this context, achievements, innovative approaches and new areas of work included the following: work on non-tariff measures in partnership with other agencies, which had helped to increase transparency in trade; work on voluntary sustainability standards, which provided additional information across the life cycles of traded products; a report on product safety, with various recommendations, as well as dispute resolution guidelines for online markets, including policy options; the new global trade update platform; a pilot project with China to deliver blockchain-based online dispute resolution for consumers along the silk road, to help improve international trade and electronic commerce; ongoing online courses on trade and gender that had benefited over 1,000 stakeholders from 152 countries; the issuance of policy briefs addressing the impact of the pandemic on women in small island developing States and in sub-Saharan Africa; a survey on the implications of the pandemic for trade in biodiversity-based products and services; a project on integrating landlocked commodity-dependent developing countries into regional and global value chains; capacity-building work in developing countries such as Ethiopia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia and Uzbekistan; a series of capacity-building events and training with regard to biotrade, plastic pollution, the circular economy and oceans, including contributions to work done at the World Trade Organization and under the Convention on Biological Diversity; and the publication in February 2021 of *Trade and Environment Review 2021: Trade-climate Readiness for Developing Countries*, which explored the adverse effects of climate change on trade, including ways to adapt.

8. In the ensuing discussion, the representatives of some regional groups expressed approval of and support for the work of the division. The representative of one regional group expressed appreciation for assistance provided by the division and highlighted the new trade policy dialogues, which were an effective instrument for member States and experts that allowed for discussions on relevant and emerging issues on the trade agenda. The representative noted that research and analysis outputs needed to be accompanied by adequate dissemination strategies that ensured that beneficiaries and policymakers were reached in a timely manner. The representative of another regional group expressed positive views on the work of the division on trade and regulations during the pandemic, particularly trade and supply in medical products and non-tariff measures. In addition, the representative of another regional group expressed interest in how the division managed

synergies among the three pillars of work, including details of how the work of the Commission was used in the work of the division, and requested updates on measures and actions taken by the division to improve online meetings and events.

9. The secretariat emphasized that recent multi-year expert meetings were an example of synergies between work under the three pillars and between the Commission and the work of the division. The Commission was a venue for discussions on divisional work under the technical cooperation pillar, as activities undertaken by UNCTAD were in response to requests from member States. The division had received positive feedback and assessments from participants in online meetings and continued its efforts to expand the number of high-quality, accessible digital platforms, while recognizing that many participants had expressed a wish to reinvent meetings with physical participation.

Presentation of the activity report of the Division on Technology and Logistics

10. The Director of the Division on Technology and Logistics presented the work of the division under the three pillars. Under the research and analysis pillar, the division's work included in particular the flagship publication *Review of Maritime Transport*; research collaboration with the International Maritime Organization on the impact of decarbonization proposals on developing countries; the launch of the global transport cost database with the International Maritime Organization and the World Bank; the port management series under the Train for Trade programme (TrainForTrade); trade and transport facilitation series reports, including an analytical compilation of policies and practices on climate change impacts and adaptation for coastal transport infrastructure; policy briefs, technical notes and the transport and trade facilitation newsletter; and a compendium of good practices under the Automated System for Customs Data programme, the largest technical cooperation programme of UNCTAD. Under the technical cooperation pillar, the division's work focused broadly on sustainable and resilient transport issues and on rapid responses to the pandemic in trade logistics and included the following: leading a United Nations Development Account project on transport and trade connectivity during the pandemic, in partnership with the United Nations regional commissions; the trade facilitation empowerment programme; and TrainForTrade, including the Port Management Programme. Under the consensus-building pillar, division efforts had focused in particular on the twelfth session of the Trade and Development Commission; the eighth session of the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Transport, Trade Logistics and Trade Facilitation; support with regard to the General Assembly resolution on seafarers and with regard to the call by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD to support seafarers and keep ports open; and support for negotiations at the International Maritime Organization on maritime decarbonization through comprehensive impact assessments. In the lead up to UNCTAD XV, it was important to highlight that, as the pandemic had demonstrated that it was vital to keep ships moving, ports open and cross-border trade flowing, while ensuring health controls at borders, efficient trade logistics remained critical for the recovery period and beyond. In addition, maritime transport was emerging as a strategic sector and the effects of the pandemic, new technologies, climate change effects and energy transitions and decarbonization would have significant impacts on developing countries, including small island developing States. Therefore, the maritime-related work of UNCTAD needed to be strengthened.

11. In the ensuing discussion, the representatives of some regional groups highlighted the importance of synergies among the three pillars of the work of UNCTAD in order to ensure the provision of integrated support and advice, to help member States in the pursuit of their development objectives. The representatives, expressing appreciation for the division's work and support and assistance to developing countries, encouraged the secretariat to continue its efforts in these areas and highlighted the importance of focusing on the relevant issues and mandates in the lead up to UNCTAD XV.

12. In response to a question from the representative of one regional group on the role of UNCTAD with regard to the situation of seafarers and crew changes in the context of the pandemic, the secretariat highlighted the importance of collaboration with other international organizations, including the International Labour Organization and the

International Maritime Organization, as well as of monitoring and collecting relevant data in order to be able to provide evidence-based information and contributions.

III. Organizational matters

A. Opening of the session

13. The twelfth session of the Trade and Development Commission was opened at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on 17 February 2021, by Mr. Chad Blackman (Barbados), Chair of the session.

B. Election of officers

(Agenda item 1)

14. The Trade and Development Commission decided to elect its officers through a silence procedure in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly decision 74/544 of 27 March 2020. As no objections were received by 16 February 2021, the Commission elected the following officers to serve on its Bureau:

- Chair:* Mr. Chad Blackman (Barbados)
Rapporteur: Mr. Peter Simiyu Nalanda (Kenya)
Vice-Chairs: Mr. Michal Kaplan (Czechia)
Mr. Raúl Vargas Juárez (Mexico)
Mr. Enkhtaivan Dashnyam (Mongolia)

C. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

(Agenda item 2)

15. At its opening plenary meeting on 17 February 2021, the Trade and Development Commission adopted the provisional agenda for the session (TD/B/C.I/50), with one modification. The agenda was thus as follows:

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
3. Reports of expert meetings:
 - (a) Reports of the multi-year and single-year expert meetings:
 - (i) Multi-year Expert Meeting on Commodities and Development;
 - (ii) Multi-year Expert Meeting on Trade, Services and Development;
 - (iii) Multi-year Expert Meeting on Enhancing the Enabling Economic Environment at All Levels in Support of Inclusive and Sustainable Development, and the Promotion of Economic Integration and Cooperation;
 - (iv) Multi-year Expert Meeting on Transport, Trade Logistics and Trade Facilitation.
4. Progress report on promoting and strengthening synergies among the three pillars.
5. Other business.
6. Adoption of the report of the Commission to the Trade and Development Board.

D. Adoption of the report of the Commission to the Trade and Development Board

(Agenda item 6)

16. At its closing plenary meeting on 17 February 2021, the Trade and Development Commission authorized the Chair to finalize the report after the conclusion of the meeting. The report would be submitted to the Trade and Development Board for consideration.

Annex

Attendance*

1. Representatives of the following States members of the Conference attended the session:

Afghanistan	Morocco
Albania	Netherlands
Azerbaijan	Nigeria
Bangladesh	Oman
Barbados	Pakistan
Belarus	Panama
Bulgaria	Peru
Cambodia	Philippines
China	Portugal
Colombia	Russian Federation
Congo	Serbia
Egypt	Slovenia
Gabon	South Sudan
Gambia	Spain
Guatemala	State of Palestine
Guinea	Sudan
India	Syrian Arab Republic
Indonesia	Thailand
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Togo
Italy	Tunisia
Kenya	Turkey
Kuwait	Ukraine
Kyrgyzstan	United Arab Emirates
Madagascar	United Republic of Tanzania
Malaysia	Viet Nam
Maldives	Zambia
Mexico	Zimbabwe
Mongolia	

2. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented at the session:

Common Fund for Commodities
European Union
International Grains Council
Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States
Organization of Islamic Cooperation

3. The following specialized agencies and related organizations were represented at the session:

International Atomic Energy Agency
World Trade Organization

4. The following non-governmental organizations were represented at the session:

General category

Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development
The Grain and Feed Trade Association

* This attendance list contains registered participants. For the list of participants, see TD/B/C.I/INF.12.