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Towards resilient, sustainable and inclusive supply chains and trade logistics

Ministerial round table

Summary prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat

1. In her opening remarks, the Secretary-General of UNCTAD emphasized the strain on supply chains from disruptions, disproportionately impacting landlocked developing countries, the least developed countries and small island developing States; and the importance of promoting resilient supply chains for development. Transitions to a low-carbon path, digital systems and resilient, inclusive trade networks needed to be just and equitable. In addition, she noted that climate resilient ports, transit transport corridors, trade facilitation, infrastructure investment, training and enabling regulatory frameworks were necessary. Finally, the Secretary-General stated that translating insights from the present discussions into concrete action was essential, and announced that the second Global Supply Chain Forum would be held in Saudi Arabia in 2026, in collaboration with the Government of Saudi Arabia and the Saudi Ports Authority.
2. The round table, focused on key challenges, potential solutions and opportunities, as well as on policy priorities for enhancing supply-chain resilience and sustainability in developing countries and for consideration at the second Global Supply Chain Forum in 2026, featured eight panellists: Minister of Economy, Industry and Investments, the Comoros; Minister of Trade, Industry and Business Development, Lesotho; Minister of Trade and Export Promotion, Algeria; Director General, International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations; Minister of Transport and Logistics Services, Saudi Arabia; Minister of Commerce and Industry, Panama; Minister of Transport, Angola; and Minister of Commerce and Industry, India.
3. One panellist highlighted that small island developing States such as the Comoros were vulnerable to supply-chain disruptions, high shipping costs and import dependence. Countries could not build resilience by relying on external assistance alone, and there was a need for inward-looking national resilience strategies building on a national vision. The Comoros had adopted the 2030 plan, involving greater resilience, food security and reduced import dependency. Modernizing infrastructure, digitalization, customs reforms, South–South cooperation and investment promotion were essential in transforming vulnerabilities into opportunities. The panellist urged UNCTAD to continue to support such efforts through technical assistance and risk-management programmes.
4. Another panellist outlined that, similar to other landlocked developing countries, Lesotho, also among the least developed countries, faced unique challenges arising from its



geography and depended for trade on ports in South Africa. Transit trade involved delays, elevated costs and regulatory unpredictability at the border. Lesotho was developing a direct route to the closest port in South Africa, Durban, to reduce travel time and generate savings, and was working on a one-stop border post. In this regard, coordinated efforts between landlocked developing countries and transit countries were critical. Trade facilitation, transit agreements and having a corridor to the sea were key for landlocked developing countries such as Lesotho.

5. One panellist detailed that Algeria was strengthening transport and logistics, bearing in mind continental economic integration and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. Algeria was developing routes to link ports to other countries in Africa, particularly landlocked countries, as well as to Europe and to the Persian Gulf. Digitalization in ports and investment in land-based infrastructure were aimed at enhancing performance and strengthening land-based intra-African trade. The panellist stated that regional cooperation, multimodal transportation and infrastructure investment were key; and that inland transport connectivity and digital integration could feature as key themes at the second Global Supply Chain Forum.

6. Another panellist noted that supply-chain disruptions had exposed vulnerabilities, such as the unreliability of schedules, increased costs and longer transit times. Stakeholder collaboration, including microenterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises, was critical for resilient, digitally enabled and sustainable supply chains. Multimodal transport connectivity and infrastructure investment, multimodal corridors, trade facilitation, digitalization and data exchanges, regulatory compliance and skills development were key in future-proofing supply chains. The panellist urged UNCTAD to support public-private collaboration, capacity-building, digital and legal harmonization and partnerships with professional industry organizations.

7. One panellist highlighted that resilient logistics, infrastructure investment, digitalization, multimodal transport and risk management were key in ensuring unhindered trade. The following areas were essential: modernizing infrastructure; digital trade and logistics platforms, such as Fasah, aimed at facilitating customs clearance and trade processes; public-private collaboration; advanced technologies; and proactive risk preparedness. The panellist stated that the resilience of the trade of Saudi Arabia showed that disruption-proofed supply chains enabled economic stability.

8. Another panellist stressed that the Panama Canal had been affected by disruptions related to climate change and that Panama had been able to enhance climate adaptation with response measures that did not depend solely on infrastructure. Resilient logistics required long-term planning, adaptation and technology; and capacity-building, climate resilience and sustainable resource management were essential. The Global Supply Chain Forum in 2024 had provided insights on the importance of logistical and maritime improvements and digitalization for the Panama Canal and its positioning as a global trade artery. International collaboration was important, including through UNCTAD, given its role as a platform for dialogue and data-sharing. The panellist stated that themes to consider at the second Global Supply Chain Forum included the decarbonization of transportation and port operations; digitalization as a driver of resilience and transparency; and data and logistics intelligence systems.

9. One panellist emphasized that in Angola, connectivity and logistics were strategic priorities, including in boosting intra-African trade. The following areas were important: infrastructure integration; private sector participation; regional collaboration; closing infrastructure gaps; reducing costs; accelerating digitalization; and sharing experiences. The acceleration of corridor development and governance was also important, and the panellist stated that digitalization was critical in accelerating processes, along with the sustainability of efforts in these thematic areas, including their sustainable financing. UNCTAD was invited to support such efforts and to promote corridor expansion and development in Africa.

10. Another panellist highlighted that the experience in India underscored the need for resilient, self-reliant supply chains. Infrastructure development was critical, to support logistics and local industry. India had launched a national master plan for infrastructure. In this regard, strengthening transport networks and ensuring resilience and reliability in both domestic and international supply chains was important. Prioritizing trusted international

partnerships over cost alone was necessary, and cooperation and collaboration, together with the sharing of digital solutions, including with regard to payment systems, and of best practices could help improve efficiency and cut costs.

11. During the ensuing discussion, all panellists noted that supply-chain disruptions, disproportionately impacting the most vulnerable countries, were becoming increasingly frequent, making sustainability, resilience and risk management critical. The panellists highlighted cross-cutting priority areas, including infrastructure development; investment and modernization across modes, networks and corridors; innovation; digitalization; collaboration; and capacity-building.
