



# United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

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## Strategic priorities and emerging directions for investment and entrepreneurship policy

### Ministerial round table

#### Summary prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat

1. The Secretary-General of UNCTAD opened the round table by highlighting the continued decline in global investment flows, particularly in sectors vital to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. While global trade and the economy had shown resilience, they remained unstable, underscoring the urgent need to direct investment towards the countries most in need. She noted the potential of artificial intelligence to attract new investment but underscored the importance of building national capacities to fully benefit from emerging technologies. She called on Governments to design coherent policy frameworks that leveraged current economic and technological trends, while addressing persistent barriers and inequalities.
2. The round table was organized around two panel discussions. The first panel comprised the Minister of Trade and Entrepreneurship of Botswana; Vice-Minister for International Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands; Vice-Minister of Commerce of the Ministry of Commerce of Saudi Arabia; and Secretary of State for Trade of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Business of Spain. Panellists for the second panel were the Minister of Trade, Industry and Tourism of Colombia; Minister of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment of the Gambia; Secretary of State for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia; and Vice-Minister of National Development Planning of Indonesia.
3. The first panel considered insights on the topic shared from the perspective of different countries.
4. The panellists highlighted common priorities, including the urgent need to restore trust and stability as foundations for investment, and called for predictable policies, clear regulations and stronger multilateral cooperation. With reference to *World Investment Reports*, the panellists highlighted knowledge-sharing and capacity-building as essential to support developing countries in designing effective investment frameworks. In that regard, UNCTAD was a key partner in providing technical assistance and acting as a repository of best practices.
5. The panellists further agreed on the importance of investment facilitation, including through the development of digital platforms, to improve efficiency and inclusiveness. Tools such as one-stop-shops and electronic business registration and licensing platforms were seen as critical for enabling entrepreneurship and international competitiveness.



6. Each panellist focused on the experiences of his or her country. One panellist outlined his country's diversification strategy, which focused on innovation, job creation, small domestic business support and digital transformation. Another panellist underscored his country's combined approach of aid, trade and investment, stressing infrastructure, removal of the limitation on cross-border trade for small and medium-sized enterprises and de-risking instruments to promote investment and regional growth in Africa. Another panellist emphasized the importance of having a clear government vision, enabling regulatory environment, public-private dialogue and data-driven policymaking. Another panellist highlighted attracting high-quality investment and the role of investment promotion and facilitation, innovation, entrepreneurship and public-private partnerships, including co-investment mechanisms.

7. Recognizing the importance of UNCTAD data and policy advice, the panellists called on the institution to further strengthen technical assistance activities, particularly building capacity for investment and entrepreneurship, support to small and medium-sized enterprises and women-owned businesses and fostering of inclusive, sustainable growth built on trust, technology and collaboration.

8. The second panel focused on sharing the approaches to reform of the panellists' countries, in terms of scaling up investment and entrepreneurship.

9. The panellists examined strategies to strengthen investment and entrepreneurship frameworks in support of inclusive and sustainable development. All panellists underlined that sustainable investment should be built on credible governance and a shared national vision, with policies that turned sustainability into a driver of competitiveness.

10. Several panellists highlighted the importance of placing sustainability at the core of national development strategies and in investment and enterprise development policies. They discussed the use of performance-based investment incentives being linked to job creation, value addition and skills development. They also spoke on sector-specific incentives in key sectors, including those related to the energy and digital transition. They further noted the importance of investment and entrepreneurship development policies that fostered inclusion and targeted youth and women. In that context, one panellist added that economic growth should go hand in hand with social justice, by building domestic capacity in the energy transition and ensuring that it advanced in a fair and inclusive manner.

11. Another panellist emphasized that countries facing structural disadvantages required smart investment policies that built investor trust and credibility. He underlined the importance of leveraging the diaspora through digital tools. He expressed appreciation for UNCTAD support through an investment policy review for his country and on the development of a national entrepreneurship strategy focused on women's empowerment, skills development and the promotion of creative industries, as well as entrepreneurial support through the Empretec programme.

12. Another panellist noted that strong fundamentals, such as a sound business environment, transparent institutions and efficient public services, were essential to attract and retain investment. He identified stability, market outreach and partnerships, including through free trade agreements and international organizations, as key priorities. He recognized UNCTAD analytical work and policy data as a valuable contribution to evidence-based policymaking.

13. Another panellist highlighted the importance of stable macroeconomic performance and policies promoting innovation, sustainability and inclusiveness. In his country, efforts had been turned towards moving up global value chains and promoting green finance, digitalization and local content development. He stressed that developing countries needed strong partnerships to achieve sustainable transformation and shared prosperity.

14. The panellists agreed on the importance of coherent policies, innovation, trust and multilateral cooperation to mobilize investment and entrepreneurship for sustainable development. They underscored the continued role of UNCTAD as a platform for dialogue and policy support on investment for development.