

Distr.: Restricted
24 June 2019

English only

Trade and Development Board

Sixty-sixth session

Geneva, 24–27 June 2019

Item 9 (a) of the provisional agenda

**Report by the Chair of the Advisory Body set up
in accordance with paragraph 166 of the Bangkok Plan
of Action on the implementation of courses by
the secretariat in 2018–2019 and their relevant impact;
and the appointment of members of the Advisory Body**

Report of the Chair of the Advisory Body for the year 2018–2019, established in the context of paragraph 166 of the Bangkok Plan of Action

Introduction

1. In line with paragraph 166 of the Bangkok Plan of Action, the Trade and Development Board during its forty-seventh session in 2000 adopted a decision to establish an advisory body to make recommendations to the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) on the broad objectives, content and structure of the capacity-building courses delivered by the organization. This mandate was renewed by the São Paulo Consensus, Accra Accord and Doha Declaration and reaffirmed at the fourteenth session of the Conference, held in Nairobi in 2016. The Policy Capacity-building Section of the Division on Technology and Logistics coordinates and implements these courses within UNCTAD, across geographical regions, with relevant regional economic commissions and permanent missions of member States based in Geneva.

2. The Advisory Body for the year 2018–2019, which was formed at the sixty-fourth session of the Board, met twice in September 2018 and May 2019. I will report on the outcome of the meetings, the implementation of the courses held since the previous meeting of the Board and the plans for the remaining courses for this biennium. I will also provide information on the end-of-course evaluations for regional courses held for Eastern Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, and Africa; and on the short courses for Geneva-based diplomats in 2018 and early 2019.

I. Outcome of the Advisory Body meetings of September 2018

3. In September 2018, the Advisory Body reviewed the activities of the paragraph 166 programme, including the curriculum and evaluations of the regional courses. The Advisory Body took note of the multi-year venues in the five developing regions and reviewed proposals to host the upcoming course for African economies. The Advisory



Body decided that the University of Nairobi would be the multi-venue for African economies (2019–2023).

4. I also took note of the extensive political support the programme receives from member States, as they are the main beneficiaries and decision-makers of the programme. In addition, I considered points raised by members of the Advisory Board and took note of the efforts made by UNCTAD in working towards the establishment of an interregional platform for the alumni of previous regional courses, representing the five developing regions. They will come together in Geneva to share cross-regional experiences and learn about recent research conducted by UNCTAD. The pilot of this interregional platform will be rolled out on 24–26 June 2019, in an event parallel to the meetings of the Trade and Development Board.

5. The two-week regional course was revised in 2018 to incorporate electronic commerce (e-commerce) and the digital economy. The course was rolled out for Eastern Europe in Belgrade (June 2018), Cairo (November–December 2018) and Nairobi (March–April 2019). With regard to the regional courses held in 2018 and early 2019, we thank the Governments of Egypt, Kenya and Serbia for their commitment and substantial support to this UNCTAD flagship programme.

6. In the second half of 2019, two additional regional courses will be held in Colombia and Singapore for participants from Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia and the Pacific. Our gratitude also goes to both countries for their generous contributions.

7. The achievements made under this programme are substantial, and the evaluations made by the recipients and their supervisors are testimony thereto. Feedback and assessment are requested by utilizing credible methods. The evaluations and feedback of the programme delineate the impact of the UNCTAD courses on policymakers in the five regions. Let me elaborate further.

II. Evaluation of the courses delivered in 2018

8. Mid-level government policymaking officials, who attended the two regional courses held in Belgrade and Cairo in 2018, complimented the structure of the course, its focus on national economic policy coordination and its link to development. Overall, the course has given them a better understanding of international economic issues and how their economies fit into the global economy, providing a comprehensive understanding of the economic growth trajectory and the various aspects that have an impact on developing countries. In this regard, the programme has provided enhanced analytical tools to better understand the efforts required to achieve a greater level of development through sound macroeconomic policies that support trade policy formulation.

9. I am also pleased to report that the programme provides an analytical vision showing how to formulate policies, while safeguarding the country's policy space when designing policies. This aspect – policy space – was highlighted in module I of the programme curriculum. The curriculum and its linkages to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals are also important. The programme updated the curriculum to reflect the 2030 Agenda and therefore contributes to policy coherence and the conduct of national consultation efforts at the national and regional levels.

10. I also took note of the results of the evaluations performed by participating member States, which report how they view economic integration as key to economic growth and how trade-related development policies can be country-specific, while considering the role of finance and technology. Finally, the paragraph 166 course provides a better understanding of development and trade-related matters.

11. The evaluations revealed a deepened knowledge of development and economic matters. Further, the content of the regional courses was relevant to the professional duties of the participants, who indicated a strengthened ability to apply lessons learned from the course. Additionally, greater integration in the decision-making processes was reported. As the programme is embedded in a knowledge-based capacity-building framework, it focuses

heavily on sharing and disseminating information with colleagues in relevant departments. Alumni participants indicated that they had shared and disseminated the knowledge they had gained as a result of attending the UNCTAD regional courses. This is the multiplier effect, towards investing in human capital, which is one of the main pillars of the programme. In this regard, I was pleased to learn that many of the supervisors who provided feedback stated that they would recommend the courses to other colleagues and that participants had shared the knowledge gained with colleagues in their departments and others.

12. The participants also reported increased integration in their organization's structure and strategy, particularly in their respective departments. Further, they were involved in the formulation of trade policies in their respective departments, in addition to the provision of advisory services in the areas of development, trade, investment and finance.

13. Policymakers pointed to the positive environment provided for these courses, generating meaningful discussion and learning from other countries' experiences and good practices in economic policy development. In this regard, I commend the high calibre of experts from UNCTAD, the regional commissions and national experts who guided these policymakers during the courses.

14. The committed engagement of UNCTAD experts, national experts, regional commissions and the Policy Capacity-building Section of the UNCTAD Division on Technology and Logistics consistently ensures the qualitative excellence of this unique programme, which addresses the challenges faced in achieving the objectives of trade, investment, finance and technology in developing countries. The Advisory Body took note that such positive feedback could only be generated through a carefully designed curriculum and its delivery, which has led to a positive impact on the knowledge and skills of policymakers.

15. The curriculum has been consistently revised and updated to reflect needs and requests. For example, in 2016, it was reviewed to ensure that the formulation of national and international development policies and strategies were situated within the context of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, providing the overall framework for development policies in 2015–2030. The curriculum was also updated in 2018 to include e-commerce and the digital economy, as previously requested in an Advisory Body meeting. Additionally, I wish to emphasize the programme's consistent approach in ensuring gender balance on average, as a matter of policy and in advocating parity. This benchmark has been set by the programme for many years.

III. Regional courses in 2018–2019

16. In 2018, and early 2019, the UNCTAD secretariat delivered three regional courses for Eastern Europe (June–July 2018), the Arab region (November–December 2018) and Africa (March–April 2019). In Belgrade, 21 participants from 11 economies completed the course, representing Albania, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, North Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkmenistan and Ukraine.

17. For the Middle East and North Africa, 22 participants from 8 countries were represented: Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Oman, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan and Tunisia.

18. For Africa, 27 participants from 21 countries participated, representing Algeria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, the Comoros, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, the Niger, Togo, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

IV. Short courses for Geneva-based delegates

19. The secretariat delivered six short courses for Geneva-based delegates in 2018 and another three in the first half of 2019. The courses dealt with many areas and topics, including trade regulation in the twenty-first century, maritime transport challenges and policy options, and how to shape an inclusive gender-response trade policy. In the first

semester of 2019, three short courses were held for Geneva based-diplomats on trade, trade policy and inequality; better trade for achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals; and commodity dependence and development.

20. These short courses were well attended, and the evaluations conducted by Geneva-based delegates indicate that they were informative and raised awareness of development and trade topics that were useful for the delegates in carrying out their duties. The participants also noted that the choice of topics was relevant.

21. In this regard, I wish to applaud the efforts of the secretariat towards ensuring that the courses continue to be delivered with a high level of quality, both in terms of substance and calibre of expertise. I call upon all members of the Trade and Development Board to continue supporting these commendable efforts. I also call upon them to provide the necessary support to the secretariat as it takes on this important capacity-building programme to continue meeting the demands of mid-level government officials and policymakers in the areas of trade, finance, investment, technology and development.

V. Conclusion

22. I wish to thank the members of the Advisory Body, namely Azerbaijan, Canada, Czechia, Ecuador, Guatemala, France, Kenya, Lebanon, Oman, Pakistan, Uganda and Zambia, for their constructive feedback and observations, which contributed to the deliberations of this body in providing the necessary guidance and support to the Secretary-General of UNCTAD regarding the implementation of this important flagship capacity-building programme and the way forward.

23. In closing, I congratulate H.E. Mr. Michael Gaffey, the Ambassador of Ireland, on his appointment as the new Chair of the Advisory Body and wish him a fruitful and successful term. I would like to bring to his attention the importance of this programme in building the capacity of future policymakers across the globe and ask that he extend the necessary support to ensure its continued success.
