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**Activities undertaken by UNCTAD in support of Africa  
Report by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD\****Summary*

This report covers the activities undertaken by UNCTAD in support of Africa from May 2021 to April 2022. It describes the impact that the work of UNCTAD has had on development in Africa in the following areas: transforming economies; tackling vulnerabilities and building resilience; improving competitiveness; enhancing multilateralism; and empowering people and investing in their future. Impact is achieved under the three major pillars of the work of UNCTAD, namely, research and policy analysis, intergovernmental consensus-building and technical assistance. This report provides a non-exhaustive list of examples of how UNCTAD is delivering results in Africa. In 2021, 34.7 per cent of the total national, regional and interregional project expenditure of UNCTAD was directed towards Africa, amounting to \$16,246,561 (provisional).

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## I. Introduction

1. This report documents activities undertaken by UNCTAD in support of Africa from May 2021 to April 2022. It provides examples of the impact that the work of UNCTAD has had on development in Africa in the following areas: transforming economies; tackling vulnerabilities and building resilience; improving competitiveness; enhancing multilateralism; and empowering people and investing in their future.

2. UNCTAD is the United Nations body mandated to assist developing countries, including member States in Africa, in harnessing international trade and its interrelated areas, such as science, technology and innovation, development finance and investment, as a means to achieve sustainable development and the Sustainable Development Goals. UNCTAD aims to help build the resiliency of countries in Africa by strengthening their capacity to engage more fully in international trade and to respond to and recover from the impact of global crises such as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, climate change and geopolitical instability. The UNCTAD commitment to achieving prosperity for all manifests in Africa through a range of activities, including convening events to engage stakeholders in discussing specific drivers of social and economic development and sharing experiences and lessons learned. Support to Africa is given a cross-cutting focus across all UNCTAD divisions, in collaboration with countries in Africa and other United Nations entities, and is integrated into the broad programme of work of UNCTAD.

## II. Highlights

### A. Major events

3. **Fifteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XV), held in a hybrid (virtual and physical) format, in Bridgetown and Geneva, from 3 to 7 October 2021.** With the theme “From inequality and vulnerability to prosperity for all”, UNCTAD XV provided an opportunity for the international community to discuss more effective mechanisms and policy measures aimed at aligning the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with the global “new normal” induced by the pandemic. Member States at UNCTAD XV, a major United Nations conference in the decade of action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, also addressed the significant unmet trade, finance, investment and technology-related needs of developing countries in the face of the challenges brought about by the pandemic. UNCTAD XV offered a unique platform for vulnerable small island developing States to identify response measures for declining tourism and travel revenues and debt sustainability; for the least developed countries in Africa to explore feasible instruments to strengthen productive capacities; and for member States, in particular middle-income countries, to identify ways forward in debt management and digital cooperation. Member States discussed the urgent actions needed to support developing countries in addressing unequal access to COVID-19 vaccines, the debt crisis, climate change and other unprecedented challenges.<sup>1</sup> Ministerial round tables held during UNCTAD XV had the following themes: scaling up financing for development; reshaping global and regional value chains; regional integration for a resilient, inclusive and sustainable future; harnessing frontier technologies for shared prosperity; and supporting productive transformation for greater resilience in a post-pandemic world. As part of the UNCTAD XV programme, a series of online pre-Conference events and forums were organized in April–September 2021, including a webinar entitled “Trade and gender linkages: An analysis of the least developed countries” and the inaugural Gender and Development Forum. Contributions were also made to the UNCTAD initiative “Les 8 du mois until we’re there”.

4. **Seventh World Investment Forum.** The forum, organized by UNCTAD and partners to devise ways and means to make investment work better for sustainable

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<sup>1</sup> TD/541.

development, provided a global platform for engagement and dialogue on emerging and key issues related to investing for sustainable development. Attended by over 8,000 participants, the forum comprised over 90 events organized by UNCTAD, including three summits, four award ceremonies and three ministerial round-table discussions that included the participation of the President of Botswana, the Prime Minister of Egypt, the Head of Government of Morocco and 24 ministers from the region. The forum hosted 12 events with a special focus on Africa, including on special economic zones, impact investing, promoting entrepreneurship, health and digital health innovation. In addition, UNCTAD launched *Handbook on Special Economic Zones in Africa: Towards Economic Diversification across the Continent*, which identifies several good practices through an analysis of case studies reflecting a variety of critical issues related to such zones while considering the specificities of diverse regions in Africa.

## B. UNCTAD Regional Office for Africa

5. Since 2015, the Regional Office has played a key role in facilitating and coordinating technical assistance from UNCTAD to the African Union Commission and its member States, regional economic communities and other key stakeholders and partners in Africa. In October 2021, the Regional Office, in collaboration with the Division on International Trade and Commodities, the African Continental Free Trade Area secretariat and the Economic Commission for Africa, facilitated a capacity-building session on competition policy for States Parties to the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement, aimed at strengthening understanding of competition policy and facilitating negotiations on the protocol on competition policy, which was attended by 34 States Parties. In addition, the Regional Office contributed to a technical review of the national implementation strategies of Botswana and Namibia under the African Continental Free Trade Area.

## C. Tracking and monitoring the impact of the pandemic on the continent

6. **Response and recovery: Mobilizing financial resources for development in the time of COVID-19.** UNCTAD leads this United Nations Development Account project, in cooperation with the Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. The project aims to strengthen the diagnostic and policy design capacity of the relevant macroeconomic, fiscal and debt financing authorities in low-income and middle-income developing countries, to be able to respond appropriately and innovatively to the pandemic and ensure a recovery that enables the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The project has five workstreams with direct relevance for countries in Africa (box 1).

Box 1

### **Response and recovery: Mobilizing financial resources for development in the time of COVID-19 – Activities with direct relevance for countries in Africa**

Three of the five workstreams are based at UNCTAD and have led to the following:

Updated analyses of the global macroeconomic environment in 2020 and 2021, based on an UNCTAD global policy model, to inform domestic policy responses in seven countries;<sup>a</sup> and a detailed assessment of the macroeconomic and social impact of the COVID-19 crisis in two countries<sup>b</sup>

An assessment of financial conditions in selected developing country regions, based on new UNCTAD financial condition indicators, including 35 countries in Africa<sup>c</sup>

A global financial safety net tracker with updated data on liquidity options and the use of these at the bilateral, regional and global levels during the pandemic for all Member States of the United Nations, including 54 in Africa

Two of the five workstreams are led by regional commissions in cooperation with UNCTAD and have led to the following:

A new tax policy framework for countries in Africa with a guide to strengthening tax policy and examining direct and indirect taxation gaps and how these can be exploited to formulate and implement policies to expand fiscal space and domestic resource mobilization (led by the Economic Commission for Africa)

Proposals for capital account management and macroprudential policy design in six countries<sup>d</sup> (led by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean).

<sup>a</sup> Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda.

<sup>b</sup> Ethiopia, Zambia.

<sup>c</sup> Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, United Republic of Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

<sup>d</sup> Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia.

Source: UNCTAD.

7. **Transport and trade challenges arising from the pandemic.** UNCTAD continued its collaboration with the five regional commissions of the United Nations, in helping developing countries address such challenges, as part of a joint project titled “Transport and trade connectivity in the age of pandemics”. Under this project, UNCTAD conducted an assessment of the impact of the pandemic on the maritime transport sector and trade, with the main findings published in *COVID-19 and Maritime Transport: Impact and Responses*. UNCTAD disseminated the main findings of and insights gained from the assessment by delivering tailored regional webinars in Africa, in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa.

8. **Trade in services and the pandemic.** Under a United Nations Development Account project on trade in services in Africa, UNCTAD and the Economic Commission for Africa supported five countries<sup>2</sup> in undertaking sectoral pandemic-related impact and response studies that analysed impacts in services sectors in the beneficiary countries and related effects at the regional level. The project was also aimed at proposing policy responses and actionable measures for recovery. In June and July 2021, UNCTAD, jointly with the Economic Commission for Africa, organized country-focus validation workshops that enabled policymakers and other stakeholders in three countries<sup>3</sup> to better comprehend the extent of the impact of the pandemic on the transport and financial services sector and to identify policies and measures that could help facilitate a quick recovery and build resilience to future shocks.

### III. Outcomes and impacts of UNCTAD activities in support of Africa

#### A. Transforming economies

9. In the context of its mandate to support countries in Africa in transforming their economies, creating jobs, reducing poverty, accelerating sustainable development and facilitating the region’s integration into the global economy, UNCTAD undertook a range of activities to support countries in harnessing domestic and foreign investment as means to catalyse structural economic transformation.

10. **World Investment Report 2021: Investing in Sustainable Recovery.** UNCTAD, in this report, noted that foreign direct investment flows to Africa fell significantly in 2020, with commodity exporting economies more significantly affected as the pandemic led to

<sup>2</sup> Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, Togo.

<sup>3</sup> Ethiopia, Nigeria, Togo.

decreased commodity export demand and prices. The impact of the pandemic on downward foreign direct investment prospects could be reversed by the adoption of the protocol on investment under the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement. Implementation of the Free Trade Area was expected to significantly shape foreign investment flows to the continent, enhancing regional market integration and providing opportunities for countries to pivot away from the primary commodities traditionally driving investment and trade flows in Africa. UNCTAD, in its global investment trends monitor in January 2022, highlighted the significant increase in foreign direct investment flows to Africa by end-2021.

11. **Investment policy reviews.** To support developing countries in their efforts to diversify economies, attract higher levels of foreign direct investment and promote sustainable development, UNCTAD conducts investment policy reviews, which are diagnostic studies of the legal, regulatory, institutional and operational environments for investment. The reviews encourage official development assistance and investment in countries in which needs are greatest. Over the reporting period, UNCTAD examined the implementation of investment policy review recommendations and provided follow-up technical assistance and advisory services in five countries.<sup>4</sup> Inputs were provided for the drafting of an investment policy in Nigeria and a new investment law in the Sudan. In addition, UNCTAD engaged closely with Francophone countries in Africa through participation in the annual conference of the Réseau international des agences francophones de promotion des investissements [International Network of Francophone Investment Promotion Agencies] in June 2021.

12. **International investment agreements.** UNCTAD continued its support to countries in Africa in the reform of the international investment agreement regime through research and policy analysis, consensus-building and technical assistance. UNCTAD support to continental integration under the African Union is noteworthy in this regard. In 2021, several countries in Africa revised their international investment agreement policies by amending or terminating outdated treaties; drafting new model agreements; and engaging in regional agreements to promote and facilitate responsible and sustainable investment. In June 2021, UNCTAD organized workshops in Egypt and Morocco on investment regime reform and investment facilitation, respectively, building upon support provided by UNCTAD in 2020 with regard to new bilateral investment treaty models in each State. In response to requests from member States, in December 2021, UNCTAD provided international investment agreement reviews for countries in the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa. In addition, research work commenced in preparation for an international investment agreement review in the Gambia.

13. ***Economic Development in Africa Report 2021: Reaping the Potential Benefits of the African Continental Free Trade Area for Inclusive Growth.*** UNCTAD, in this report, aimed to clarify and build upon much-needed opportunities, providing an assessment of how the region can inclusively benefit from unexploited trade potential under the African Continental Free Trade Area. Insights were provided on the challenges faced by women and youth engaged in informal cross-border trade and employment; and the importance of partnerships in operationalizing the Free Trade Area, to effectively foster inclusive growth and post-pandemic resilience in the region, was highlighted. UNCTAD collaborated with the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa on the launch and dissemination of the report. Following the launch in December 2021, UNCTAD engaged with policymakers, researchers and public and private sector actors in Africa and development partners on the critical and unexplored question of how regional integration and inclusive growth can be mutually beneficial, in particular in the context of the Free Trade Area. UNCTAD also collaborated with the International Trade Centre on a joint research study on unlocking regional trade opportunities in Africa for a more sustainable and inclusive future.

14. **Non-tariff measures.** UNCTAD worked with the African Union to develop and implement the online mechanism for reporting, monitoring and eliminating non-tariff barriers provided for in the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement in annex 5 of the protocol on trade in goods. In this context, UNCTAD extended its support to all African

<sup>4</sup> Angola, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Seychelles, Sudan.

Union member States, States Parties to the Agreement and the African Continental Free Trade Area secretariat (box 2). UNCTAD also contributed to resolving non-tariff barriers concerning small traders between the Gambia and Senegal; and, following a series of consultations at the national and bilateral levels and with ministers responsible for trade, an accord was established and signed by both countries. UNCTAD worked with the Economic Community of Central African States to discuss the effective implementation of a regional mechanism for eliminating non-tariff barriers under the Free Trade Area; and contributed to the adoption by ministers responsible for trade of an online mechanism as a subsystem of the mechanism under the Free Trade Area, ensuring compatibility and synergy between the platforms. In 2021, UNCTAD provided support to 15 countries in Africa in collecting or updating data on non-tariff measures, to increase regulatory transparency.

Box 2

**African Continental Free Trade Area: Non-tariff measures**

UNCTAD provided substantive support for the preparation of the first meeting of the subcommittee for non-tariff barriers on 17 and 18 November 2021. The meeting was attended by 149 delegates from 10 member States of the African Union and 24 States Parties to the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement. UNCTAD also assisted member States and States Parties in the drafting of the 2021–2022 workplan, adopted at the meeting of the subcommittee, which sets an ambitious and impact-driven agenda for 2022 and designates UNCTAD as the main technical partner in many activities.

A significant challenge to the success of the online mechanism for reporting, monitoring and eliminating non-tariff barriers is the lack of awareness among microenterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises, informal traders and women and youth entrepreneurs. In 2021, the focus of efforts shifted towards local and grass-roots advertising, including promotional and instructional videos on the African Continental Free Trade Area. A pilot campaign was designed with the Government of Togo to test various approaches and their cost effectiveness. UNCTAD continued to engage with many national, regional and international partners to leverage stakeholder networks.

The online mechanism is designed to be easy to use, yet obtaining access to the Internet is a challenge for many small and informal traders at remote border crossings. At the request of member States to support the development of offline solutions, in 2021, UNCTAD developed the short message service offline reporting feature, which will be launched on a pilot basis in 2022.

UNCTAD support to member States under the African Continental Free Trade Area continues and expands on previous data collection efforts under the Economic Community of West African States and the tripartite free trade area agreement between the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the East African Community and the Southern African Development Community; and is part of a global non-tariff measures regulatory transparency initiative that is already being implemented in over 100 countries. In 2021, UNCTAD received additional requests from 10 member States<sup>a</sup> to participate in the transparency initiative or update information from previous efforts. UNCTAD therefore held capacity-building workshops in these countries, to help strengthen understanding of the impacts and policy implications of non-tariff measures and the benefits of regulatory transparency. More than 300 regulations in these countries have already been collected and classified and data collection is expected to be completed in 2022.

<sup>a</sup> Burundi, Chad, Gabon, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Niger, Senegal, South Sudan, Togo.

Source: UNCTAD.

15. **Debt Management and Financial Analysis System (DMFAS).** This programme, which aims to support countries in public debt management, is being implemented in 24 countries in Africa. It provides debt management offices with software that helps better manage central government and government guaranteed debt. The programme also provides capacity-building opportunities for debt management officials in debt data validation, debt statistics, debt portfolio analysis and DMFAS integration with public financial management information systems. As a result, these countries benefit from

comprehensive debt databases for operational purposes, analysis and reporting. Over the reporting period, UNCTAD supported debt reporting and debt analysis, with 15 countries in Africa producing debt statistical bulletins and 14 countries producing debt portfolio reviews, thereby enhancing debt data transparency. In relation to debt reporting, over the reporting period, 96 per cent of countries in Africa supported by DMFAS reported effectively to the World Bank debtor reporting system database. In addition, 10 countries have up-to-date procedural manuals and 11 countries have disaster recovery plans that cover the DMFAS database.

16. **Measurement of illicit financial flows.** UNCTAD, in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa, is implementing a United Nations Development Account project on the measurement of illicit financial flows in Africa, aimed at strengthening statistical capacity among Governments and other stakeholders to define, measure and disseminate statistics on such flows. In 2021, 12 countries<sup>5</sup> began pilot tests of the measurement of such flows in accordance with the UNCTAD methodological guidelines for measuring commercial and tax-related illicit financial flows, issued in May 2021 and targeting statistical and other national authorities with a mandate to access relevant data.<sup>6</sup> Activities are carried out with ministries of finance, national statistical offices, central banks, tax authorities, customs and revenue offices and financial intelligence units. In addition, under the United Nations Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund Support to Egypt for Integrated Sustainable Development Goals Financing, since 2020, UNCTAD has been supporting the Government in conducting a study to assess risks related to illicit financial flows and the measurement of selected flows and in developing a methodology to estimate the costs involved in achieving the 2030 Agenda in Egypt. These methods could be applicable in other countries and contribute to improved evidence-based policy formulation, to curb illicit financial flows and redirect returned flows to financing the achievement of the Goals.

17. **Review of Maritime Transport 2021.** UNCTAD, in this report, highlights positive trends in maritime trade that might help sustain economic growth in Africa, notably the entry into force of the African Continental Free Trade Area and the potential of technology to facilitate trade and transport on the continent. In addition, ongoing challenges in the maritime sector are addressed, including challenges faced by seafarers in view of the COVID-19 crisis, long vessel waiting times at ports, significant liner shipping connectivity issues and drops in maritime volumes due to disruptions related to the pandemic.

18. **Sustainable freight transport.** UNCTAD, in collaboration with the Islamic Development Bank, continued to support the promotion and commercialization of the trans-Saharan road corridor, which comprises six countries.<sup>7</sup> In February 2022, UNCTAD published a study with recommendations, with a view to establishing a suitable management mechanism as a key instrument in promoting and commercializing the corridor. In 2021, under the European Union–UNCTAD joint programme of support for Angola: Train for Trade II, UNCTAD conducted a series of webinars on public–private partnerships for logistics hub development in Angola.<sup>8</sup>

19. **Trade facilitation.** UNCTAD continued its extensive technical assistance and capacity-building activities in this area, focusing on assisting countries in Africa<sup>9</sup> and regional economic cooperation organizations that are implementing and managing trade facilitation reforms in the framework of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement, the Agreement on Trade Facilitation of the World Trade Organization and

<sup>5</sup> Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Gabon, Ghana, Namibia, Nigeria, Mozambique, Senegal, South Africa, Zambia.

<sup>6</sup> See <https://unctad.org/news/testing-new-guidelines-measuring-illicit-financial-flows-africa-and-asia>.  
*Note:* All websites referred to in footnotes were accessed in April 2022.

<sup>7</sup> Algeria, Chad, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Tunisia.

<sup>8</sup> See <https://unctad.org/project/eu-unctad-joint-programme-angola-train-trade-ii>.

<sup>9</sup> Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eswatini, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sudan, Sao Tome and Principe, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

subregional and regional trade facilitation commitments. UNCTAD activities focused on the provision of support for national trade facilitation committees. In 2021, UNCTAD continued to support countries in Africa in undertaking regional and international obligations to implement trade facilitation reforms in a coordinated manner.

20. **Productive capacities.** In the context of its work in this area, in 2021, UNCTAD launched a technical cooperation project under the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund entitled “Developing integrated programmes to alleviate binding constraints to development by fostering structural transformation, building productive capacities and enhancing investment opportunities and linkages with China”. The project aims to assist eight countries<sup>10</sup> in harnessing the transformative potential of partnership with China, including in the context of the Belt and Road initiative, for economic development in these countries. In 2021, UNCTAD conducted research on trade and investment relations between China and countries in Africa; carried out productive capacities gap assessments in Angola and Nigeria; and, in November, engaged in dialogues with the Government of Kenya and other stakeholders, including the private sector and relevant Nairobi-based United Nations entities, to raise awareness and mobilize support for UNCTAD work on productive capacities and to collaborate on the preparation for the launch of the project in the country. In addition, UNCTAD initiated the technical assistance component of its support programme for countries graduating from the least developed country category by preparing national productive capacities gap assessments.

21. **Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA).** Since the start of this programme, projects have been designed to assist beneficiary States in reforming customs regimes, procedures and systems in line with international standards and best practices. Over the reporting period, the following 10 new ASYCUDA technical assistance projects were initiated in Africa: seven for the installation and enhancement of the fourth generation of the customs management system;<sup>11</sup> one for the launch of a cloud-based permit system for the international trade of endangered species;<sup>12</sup> one for the integration of the automated system for the African Trade Observatory;<sup>13</sup> and one for the implementation of a customs-centric single window.<sup>14</sup> With regard to capacity-building, in 2021, customs information technology officers from Sierra Leone, Zambia and Zimbabwe participated in an ASYCUDA technical training session on better configuring and tailoring ASYCUDA World to their needs and requirements; and, in Uganda, 90 sessions for a total of 546 participants were organized by the Revenue Authority and UNCTAD. In 2021, the use of ASYCUDA systems helped ensure the achievement of important milestones in six countries.<sup>15</sup> Regionally, UNCTAD and the World Trade Organization signed memorandums of understanding with Côte d’Ivoire and Madagascar and deployed ASYCUDA automated data notification software for the extraction of trade and customs-related data for the integrated database of the World Trade Organization. In the Economic Community of West African States region, UNCTAD assisted Burkina Faso and Côte d’Ivoire in the development and integration of rail transport interfaces for exchanges of rail transit data between the countries.

22. **Improvement in revenue collection and management.** The implementation of ASYCUDA systems has a direct impact on economies and development by enabling more effective and efficient ways to collect and manage revenue. For example, in Rwanda, the Revenue Authority collected RF 1,654.5 billion in taxes in fiscal year 2020/21, an increase of 9.4 per cent compared with fiscal year 2019/20.<sup>16</sup> In Togo, the Revenue Authority collected CFAF 780 billion in 2021, an increase of 20 per cent compared with 2020.<sup>17</sup> In Uganda, in 2021, use of an electronic single window system allowed for the processing of 23,070 certificate of origin requests, 10,128 pre-export verifications of conformity

<sup>10</sup> Angola, Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>11</sup> Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Mali, Sudan, Togo.

<sup>12</sup> Mozambique.

<sup>13</sup> Seychelles.

<sup>14</sup> Zimbabwe.

<sup>15</sup> Burundi, Guinea, Gambia, Libya, Mauritania, Uganda.

<sup>16</sup> See <https://www.rra.gov.rw/>.

<sup>17</sup> See <https://www.revenue.gov.to/>.



applications submitted by importers and 760 applications from clearing agencies. In addition, in 2021, the use of ASYCUDA systems allowed for improvements in trade facilitation, transparency and paperless trade. For example, in Gabon, through national implementation of ASYCUDA World, the digital and sustainable trade facilitation score rose from 12.9 per cent in 2019 to 38.71 per cent in 2021, with significant improvements in transparency (from 6.7 to 33.3 per cent) and paperless trade (from 7.4 to 40.7 per cent).<sup>18</sup> In Mauritania, the score rose from 24.7 in 2019 to 54.8 per cent in 2021, with improvement under the transparency and cross-border paperless trade indicators. In Zimbabwe, the score rose from 30.1 per cent in 2019 to 39.8 per cent in 2021, with significant improvement in cross-border paperless trade (from 0 to 16.7 per cent).

23. **Services trade and policies.** Under a United Nations Development Account project on trade in services in Africa, UNCTAD and the Economic Commission for Africa supported six countries<sup>19</sup> in strengthening capacities to measure the value added generated in selected services sectors to maximize their contribution to national and regional value chains, with the objective of contributing to sectoral policymaking and building the resilience of the services sector in the beneficiary countries. In 2021, UNCTAD supported the countries in the preparation of policy action plans. UNCTAD and the Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with the Governments of the beneficiary countries, organized a multi-stakeholder workshop, held in Nairobi in November 2021 (with physical and remote participation), to support services trade policymaking in the countries.

## B. Tackling vulnerabilities and building resilience

24. Over the reporting period, UNCTAD assisted countries in Africa in reducing the vulnerability of their economies to commodity dependence and exploring opportunities to increase value addition in production and exports and foster economic diversification. UNCTAD provided guidance on how countries can efficiently harness trade as a tool for structural transformation and how to improve trade policy regimes, to boost their competitiveness and facilitate their integration into regional and global value chains.

25. **Assistance in Gabon.** At the request of the Government and in preparation for the launch of the second phase of a regional programme on strengthening competition and consumer protection, UNCTAD organized a series of outreach and training seminars from September to December 2021. The seminars, on competition and consumer protection policies, economic analysis and competition policy, were organized in cooperation with the Ministry of Economy and Recovery, Gabon; the Institute of Economy and Finance, Gabon; the Directorate of Competition and Consumer Affairs, Gabon; and the Directorate of Trade and Competition, Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa.

26. **Integrated national financing framework and illicit financial flows.** Under a United Nations Development Account project, in September 2021–March 2022, UNCTAD and partners organized a series of capacity-building workshops in six countries<sup>20</sup> on measuring illicit financial flows and impacts on domestic resources. In addition, UNCTAD delivered capacity-building workshops in 11 countries on offshore wealth, data and measurement, as well as on measuring illicit financial flows using the partner country trade gap method and related case studies.<sup>21</sup>

27. **Enhanced Integrated Framework project in West Africa.** Diagnostic trade integration studies were conducted in three beneficiary countries,<sup>22</sup> showing a weak level of implementation of bilateral and regional instruments on transport, transit and trade facilitation. The studies served to illustrate the many opportunities for better participation in value chains. Under the project, measures were identified that could be put in place by

<sup>18</sup> See <https://www.untfsurvey.org/economy?id=GAB>.

<sup>19</sup> Ethiopia, Gambia, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, Togo.

<sup>20</sup> Benin, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ghana, Senegal, Zambia.

<sup>21</sup> See the conceptual framework at <https://unctad.org/news/testing-new-guidelines-measuring-illicit-financial-flows-africa-and-asia>.

<sup>22</sup> Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger.

Governments and reforms were identified that could facilitate the implementation of regional instruments on transit, transport and trade facilitation, with potential impacts beyond the project term.

28. **Nutraceuticals study.** UNCTAD, in a study entitled “Harnessing the potential of nutraceutical products for export diversification and development in landlocked developing countries: Assessment of comparative advantages and binding constraints”, reviewed the potential of three nutraceutical products in two landlocked developing countries in Africa, namely, Burkina Faso and Ethiopia, and identified the policies and measures required to increase exports and strengthen value added in production.

29. **Teaching package on trade and gender.** As a component of capacity-building activities on trade and gender, UNCTAD has developed a distance learning package, the objective of which is to equip policymakers, academics and civil society representatives in developing countries with analytical tools to analyse the two-way relationship between trade and gender and to produce gender-aware policy, research and advocacy. UNCTAD, in cooperation with the Enhanced Integrated Framework, delivered the online course on trade and gender from 31 May to 25 July (including an optional module on the least developed countries), in English and French; 104 of the 163 selected participants were from 25 countries in Africa.

30. **National green export review: Angola.** This review was a component of the European Union–UNCTAD joint programme of support for Angola: Train for Trade II, funded by the European Union. The programme aims to train representatives from the Government, the private sector and academia in examining issues relevant to the development of green sectors and related value chains, with particular attention paid to export opportunities for trading partners in Southern Africa and worldwide; and activities are aimed at supporting National Development Plan 2018–2022 and the guidelines for defining a strategy for exiting the crisis derived from falling oil prices in the international market. A webinar entitled “Control and quality in the honey value chain in Angola: Foundations for traceability, certification and exports” was held in May 2021, addressing the requirements of the Codex Alimentarius on honey, European Union legislation, residue analysis plans, quality control, traceability and certification. Train-the-trainer sessions on quality control, traceability and certification in the honey value chain in Angola were held in November and December 2021 and involved four sessions held with remote participation at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, José Eduardo dos Santos University, Huambo, Angola.

31. **Assistance in Mozambique and Namibia.** In Mozambique, UNCTAD provided technical and advisory support under a European Union and United Nations Industrial Development Organization project on support in implementing trade remedies and safeguards. In 2021, in June and July, UNCTAD organized two training sessions on trade remedies and, in August, in collaboration with the Ministry of Industry and Commerce and the Trade Law Centre (Tralac), coordinated a meeting to discuss the preparation of a revised draft law on trade remedies and safeguard measures; a draft was provided in September. In Namibia, in August 2021, UNCTAD organized a consultative meeting on United Nations system support for trade policy formulation for the acceleration of the Sustainable Development Goals and provided advisory support on the national implementation strategy under the African Continental Free Trade Area; and, in October 2021, UNCTAD co-organized a capacity-building workshop on policy formulation and acceleration of the Goals, with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Economic Commission for Africa, the German Corporation for International Cooperation and the United Nations entities based in Namibia.

### C. Improving competitiveness

32. UNCTAD supports countries in Africa in improving their competitiveness by assisting them in improving the functioning of markets in Africa, enhancing the efficiency of their State apparatus and achieving a better distribution of functions between States and markets. Such support takes place in the creation of new regulatory and legal frameworks,

the creation of a favourable environment to benefit from opportunities provided by information and communications technology and the use of such technology to promote trade through electronic commerce (e-commerce).

33. **Intellectual property for development.** In 2021, UNCTAD provided technical input on key intellectual property rights issues of relevance to countries in Africa in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement, including to the intellectual property committee. In addition, UNCTAD delivered a one-day training session for negotiators of the protocol on intellectual property rights. As part of a project on investment incentives for the local production of essential antibiotics in East Africa, UNCTAD conducted studies on the manufacturing and supply of antibiotics and the policy framework for investment in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda at the national level and in the East African Community at the regional level. The draft advisory reports and recommendations were reviewed at an international expert meeting, followed by a series of national consultative and validation workshops held over the reporting period.

34. **Digital Economy Report 2021: Cross-Border Data Flows and Development: For Whom the Data Flow.** UNCTAD, in this report, launched in October 2021, examined the implications of growing cross-border data flows, in particular in developing countries, and proposed that the international policy debate be reframed and broadened, with a view to building multilateral consensus. The need for innovative approaches to governing data and data flows was highlighted, to ensure a more equitable distribution of the gains from data flows while addressing risks and concerns. Due to expertise gained through research on global data governance issues, UNCTAD was requested to support the African Union in these areas by taking part in a task force on the preparation of a data policy framework.

35. **Global cyberlaw tracker.** This global mapping of cyberlaws tracks the state of e-commerce legislation in the fields of online consumer protection, e-transactions, data protection and privacy and cybercrime, showing progress made in the adoption of legislation and any remaining gaps. The rate of adoption is generally highest with regard to e-transaction laws and lowest with regard to online consumer protection laws. In Africa, in recent years, there has been significant progress in the adoption of relevant legislation. In 2021, the share of countries in Africa that had adopted online consumer protection laws was 52 per cent; e-transaction laws, 61 per cent; data protection laws, 61 per cent; and cybercrime laws, 72 per cent.

36. **eTrade for women initiative.** This initiative helps combine the positive impact of digital technology with the transformative power of women's entrepreneurship to advance inclusive and sustainable economic growth, in line with Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 8. The initiative leverages the visibility of eTrade for women advocates, a group of successful women leaders in e-commerce. In 2021, the second master class for women digital entrepreneurs in Eastern Africa was held from 31 August to 2 September.

37. **Strategies for e-commerce.** UNCTAD provides technical assistance, advisory services, diagnostics and strategy development in this area. Over the reporting period, UNCTAD, in Benin, submitted a draft on the development of an e-commerce strategy to the Government for its review; in Botswana, launched the e-commerce strategy in collaboration with the Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry, with financial support from the European Union and the Trade-Related Facility of the Southern African Development Community; in Rwanda, completed the provision of support to the Ministry of Trade and Industry, with financial support from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in order to finalize the e-commerce strategy; and, with the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States, organized several kick-off events for a regional e-commerce strategy.

38. **eTrade readiness.** Over the reporting period, UNCTAD engaged with United Nations resident coordinator offices in Guinea, Eswatini and Zimbabwe to map the digital activities of resident development partners, to mobilize interest and increase synergies with digital programmes. In September 2021, UNCTAD organized two workshops for Anglophone and Francophone countries in Africa for stakeholders involved in second reviews of eTrade readiness assessment implementation. In 2021, UNCTAD organized a national e-commerce forum in Burkina Faso; supported an impact investment fund

dedicated to start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises in Madagascar; formally established an e-commerce consultative committee in the Niger; and implemented a computer emergency response team in Togo. Under the eTrade readiness project, preliminary results suggest that nine countries<sup>23</sup> have increasingly taken ownership of the implementation process and are making progress; in Senegal and Togo, implementation rates of assessment recommendations have exceeded 80 per cent. Concrete examples of impacts and success stories include the setting up of national e-commerce committees in several countries.

39. **eCommerce Week 2022.** UNCTAD, in collaboration with the eTrade for all initiative and other partners, organized eCommerce Week 2022 under the theme “Data and digitalization for development” (25–29 April 2022; with physical and remote participation). The event aims to strengthen ability in developing countries and the least developed countries, including countries in Africa, to continue to engage in and benefit from e-commerce and the digital economy, to build more resilient and inclusive societies in a significantly different post-pandemic environment.

40. **Business facilitation.** In 2021, UNCTAD continued its deployment of business facilitation tools in several countries under the New Partnership for Africa’s Development, through its programme of e-government systems, namely e-regulation, e-registration and trade portals, helping to improve the business climate. Through the use of e-government systems, business registration procedures in countries in Africa have become notably quicker. For example, in Benin, company registrations and fee income for the Government each increased by 91 per cent in 2020–2021. In 2021, globally, the fastest online registration of a business could be conducted in Benin. UNCTAD has launched trade information portals in Burkina Faso and Burundi and investment information portals in Libya and Togo; and expanded the use of trade information portals in Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania (including Zanzibar). The use of e-government systems has significantly increased the transparency, speed, automation and simplification of investment-related procedures in countries under the New Partnership for Africa’s Development.

41. **Science, technology and innovation policy reviews.** In 2021, following a request from the Government, UNCTAD initiated the drafting of a science, technology and innovation policy review in Botswana, building on research and a series of fact-finding interviews and discussions. In Zambia, UNCTAD launched a science, technology and innovation policy review in 2019; the review was finalized and published in the first quarter of 2022 and provides perspectives on the national system of innovation and discusses the role of science, technology and innovation and contributions to digital transformation, gender equality, a functional food system and the mining sector.

## D. Enhancing multilateralism

42. **Regional dialogue for the African Continental Free Trade Area and e-commerce.** UNCTAD is collaborating with the United Nations Development Programme, the Economic Commission for Africa and the International Trade Centre in a series of activities aimed at promoting a regional dialogue on making the African Continental Free Trade Area work for e-commerce in Africa. In September 2021, an event was organized with private sector groups, including the African Technology and Creative Group. UNCTAD will continue to engage with these entities to support the African Continental Free Trade Area secretariat, Governments, the private sector and other stakeholders in the development and implementation of the protocol on digital trade. In February 2022, on the margins of the eighth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, UNCTAD, the United Nations Development Programme and the Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the African Continental Free Trade Area secretariat, the International Trade Centre and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, organized an event entitled “Towards enhanced partnerships to support an inclusive African Continental

<sup>23</sup> Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Madagascar, Malawi, Niger, Senegal, Togo, Uganda, Zambia.

Free Trade Area". This side event enabled UNCTAD and other United Nations entities to enter into a close dialogue with member States and regional institutions on how to best support the effective implementation of the Free Trade Area and enhance coordination, coherence and complementarity between United Nations-wide interventions in supporting member States and the African Continental Free Trade Area secretariat.

43. **Collaboration with the United Nations Statistics Division and the World Trade Organization.** UNCTAD and partners organized a series of e-learning courses on international merchandise trade statistics and trade in services statistics under the framework of the UNCTAD Train for Trade programme (TrainForTrade). TrainForTrade fosters international and South–South exchanges by providing a platform through which regional and international stakeholders can interact and engage in a sustainable manner. The e-learning courses delivered over the reporting period aimed at enhancing the ability of statisticians to apply internationally agreed recommendations, identify data sources, set up new or reinforce existing data collection systems and enhance compilation methods and practices. The courses applied blended learning methods, recommended for capacity-building provided by the United Nations. Along with e-learning modules (online lectures, discussion forums and quizzes), the courses included a face-to-face component (at times substituted by webinars). The courses are open to all compilers and users of international trade statistics and support efforts in developing countries to strengthen national statistical systems for measuring international trade. By December 2021, UNCTAD and partners had trained 6,304 participants from 204 countries (of whom 49.4 per cent were women) in the e-learning courses on merchandise and services trade statistics.

44. **Collaboration in science, technology and innovation policy.** In December 2021, UNCTAD and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization organized a series of online sessions for the Southern African Development Community region on science, technology and innovation policy for the Sustainable Development Goals. The sessions were organized in cooperation with the Southern African Development Community secretariat, in the context of the work of the United Nations inter-agency task team on science, technology and innovation policy for the Sustainable Development Goals.

## E. Empowering people and investing in their future

45. **Enterprise development.** In 2021, in the context of a joint project on a global initiative towards the post-pandemic resurgence of the microenterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises sector, UNCTAD supported three countries<sup>24</sup> in designing and implementing national entrepreneurship policies based on the UNCTAD Entrepreneurship Policy Framework. Over the reporting period, UNCTAD also provided assistance to 14 Empretec centres in Africa, with a focus on strengthening entrepreneurial skills to facilitate the post-pandemic resurgence of microenterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises; and organized over 15 Empretec training workshops in five countries.<sup>25</sup> In addition, UNCTAD equipped cross-border women traders in three countries<sup>26</sup> with entrepreneurship skills to navigate the COVID-19 crisis, through workshops based on the Empretec training methodology.

46. **Creative economy.** Under the European Union–UNCTAD joint programme of support for Angola: Train for Trade II, UNCTAD, through the creative economy programme, continued to provide support to the Government in diversifying production and exports, including in new sustainable growth areas as a creative industry and, in September 2021, produced a training module on cultural and creative entrepreneurship and exports. In May–November 2021, UNCTAD delivered a number of activities for countries in Africa aimed at identifying trends and promoting data-led understanding of trade in creative goods and services, public policies, intellectual property and technology, including the following: in Angola, a training course on governance of the cultural and creative industries sector and the training noted above, as well as training in the international dimensions of the cultural

<sup>24</sup> Seychelles, South Africa, Uganda.

<sup>25</sup> Benin, Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa.

<sup>26</sup> Malawi, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia.

and creative industry sectors, culture, diplomacy and branding and participation in the Pan-African Forum for the Culture of Peace, Biennale of Luanda; the Africa dialogue series, with the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa; and the Global Services Forum, held as part of UNCTAD XV, including a session entitled “Create, innovate, recover: Digitalizing creative industries for a sustainable recovery in Africa”.

#### **IV. Financial resources committed to Africa**

47. In 2021, 34.7 per cent of the total national, regional and interregional project expenditure of UNCTAD was directed towards Africa, amounting to \$16,246,561 (provisional). In 2020–2021, financial resources committed to Africa increased by 18.8 per cent. In 2020, 38.94 per cent of the total national, regional and interregional project expenditure of UNCTAD had been directed towards Africa, amounting to \$13,670,071.

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