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### **Activities undertaken by UNCTAD in support of Africa\***

#### **Report by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD**

##### *Summary*

This report documents the outcomes and impact of UNCTAD work in support of development in Africa in the following areas: transforming economies; tackling vulnerabilities and building resilience; improving competitiveness; and empowering people and investing in their future. Though not exhaustive, the report covers key activities undertaken in support of Africa from May 2022 to April 2023. In undertaking this work, UNCTAD utilized 32.3 per cent of its total project expenditure, amounting to \$17,028,014 as of January 2023.

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## I. Introduction

1. This report documents the outcomes and impact of UNCTAD work in support of Africa's sustainable development in the following areas: transforming economies; tackling vulnerabilities and building resilience; improving competitiveness; and empowering people and investing in their future. Though not exhaustive, the report covers key activities undertaken from May 2022 to April 2023 and highlights the amount of project-related resources that were devoted to this cause.

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

### A. Transforming economies

2. UNCTAD continues to support African countries transform their economies, create jobs, reduce poverty, accelerate sustainable development and facilitate the region's integration into the global economy. In this regard, UNCTAD activities continue to focus on building the capacity of African countries to catalyse structural economic transformation.

3. *Economic Development in Africa Report 2022: Rethinking the Foundations of Export Diversification in Africa – The Catalytic Role of Business and Financial Services.* In this report, UNCTAD emphasizes that neglecting the potentially transformative role of highly knowledge-intensive services, such as information and communications technology, business services and digital financial services, is among the key reasons why export diversification remains a challenge in Africa. UNCTAD further highlights that effectively addressing barriers to services trade under the African Continental Free Trade Area will be key to unleashing the transformative role of services in enhancing the diversity and complexity of African economies.

4. Following the launch of the report in July 2022, UNCTAD engaged with policymakers, researchers and public and private sector actors in Africa through a series of events from September to December 2022. Among other issues, discussions at these events focused on innovative and sustainable pathways to promote export diversification and productive capacity in Africa by unlocking high-technology services, including financial services.

5. *World Investment Report 2022: International Tax Reform and Sustainable Investment.* In this report, UNCTAD notes that foreign direct investment flows to Africa increased to \$83 billion in 2021 (5.2 per cent of global foreign direct investment), from \$39 billion in 2020. However, most recipients saw a moderate rise in foreign direct investment, as the total for the continent was inflated by a single large intra-firm financial transaction, without which it would have increased only moderately. Greenfield announcements remained depressed, but international project finance deals were up 26 per cent, with strong growth in extractive industries. Southern Africa saw its flows increase by 895 per cent due to the unusually large Naspers-Prosus corporate reconfiguration in South Africa, while flows to East Africa and West Africa rose by 35 per cent and 48 per cent, respectively; Central Africa remained flat and North Africa declined by 5 per cent. The report, however, highlights a gloomy outlook for 2022 as, just as in other developing countries, foreign direct investment flows to Africa are expected to be strongly affected by the war in Ukraine and its wider ramifications. Higher commodity prices may provide some offsetting investment increases for resource-based economies in Africa. Regarding policy to promote foreign direct investment, the report noted that only 35 per cent of all tax incentives introduced in Africa over the last decade were time-bound, the lowest share among all regions.

6. **Vulnerability profile assessment reports.** Vulnerability profiles are aimed at assisting qualifying least developed countries to formulate strategies for graduation with

momentum to increase their chances of achieving structural, social and economic progress towards and beyond graduation from the least developed countries category. For UNCTAD, this involves the provision of country-specific analytical material on the implications of graduation. This encompasses a comprehensive vulnerability assessment based on relevant and up-to-date information about a country; providing relevant advisory services to policymakers; policy dialogues with relevant stakeholders in the country; and assisting the country in preparing a smooth transition strategy for the global landscape to be entered into after graduation. UNCTAD published the vulnerability profile for Angola in January 2023, while it is expected that the vulnerability profiles for the Comoros, Djibouti, Senegal and Zambia will be published by the end of the second quarter of 2023.

7. **Investment policy reviews.** In support of developing country efforts to diversify their economies, attract higher levels of foreign direct investment and promote sustainable development, UNCTAD conducts investment policy reviews, diagnostic studies of the legal, regulatory, institutional and operational environment for investment. Investment policy reviews encourage official development assistance and investment in countries where the needs are greatest. Over the reporting period, UNCTAD supported the development of national investment policy in Nigeria and an investment policy review in Togo and provided capacity-building for investment promotion and foreign direct investment statistics in Angola. Notably, the investment policy review of Togo is part of a three-component project that UNCTAD is implementing in collaboration with the United Nations country team and the United Nations Development Programme in Togo. The project analyses strategic, legal and institutional frameworks for investment, as well as the potential and competitiveness of the country, and provides recommendations on attracting more foreign investment, strengthening the local private sector and increasing the competitiveness of Togo.

8. **Review of Maritime Transport 2022.** In this report, UNCTAD provides a critical review of the structural and cyclical changes affecting seaborne trade, ports and shipping industries, freight markets and transport costs. Furthermore, an in-depth assessment is provided of the legal and regulatory developments affecting transport and trade, and relevant policy recommendations for addressing the challenges highlighted are provided.

9. **National productive capacities gap assessment.** In the context of its work on productive capacities, UNCTAD seeks to improve policymaking at the national and global levels to tap comparative advantages by relieving key binding constraints through capacity building and technical assistance in the formulation of national productive capacities gap assessments and policy reviews. Several countries, including Angola, Ethiopia, Kenya and Zambia, have completed their respective national productive capacities gap assessments, which provide the basis for holistic national programmes for the development of productive capacities. From May 2022 to April 2023, UNCTAD trained national statistical and policy experts in Ethiopia,<sup>1</sup> Nigeria<sup>2</sup> and Zambia.<sup>3</sup>

10. Through the European Union–UNCTAD Joint Programme for Angola: Train for Trade II, UNCTAD also trained 875 Angolans (encompassing key actors in the public and private sectors, academia and non-governmental organizations) in 2022, in different productive capacity and economic policy areas, to holistically support the diversification of the economy and exports towards green sectors and move towards enhanced structural transformation. This was accompanied by the production of five research reports and guidebooks in the year, with concrete recommendations and guidance to improve policies and their implementation. The programme has also helped to map the value chains of eight promising green products and support their development towards exportability in Angola.

<sup>1</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/validation-results-national-productive-capacities-gap-assessment-ethiopia> and <https://unctad.org/meeting/training-statistical-methodological-and-computational-aspects-productive-capacities-index>.

<sup>2</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/workshop-fostering-productive-capacities-and-structural-economic-transformation-nigeria>.

<sup>3</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/training-statistical-methodological-and-computational-aspects-productive-capacities-index-0>.

11. While UNCTAD work on productive capacities has clearly described economy-wide development challenges and gaps, and provided tailored and specific policy recommendations to targeted countries, it is noteworthy that, in the case of the European Union–UNCTAD Joint Programme for Angola: Train for Trade II, UNCTAD work was instrumental in the identification of eight new viable green economic sectors for diversification and further value chain and exports development. Moreover, the Joint Programme for Angola has substantially improved the capacity of national policymakers through its holistic approach across seven interlinked economic policy areas.<sup>4</sup> This multisector programme has triggered a whole-of-society culture, facilitating coherent policies. Through the programme, contributions have been made that helped in the drafting of better policies and assisted in their implementation, and entrepreneurs have been trained to leverage new opportunities. UNCTAD has successfully handed over the management of the Empretec entrepreneurship training programme to a national private sector association now functioning as the Empretec host institution in the country. The impact of the programme can be seen in the exports of non-oil products of Angola, which have grown in real terms since 2016. The impact is likewise reflected in an increasing trend in the value of the country’s total exports to countries of the Southern African Development Community. The programme was highlighted as a global success in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals<sup>5</sup> in 2022.

12. **Coherent strategies for productive capacity development in African least developed countries.** Within the framework of a United Nations Development Account project (tranche 12) titled “Coherent strategies for productive capacities development in African least developed countries”, in collaboration with the Ministry of Investment, Industry and Trade of the United Republic of Tanzania, UNCTAD organized an eponymously titled regional workshop on 12 and 13 October 2022 in Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania. The regional workshop was a follow-up to national workshops that were held in the United Republic of Tanzania (April 2021), Rwanda (May 2021) and Burkina Faso (June 2022). The regional workshop brought together officials from Burkina Faso, Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania, selected non-beneficiary African countries, representatives of the private sector, partner implementing agencies and international experts to discuss challenges and opportunities associated with developing coherent strategies for productive capacity development. Workshop participants expressed high appreciation of the workshop and the presentations, and most of the ratings provided were either very good or excellent.

13. During the year under review, UNCTAD also provided support to the Ministry of Investment, Industry and Trade of the United Republic of Tanzania in carrying out fieldwork in selected cities in the country, to obtain private sector perspectives on current and emerging constraints and the challenges faced in boosting productive capacities. Fieldwork, which targeted local firms in the roofing, cement, steel, ceramics, textiles, sunflower and sugar subsectors, fed into the Ministry’s policy implementation process for building productive capacities and fostering industrial and trade expansion in the United Republic of Tanzania. UNCTAD also provided advisory services on productive capacity issues and engaged a policy implementation adviser (on a consultancy basis) for the Ministry of Industrial Development, Trade, Handicrafts and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises in Burkina Faso to assist officials in the formulation and implementation of policies for developing productive capacities in the country.

14. UNCTAD, in cooperation with the Economic Policy Research Network secretariat in Rwanda, co-organized the eighth Annual Research Conference held on 26 and 27 May 2022 under the broad theme, “The [coronavirus disease] COVID-19 pandemic in perspective: Policies to accelerate economic recovery for the Rwandan and regional economy”. The research findings discussed at the conference contributed to policy recommendations to the Government on specific short-term, medium-term and long-term

<sup>4</sup> The interlinked policy areas are: (a) identification and development of green non-oil sectors; (b) cultural and creative industries mapping and development; (c) investment policy review and implementation; (d) entrepreneurship development and training; (e) trade policy; (f) trade facilitation; and (g) transport and trade logistics.

<sup>5</sup> See <https://sdgs.un.org/publications/sdg-good-practices-2nd-edition-2022>.

economic policy options to advance a new and inclusive path to recovery and growth in Rwanda and the region. The Board of the Economic Policy Research Network issued a certificate of appreciation to UNCTAD management in recognition of the support provided.

15. **International investment agreements.** UNCTAD continued to assist African countries with international investment regime reforms. In 2022, UNCTAD was part of a task force that assisted the African Union and the secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area in concluding the Protocol on Investment, which was approved at the ministerial level in January 2023. At the request of member States, UNCTAD conducted comprehensive reviews of the international investment agreements concluded by the Economic Community of West African States in September 2022. In collaboration with the League of Arab States, UNCTAD drafted a new Arab regional investment agreement and a set of guiding principles on investment policymaking for member countries of the League of Arab States. Lastly, through a joint UNCTAD–Islamic Development Bank programme on investment promotion and international investment policies, UNCTAD and the Bank developed a set of non-binding guiding principles for investment policies to support the improvement of the investment climate in member countries of the Bank.

16. **Non-tariff barriers and non-tariff measures.** UNCTAD worked with the African Union to develop and implement the continent’s non-tariff barriers online reporting, monitoring and eliminating mechanism, which is based on Annex 5 of the Protocol on Trade in Goods to the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area. Accordingly, UNCTAD continued to provide support through one-on-one training to national focal points for non-tariff barriers in member States of the African Continental Free Trade Area and continued to fund technical assistance services of an expert inside the African Continental Free Trade Area secretariat on work related to non-tariff barriers, technical barriers to trade and sanitary and phytosanitary measures. Furthermore, UNCTAD intensified awareness campaigns among traders about the new online tool and the opportunity it provides for better addressing non-tariff barriers. Consequently, website<sup>6</sup> users of the non-tariff barriers online mechanism increased by 22 per cent, from 8,200 users in 2021 to 10,000 in 2022.

17. UNCTAD has continued to contribute to increasing transparency on non-tariff measures, including regulatory and behind-the-border measures, and reducing the costs of non-tariff measures through comprehensive data collection and dissemination to the public and private sectors. In this regard, UNCTAD ensures the free availability of relevant data to all stakeholders through the UNCTAD Trade Analysis and Information System database<sup>7</sup> and the Global Trade Helpdesk, led by UNCTAD, the International Trade Centre and the World Trade Organization.<sup>8</sup> To ensure good quality data and effective utilization by member countries in strengthening policy coherence and regulatory cooperation among other uses of the database, UNCTAD conducted a series of capacity-building and non-tariff measures data collection activities in Chad, Gabon, Guinea, Kenya, Mozambique, the Niger, Rwanda, Senegal and Togo in 2022.

18. **Debt Management and Financial Analysis System.** Under this programme, UNCTAD supports African countries in public debt management through software provision and integration with public financial management information systems, as well as capacity-building in the areas of debt data validation, debt statistics and debt portfolio analysis. Currently, Debt Management and Financial Analysis System (DMFAS) software is used by 26 debt management offices in Africa<sup>9</sup> to manage their public liabilities on a day-to-day basis. To ensure optimal outcomes from the software, UNCTAD further assists beneficiary countries in the integration of DMFAS with public financial management information systems. As a result, beneficiary countries continue to benefit from

<sup>6</sup> See <https://www.tradebarriers.africa>.

<sup>7</sup> See <https://trainsonline.unctad.org/home>.

<sup>8</sup> See <https://globaltrahelpdesk.org/en>.

<sup>9</sup> DMFAS user countries in Africa are Algeria, Angola, Burkina Faso, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo, Côte d’Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Mauritania, the Niger, Rwanda, the Sudan, Togo, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

comprehensive debt databases for operational purposes, analysis and reporting. During the reporting period, 87 per cent of user countries had comprehensive central government external debt records and 75 per cent had comprehensive domestic debt records in DMFAS. With continued support from UNCTAD in enhancing debt transparency through analysis and reporting, 18 countries produced debt statistical bulletins and 15 countries produced debt portfolio reviews, an increase of three countries and one country, respectively, from the previous reporting period. Moreover, 96 per cent of DMFAS user countries in Africa reported to the World Bank Debtor Reporting System database, 10 countries have up-to-date procedures manuals, and 9 have disaster recovery plans covering the DMFAS database.

19. **Transport and trade connectivity in the age of pandemics project.** In 2022, UNCTAD published a guidebook to build the capacity of developing countries in maritime supply chain resilience and to help stakeholders across the maritime supply chain to better manage risks, prepare in the face of disruptions, ensure effective response measures and enable rapid recovery. The resilient maritime logistics guidebook and a website also feature selected case studies and best practices in port disruption from different regions, including from Africa, such as the ports in Djibouti, Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa.

20. **Transport and transit corridors.** In collaboration with the Islamic Development Bank, UNCTAD has also been supporting the promotion and commercialization of the trans-Saharan road corridor, which comprises six countries (Algeria, Chad, Mali, the Niger, Nigeria and Tunisia). More specifically, and recognizing the growing importance of transport and trade corridors worldwide and the potential benefits of efficient economic corridors, UNCTAD carried out a substantive analytical assessment of the trans-Saharan road corridor, highlighting the performance issues, challenges and obstacles undermining its operations, as well as potential solutions. In October 2022, UNCTAD published a report titled *Towards an Economic Corridor: Commercializing and Managing the Trans-Saharan Road*<sup>10</sup> that, among other matters, puts forward recommendations to establish a suitable trans-Saharan road corridor management mechanism as a key instrument to promote and commercialize the trans-Saharan road corridor for better impact as a regional economic corridor.

21. **Facilitation of transit, transport and trade in West Africa for better value chain participation.** This project, funded under the Enhanced Integrated Framework initiative, seeks to develop a subregional strategy for the implementation of regional conventions on transit, transport and trade facilitation issues. UNCTAD launched the project on 30 May 2022 in Geneva; the beneficiary countries are Benin, Burkina Faso and the Niger. Within a year of its implementation, under the project, a study was conducted on the legal framework for transport of Burkina Faso, in August 2022, and another study on the convergence of the subregional transport legislative framework, in October 2022. Reviews were carried out of the updated Inter-State Road Transit Convention of the Economic Community of West African States to formulate an implementation plan and of transport-related legislation to provide regulatory suggestions for increasing efficiency, particularly for the road transport sector in the beneficiary countries. Moreover, road maps were also produced through the project for the implementation of a functional transit programme in the beneficiary countries and to support customs connectivity through the Interconnected System for the Management of Goods in Transit<sup>11</sup> between the Ouagadougou–Lomé and Niamey–Cotonou corridors. A survey was also launched along the Lomé–Ouagadougou and Cotonou–Niamey corridors in December 2022 to identify bottlenecks that account for increases in transit times and the final cost of goods.

22. **Catalogue of diversification opportunities 2022.** In 2022, UNCTAD released a catalogue that identifies, for the first time, over 45,000 potential new products with export potential that can help diversify economies. The catalogue is aimed at informing Governments, the private sector and other stakeholders that create national innovation systems about possible product areas for which technology can be used to diversify

<sup>10</sup> See <https://unctad.org/publication/trans-saharan-road-corridor>.

<sup>11</sup> Known as SIGMAT, by its acronym in French. See also <https://unctad.org/publication/sigmat-system-ascuda-journey-west-africa>.

economies for structural transformation. The list of products serves as a basis for an inclusive process of identifying, evaluating and selecting economic activities for export diversification and allows for strategic government interventions for the formulation of industrial strategies. For example, in Angola,<sup>12</sup> the top three sectors in terms of potential for export diversification are mechanical appliances, pharmaceutical products and plastics. As the production of plastics is closely linked to oil production and given the position of Angola as the second-largest oil producer in Africa, this possibility for economic diversification is clearly linked to the country's endowments. The catalogue presents information on four main areas: (a) basic statistics on diversification; (b) potential new sectors for diversification covering all products, and the markets that offer growing export opportunities; (c) potential new sectors for diversification covering only agribusiness products and the markets that offer growing export opportunities; and (d) examples of potential new products with higher export opportunities. In addition to accessing the full catalogue, users can download fact sheets corresponding to individual economies and the full dataset of possible new exports from the UNCTAD website.<sup>13</sup>

23. **Automated System for Customs Data.** The Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) programme continues to have a strong presence in Africa with 39 countries and territories running or implementing ASYCUDA systems,<sup>14</sup> including 28 of 33 least developed countries and 13 of 16 landlocked developing countries. Over the reporting period, six new national projects or project extensions were signed for the technical support of trade facilitation activities in Angola, Burundi, Djibouti, Malawi and the Sudan. Key activities included the implementation or upgrading of the latest generation of customs information technology (IT) systems (ASYCUDA World) in Chad, the Gambia, the Niger and Rwanda, implementation of the valuation control module of ASYCUDA World in Mali, launch of the single window for trade in Zimbabwe, deployment of the single window module for the automated management of tax exemptions in Burundi and development on an interface for the exchange of standardized declaration data with the single window in the Niger. Furthermore, in Uganda, UNCTAD under the single window implementation project assisted with the automation of other trade facilitation initiatives, such as Advance Ruling, Free Zones and Authorized Economic Operators. Mozambique launched a system for the management of permits for the international trade of endangered species developed in cooperation with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, called eCITES. Togo has become the third country after Cote d'Ivoire and Madagascar to instal the ASYCUDA Automatic Data Notification tool, the software module that facilitates the compilation of trade statistics by means of the extraction of trade and customs data for the World Trade Organization.

24. Overall, the ASYCUDA programme has increased the availability of real-time trade data and enhanced efficiency in the processing of goods. For example, Burundi now manages to process over 71 per cent of its trade requests within 24 hours, and 80 per cent of the goods transiting to Ethiopia are cleared in less than 4 hours in Djibouti.<sup>15</sup> The implementation of the ASYCUDA World has also contributed to job creation and enhanced efficiency in revenue collection. For instance, customs revenues doubled at N'Djamena airport in Chad,<sup>16</sup> and over 1,000 jobs have been created in the Gambia through ASYCUDA World.<sup>17</sup> Lastly, 80 per cent of the payments collected by the Gambia revenue authority were handled electronically through ASYCUDA.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>12</sup> See [https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tcsdtlinf2022d6\\_ao.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tcsdtlinf2022d6_ao.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> See [https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tcsdtlinf2022d6\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tcsdtlinf2022d6_en.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> See <https://asycuda.org/en/user-countries/>.

<sup>15</sup> See <https://unctad.org/webflyer/asycuda-compendium-2022>.

<sup>16</sup> See <https://tchadinfos.com/economie-les-recettes-de-la-douane-de-laeroport-ont-double-grace-au-systeme-sydonia-world/>.

<sup>17</sup> See <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/national-news/accfa-conveys-20th-agm>.

<sup>18</sup> See <https://www.voicegambia.com/2022/04/19/about-80-of-gra-payments-handling-electronically-dcg-jallow/>.

25. During the year under review, the programme published *The SIGMAT System: The ASYCUDA Journey in West Africa – Facilitating Cross-Border Transit Trade*,<sup>19</sup> the third edition of the ASYCUDA compendium of case studies that highlight the benefits of implementing ASYCUDA systems in 22 different countries<sup>20</sup> and the *ASYCUDA Report 2021/22*.<sup>21</sup>

## B. Tackling vulnerabilities and building resilience

26. UNCTAD assists African countries to reduce the vulnerability of their economies to commodity dependence and explore opportunities for enhancing value addition in production and exports and fostering economic diversification. In this context, UNCTAD guided African countries on how they can efficiently harness trade for structural transformation and how they can improve trade policy regimes to boost their competitiveness and facilitate their integration into regional and global value chains.

27. **“Industry 4.0” for inclusive development.** In 2022, UNCTAD prepared a report on “Industry 4.0”, focusing on automation and data-driven changes in manufacturing technologies and processes and the trend towards using smart factories, predictive maintenance, three-dimensional printing and smart sensors in production processes. The report contends that use of Industry 4.0 technologies in manufacturing can increase productivity and reduce the environmental impact of industrialization, and may create rather than replace jobs. Such technologies, though, may not shift the manufacturing wage advantage from emerging to industrialized economies. However, the report suggests that most firms in the majority of developing countries, including those in Africa, are not ready to use such technologies. As such, to benefit from Industry 4.0 technologies, most developing countries need to further industrialize. This will require a balanced approach that includes building a robust and diversified industrial base, while disseminating Industry 4.0 technologies in manufacturing. It will also require forging and strengthening partnerships and international collaboration to facilitate economic diversification and technology dissemination and adoption by manufacturing firms in developing countries.

28. **National green export review of Angola.** The national green export review of Angola is a component of the European Union–UNCTAD Joint Programme for Angola: Train for Trade II. Funded by the European Union, the programme aims at training representatives from the Government of Angola, private sector and academia to examine issues relevant to the development of green sectors and their value chains, with special attention to export opportunities for trading partners in Southern Africa and the rest of the world. During the year under review, UNCTAD activities were focused on providing support for the development of a honey policy and a residue monitoring plan for Angola. In collaboration with the José Eduardo dos Santos University, a training-of-trainers activity took place in Angola in October 2022, with a focus on consolidation of knowledge and practical work, as well as sessions on environment and apiculture issues, and building a sustainable honey business.

29. **Integrated national financing framework and illicit financial flows.** Under a United Nations Development Account project entitled, “Towards integrated national financing frameworks”, in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa, UNCTAD has continued with the implementation of the subcomponents on domestic resource mobilization and illicit financial flows. The focus remains on the statistical measurement of illicit financial flows, using methodology developed by UNCTAD and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, through a series of workshops. To date, 12 African countries (Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Gabon, Ghana, Namibia, Nigeria, Mozambique, Senegal, South Africa and Zambia) have benefited from technical assistance under the project. During the year under review, a series of technical assistance

<sup>19</sup> UNCTAD, 2022. UNCTAD/DTL/ASYCUDA/INF/2022/1, Geneva, available at <https://unctad.org/webflyer/sigmat-system-asycuda-journey-west-africa>.

<sup>20</sup> See <https://unctad.org/webflyer/asycuda-compendium-2022>.

<sup>21</sup> UNCTAD, 2022. UNCTAD/TCS/DTL/INF/2022/5, Geneva, available at [https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tcsdtinf2022d5\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tcsdtinf2022d5_en.pdf).



activities on the statistical measurement of Sustainable Development Goal indicator 16.4.1 were provided to Burkina Faso and Senegal. In collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Economic Commission for Africa, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, UNCTAD secured more resources for a second phase of the subcomponent on illicit financial flows.

30. **Supporting implementation by selected African countries of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area.** To effectively support the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, UNCTAD signed a memorandum of understanding with the African Continental Free Trade Area secretariat for cooperation in the areas of trade in goods, market access, rules of origin, trade in services, investment, statistics, entrepreneurship, electronic commerce (e-commerce) and the digital economy, transport, trade facilitation, transit, customs reform and digitization, elimination of tariffs and non-tariff barriers to trade and investment, research and policy analysis, policy coherence in trade and investment regimes and monitoring and evaluating the implementation process.

31. In collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa and the German Agency for International Cooperation, UNCTAD is supporting selected African countries to put their national African Continental Free Trade Area implementation strategies into action. To date, UNCTAD has discussed the scope of this intervention with the Governments of Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Malawi and the Niger to enhance their knowledge and capacity in identifying African Continental Free Trade Area market niches, through value chain mapping, and contribute to the effective implementation of their national strategies.

32. **Support to the least developed countries on World Trade Organization issues.** UNCTAD remains central to the effective and fair participation of the least developed countries in World Trade Organization negotiations on rules of origin and market access preferences. During the year under review, UNCTAD achieved and contributed to an enhanced awareness of representatives of the least developed countries on the concepts and consequences of rules of origin for their trade potential through a series of training and research on market access, trade preferences and rules of origin. Member State representatives are now more prepared to identify their trade priorities and articulate them in multilateral negotiating forums. Additionally, policymakers, researchers and trade negotiators in the least developed countries, as well as the broader public, have access to up-to-date, detailed databases with detailed data on interrelated trade statistics, tariff offers and rules of origin under the African Continental Free Trade Area, as well as product-specific utilization rates under the Generalized System of Preferences, necessary to inform national evidence-based policymaking.

33. **Greening the African Continental Free Trade Area.** UNCTAD, jointly with the Economic Commission for Africa, is implementing a project aimed at supporting the inclusion of green initiatives in national African Continental Free Trade Area implementation strategies, by building the capacity of national and regional experts in African countries. The project was launched in 2022 and will be implemented through December 2023. It is being implemented in North Africa (Algeria, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia), West Africa (Burkina Faso, the Gambia, Senegal and Togo) and Central Africa (Chad and Gabon). To date, under the project, regional analytical notes on green value chains, trade and climate change have been developed and disseminated to national focal points. Following bilateral meetings with national focal points, national priority green value chains were selected. Similarly, following a regional meeting on regional green value chains, teams of regional experts have been selected for West Africa, North Africa and Central Africa to conduct in-depth research on priority green value chains in their respective regions.

34. **Sustainable manufacturing and environmental pollution programme.** Through the sustainable manufacturing and environmental pollution programme, in collaboration with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, UNCTAD supports research and related interventions aimed at reducing the environmental health and socioeconomic impacts of the manufacturing sector in beneficiary countries, as well as addressing some of the most pressing challenges associated with plastic pollution. Programme interventions

aim to accelerate the development and uptake of practical solutions with potential for impact. Through the programme, UNCTAD is working with the Africa Legal Network to deliver training on policy options for plastic pollution mitigation in East Africa, involving policymakers from seven countries of the East African Community (Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania). During the year under review, a dashboard<sup>22</sup> was produced through the programme to assist policymakers and private sector practitioners in identifying the pollution footprint of key exports from 10 sub-Saharan countries, considering life-cycle analysis parameters.

35. **Cropwatch innovative cooperation programme.** This project is implemented by UNCTAD in partnership with the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Alliance of International Science Organizations. The programme transfers customized and localized cropwatch systems that cater to a country's unique situation and challenges. Accordingly, participating countries are trained in the technology and are custodians of the data collected during the project. Following online training in 2021 in Algeria and Mauritius, data was collected in 2022 on the growth and yield prediction of several key crops to allow for the installation of a localized cropwatch system in the two countries. A regional training workshop is scheduled for May 2023 in Mauritius.

### C. Improving competitiveness

36. UNCTAD supports African countries in improving their competitiveness by assisting them in improving the functioning of their markets, enhancing the efficiency of their State apparatus and achieving a better distribution of functions between States and markets. Such support takes place through the creation of new regulatory and legal frameworks, the creation of a favourable environment to harness opportunities provided by information and communications technology and, in using such technology, to promote trade through e-commerce.

37. **Science, technology and innovation policy reviews.** In 2022 and UNCTAD completed the respective national science, technology and innovation policy reviews for Angola and Botswana. This work was aimed at helping the two countries transform their economies from a natural-resource based economy towards a knowledge-based one through the application of technologies and innovation within an enabling policy environment. The science, technology and innovation policy reviews and related training improved the capacity of public and private stakeholders to assess their national science, technology and innovation capacities, to identify gaps and incoherencies in policies and to identify priority actions. In November 2022, a science, technology and innovation policy review was launched for Seychelles to identify appropriate policies that will spur innovation in Seychelles and overcome its vulnerabilities as a small island country.

38. **Competition and consumer policy.** UNCTAD has continued with its support to African countries in strengthening competition and consumer policies at the request of Governments. As a follow-up to the 2021 peer review for Malawi, in cooperation with the country's Competition and Fair Trading Commission, in November 2022, UNCTAD organized training for 25 Commission staff in various areas of competition enforcement, including agency effectiveness, investigation plan and process, merger analysis, investigations and resolution, at the national and regional levels, and cartel agreements analysis and dawn raids. Through bilateral meetings between UNCTAD and key partners, the European Union delegation and the German Agency for International Cooperation agreed to include competition policy in their four-year programmes starting in 2023, the United Nations Development Programme agreed to assist the Commission in advocacy within its programmes and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa would continue giving priority to Malawi in its programme of activities. Furthermore, in collaboration with the Competition Council and the Supreme Council of the Judiciary of

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<sup>22</sup> See <https://unctad.org/news/dashboard-shows-environmental-impacts-exports-african-and-south-asian-countries>.

Morocco, UNCTAD trained Moroccan judges in various topics related to the application of competition law.

39. Through the second phase of a regional project on strengthening competition and consumer protection, UNCTAD commenced work in preparation for a peer-review report on the consumer protection law and policy of Gabon. The main objective of the project is to develop institutional and human capacities and to promote competition and consumer protection policies in Central Africa, specifically in the Central African Economic and Monetary Community zone. Technical assistance is being extended through the project to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the preparation of a reference framework on competition and consumer protection law and policy. The Democratic Republic of the Congo will be further supported with the establishment and operationalization of the national structure responsible for the application of the two laws relating to pricing freedom and competition regulations enacted in 2018.

40. **Intellectual property for development.** In 2022, UNCTAD continued to support developing countries to address the development dimensions of intellectual property rights and advance the local production of pharmaceuticals as one means to promote access to medicines. Through its project on investment incentives for the local production of essential antibiotics in East Africa, UNCTAD supported the East African Community in the local production of essential antibiotics considering the need to combat antimicrobial resistance. UNCTAD convened a regional expert meeting on 29 and 30 November 2022, in Nairobi, in partnership with the East African Community secretariat. With the participation of 25 regional and international experts, at the meeting, discussions focused on how to promote the production of essential antibiotics in the region. The meeting concluded with the successful adoption of a regional framework for producing essential antibiotics and a regional information exchange mechanism on the supply of antibiotics.

41. **Science, technology and innovation policy training.** UNCTAD organized a series of online training sessions on science, technology and innovation and the Sustainable Development Goals. The training sessions were open to African countries, in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization under the inter-agency task team on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals, an operational arm of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism of the United Nations. In October 2022, a webinar on current approaches to science, technology and innovation policymaking in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, innovation and entrepreneurship and science, technology and innovation policy instruments design was attended by 70 participants from Egypt, Lebanon and Tunisia. An in-person training session was held in February 2023 in Addis Ababa. Among other key issues, the training covered science, technology and innovation policy implementation, monitoring and evaluation; technology transfer needs assessment; open science; and gender in science, technology and innovation. Twenty-four participants attended, from Cameroon, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Mauritania, Namibia, Nigeria, Seychelles, Togo, Tunisia, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia, as well as the African Union. The participants found the training helpful for them to review, design and implement science, technology and innovation policy and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

42. The Young Female Scientist Programme and the Young Scientist PhD Programme launched by UNCTAD in collaboration with the University of Okayama (Japan) contributed to building human capital in science, technology and innovation-related fields and to closing the gender gap through gender equality and empowerment in scientific research. In 2022, 13 young female scientists from Egypt, Ethiopia, the Gambia, South Africa and the United Republic of Tanzania participated and undertook research in Japan. Researchers from Madagascar, Nigeria and the Philippines have also benefited from this programme, focusing on areas from electronic engineering to open data, wastewater treatment and agricultural extension services.

43. **The eTrade for Women initiative.** The initiative combines the positive impact of digital technology with the transformative power of female entrepreneurship, to advance inclusive and sustainable economic growth, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 5 and Sustainable Development Goal 8. The initiative leverages the visibility of a small group of highly successful women leaders in e-commerce, the eTrade for Women Advocates.

In 2022, two master classes encompassed a new component on intellectual property. For greater impact, through the programme, UNCTAD has continued to leverage new partnerships, such as with the Deutsche Post DHL Group, which has enabled women, including from Africa, to participate in the DHL GoTrade Global Business School Network Fellowship Programme<sup>23</sup> for mentorship and training. Furthermore, in December 2022, UNCTAD published a paper titled *Fostering Women Entrepreneurship in the Digital Economy: Insights from UNCTAD eTrade for Women Advocates*,<sup>24</sup> in which the main obstacles that women digital entrepreneurs encounter in developing countries, including in Africa, are reviewed and actionable measures for women to grow successful digital businesses are recommended.

44. **E-commerce strategies and action plans.** UNCTAD deepened its engagement with African countries on the advancement of e-commerce through the development of e-commerce strategies and action plans. Overall, seven countries in Africa (Benin, Botswana, Egypt, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda and Tunisia) and the Economic Community of West African States have benefited from UNCTAD support for the development of e-commerce strategies or action plans. These policy documents serve as road maps for how e-commerce can support countries' strategic development goals. In 2022, UNCTAD also supported Tunisia in developing an action plan to provide the Government with an operational and planning tool to mobilize resources for the implementation of selected actions identified in eTrade readiness assessments, based on the country's policy priorities. The action plan has helped enhance national coordination and dialogue on e-commerce and the digital economy. It has also offered an opportunity to forge further connections among relevant stakeholders and catalyse engagement from other development partners in Tunisia for increased impact.

45. Following the completion of the eTrade readiness assessment for the Economic Community of West African States, UNCTAD commenced work, jointly with the regional economic community, on the development of the first e-commerce strategy for the Economic Community of West African States. The strategy is aligned with Vision 2050 of the Economic Community of West African States and is instrumental to the region's efforts to fully leverage technology to accelerate structural change and development and foster regional integration. Similarly, following the launch of its eTrade readiness assessment in June 2022, with support from UNCTAD, the Government of Kenya developed a draft e-commerce strategy in consultation with a range of public and private stakeholders. Furthermore, as a follow-up to the e-commerce strategy for Botswana, 119 e-commerce entrepreneurs benefited from a series of UNCTAD-facilitated a series of training activities aimed at enhancing their capacity to build and grow an online business and take it internationally. More than 90 per cent of participants in all four courses rated the training as "very useful".

46. **E-trade readiness.** In 2022, UNCTAD continued to assess the state-of-play of the e-commerce enabling environment in member States. Sixteen countries and two regional economic communities in Africa have now been equipped with a diagnostic of their e-commerce enabling environment through an eTrade readiness assessment.<sup>25</sup> New assessments are under way in Algeria and Mauritania, with Ghana and Zimbabwe in planning.

47. The second UNCTAD implementation review of the programme<sup>26</sup> shows that countries are increasingly taking ownership of the implementation process and making good progress. Senegal and Togo ranked among the top performers (81 per cent implementation rate) in both implementation reviews conducted to date. Other tangible outcomes and impacts include the introduction of information and communications

<sup>23</sup> See <https://gbsn.org/what-we-do/programs/gotrade-gbsn-fellowship-program/>.

<sup>24</sup> See <https://unctad.org/publication/fostering-women-entrepreneurship-digital-economy>.

<sup>25</sup> Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, West African Economic and Monetary Union and Economic Community of West African States.

<sup>26</sup> UNCTAD, 2022, *Fast-Tracking Implementation of eTrade Readiness Assessments*, second edition (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.22.II.D.21, Geneva).

technology and digital education into the school curriculum of pre-schools and first grades in October 2022, introduction of the first Mastercard that functions as a debit card in Malawi, in partnership with a mobile operator,<sup>27</sup> establishment of a multi-stakeholder e-commerce consultative committee in the Niger and inauguration a new tier 3 data centre in Senegal. Furthermore, to improve last-mile delivery in Uganda, post and courier services increased the number of registered pick-up centres used for mail processing and delivery by 18 per cent.<sup>28</sup>

48. **UNCTAD E-commerce Week 2022.** Through the eTrade for all initiative and in collaboration with partners, UNCTAD organized the E-commerce Week from 25 to 29 April 2022, with physical and remote participation, under the theme “Data and digitalization for development”. The event aimed at strengthening the ability of developing countries and least developed countries, including African countries, to continue engaging in and benefiting from e-commerce and the digital economy, to build more resilient and inclusive societies in a dramatically different post-COVID-19 environment.

49. **Intergovernmental Group of Experts on E-commerce and the Digital Economy.** The Intergovernmental Group of Experts on E-commerce and the Digital Economy enables consensus-building by providing a venue for UNCTAD member States and other stakeholders to discuss policy-relevant topics, to maximize development gains from e-commerce and the digital economy and address associated challenges. The fifth session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts took place in 2022 in a hybrid format that attracted close to 400 participants, of which more than 230 were government representatives from 80 member States, including 20 in Africa. At the session, the topic “Recovering from COVID-19 in an increasingly digital economy: Implications for sustainable development” was examined. The session provided an opportunity to share lessons learned from policy responses to the pandemic in Africa.

50. The Intergovernmental Group of Experts established the Working Group on Measuring E-commerce and the Digital Economy to improve the availability of data on this topic. The Working Group aims at advancing cooperation on measuring e-commerce and the digital economy and enhancing the availability, quality, comparability, usability and relevance of statistics concerning e-commerce and the digital economy to support evidence-based policymaking, particularly in developing countries, including those in Africa where there is a significant lack of relevant statistics. The third meeting of the Working Group took place in November 2022, gathering more than 200 registered participants, including from several African countries.

51. **Advanced technologies for family agriculture.** UNCTAD in cooperation with the National Industrial Training Service, Pernambuco Regional Department, organized a workshop from 30 January to 3 February 2023, in Brazil, on the use of advanced technologies for family agriculture. The workshop focused on technology assessment and management, as well as on the use of advanced technologies in precision agriculture. Using a case study from rural areas of the semi-arid region in the north-east of Brazil, the workshop demonstrated the practicality of advanced technologies use in family agriculture. The objective was to build the capacity of government officials and experts on the use of frontier technologies for agriculture, particularly in family agriculture. Workshop participants were experts from Botswana, Cameroon, the Gambia, Kenya, Mozambique, Seychelles, South Africa and Zambia.

52. **Business facilitation.** UNCTAD continued its deployment of business facilitation tools through its programme of web-based and electronic (e-government) systems, namely e-regulation, e-registration and trade portals, in several African countries to improve their business climate. In 2022, UNCTAD launched e-registration systems in Burundi, Libya and Togo. UNCTAD also expanded the use of trade information portals in Burkina Faso, Burundi, Kenya, Lesotho, Nigeria, Rwanda, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and

<sup>27</sup> See <https://www.mastercard.com/news/eemea/en/newsroom/press-releases/press-releases/en/2021/august/tnm-mpamba-and-mastercard-partner-to-transform-malawi-s-payment-landscape/>.

<sup>28</sup> See [https://www.ucc.co.ug/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/UCC\\_1Q21-MARKET-PERFORMANCE-REPORT\\_-compressed.pdf](https://www.ucc.co.ug/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/UCC_1Q21-MARKET-PERFORMANCE-REPORT_-compressed.pdf).

Zanzibar, United Republic of Tanzania. Civil servants were trained in Burundi, Lesotho and Togo on the principles of simplifying administrative procedures and the design of user-centric online services. The use of e-government systems has significantly increased transparency, speed, automation and simplification of investment-related procedures in most countries in Africa. For instance, company registration in Benin doubled in the two years following installation (2020–2022): one-third by women, 50 per cent under 30s and 50 per cent from outside the capital city.<sup>29</sup>

53. **Technology assessment projects.** Funded by the United Nations Development Account, UNCTAD is currently conducting technology assessment projects in the energy and agricultural sectors in Seychelles, South Africa and Zambia. The projects address the lack of capacity to assess the socioeconomic and environmental implications of new and emerging technologies in the energy and agricultural sectors so that their benefits can be harnessed, and their potentially negative effects, minimized. The projects are making good progress with the establishment of a steering committee and expert group in each beneficiary country. UNCTAD has also organized related capacity-building activities in 2022. In the medium- to long-term, the project should enable these countries to develop institutional capacities to continuously scan, monitor and assess the impacts of technologies as part of forward-looking development strategies.

#### D. Empowering people and investing in their future

54. Under this category, UNCTAD provided support to developing countries in the following areas: trade and gender, key issues on the international economic agenda and accounting and reporting, as well as key issues relating to commodities.

55. **Teaching package on trade and gender.** As a component of its capacity-building activities on trade and gender, UNCTAD has developed a teaching package that includes teaching modules and online courses. The objective of this distance learning initiative is to equip policymakers, academics and civil society representatives in developing and least developed countries with analytical tools to analyse the two-way relationship between trade and gender, and to develop gender-aware policy, research and advocacy activities. The “Trade and gender linkages: An analysis of least developed countries” module<sup>30</sup> published by UNCTAD formed the basis for a new online course that enriched the UNCTAD portfolio of online courses on trade and gender. Accordingly, two iterations of the course were delivered in June–July 2022 and October–December 2022, respectively, with participants coming from 38 African countries.<sup>31</sup> Taking account of the significant role played by small-cross border traders, UNCTAD also trained 35 women in Botswana to enhance awareness of trade rules and customs procedures and strengthen traders’ entrepreneurial skills and resilience to recover from the COVID-19 crisis. Overall, positive feedback from the training participants relative to the objectives of the training modules highlights the significance of the impact of UNCTAD work through the programme on enhancing awareness and informing trade and gender policy.

56. **Capacity-building on key issues on the international economic agenda.** UNCTAD delivered six short courses for Geneva-based permanent missions, which included delegates from 25 African countries. The topics covered under these courses were interconnected to development and addressing the challenges developing economies face and, thus directly linked to enhancing knowledge among delegates, by contributing to their role in the implementation of the Third Industrial Development Decade for Africa (2016–2025). In addition, the topics supported the six themes that guide the strategic direction of

<sup>29</sup> See <https://monentreprise.bj/>.

<sup>30</sup> See <https://unctad.org/publication/trade-and-gender-linkages-analysis-least-developed-countries>.

<sup>31</sup> Algeria, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Comoros, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

the New Partnership for Africa's Development, such as regional integration, human development and food security.

57. **Accounting and reporting.** An UNCTAD project on enabling policy frameworks for enterprise sustainability and Sustainable Development Goal reporting resulted in the creation of a regional partnership for the promotion of sustainability reporting in Africa that will further support long-term sustainability and continuous cooperation well beyond the project end date. In 2022, UNCTAD conducted activities to strengthen the partnership by increasing the membership, which currently stands at 50 entities from 25 countries. In addition, and as part of the project, UNCTAD presented national action plans for Kenya and South Africa towards developing high-quality sustainability and Sustainable Development Goal reporting by companies. The action plan provided recommendations and proposed activities to overcome the gaps in priority areas identified in a previous assessment of the reporting infrastructure in the countries.

58. **Training on commodities.** In 2022, UNCTAD conducted a series of training on commodities for both young researchers, in collaboration with the African Economic Research Consortium, and for mid-level government officials, including trade experts and practitioners from the private sector, academia and civil society. Following the delivery of a training module on commodities at the Trade Policy Training Centre in Africa, UNCTAD signed a memorandum of understanding with the Centre, whereby UNCTAD will develop a training module on commodities to be delivered to students every year. The courses have been appreciated by participants.

### III. Financial resources committed to Africa

59. Of UNCTAD total project expenditure, 32.3 per cent, amounting to \$17,028,014 (as of January 2023), was spent on projects in support of development in Africa. While this represents a marginal increase of about 5 per cent in absolute value from UNCTAD project expenditure of \$16,246,561 in 2021 in Africa, most importantly, it highlights that the relative weight of UNCTAD project expenditure in Africa in its total project expenditure has continued to fall from 2017. In particular, this share has dropped by 11.7 percentage points, from 44 per cent in 2016 to 32.3 per cent in 2022.