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Activities undertaken by UNCTAD in support of Africa

Report by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD

Summary

This report covers the key activities undertaken by UNCTAD in support of sustainable development in Africa in May 2025–April 2026. The activities are grouped under four of the aspirations in Agenda 2063 of the African Union, as follows: inclusive growth and sustainable development; regional integration; people-driven development, with an emphasis on women and youth; and integration into the world economy. Of the total technical cooperation expenditure of UNCTAD in 2025, 33.9 per cent was directed towards these activities, amounting to $19,979,521.

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I. Introduction

1. In 2015, African Heads of State and Government adopted Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, with the following aspirations: a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development; an integrated continent, politically united and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa's renaissance; an Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children; and Africa as a strong, united, resilient and influential global player and partner. UNCTAD is mandated to support countries in Africa in the achievement of Agenda 2063.[1] This report covers the key activities undertaken by UNCTAD in support of sustainable development in Africa in May 2025–April 2026.

II. Key activities

A. Inclusive growth and sustainable development

2. In the reporting period, UNCTAD supported inclusive growth and sustainable development in countries in Africa through several research and analysis and technical cooperation activities.

3. ***Economic Development in Africa Report 2024: Unlocking Africa's Trade Potential – Boosting Regional Markets and Reducing Risks***. UNCTAD continued to disseminate the findings of this publication through international policy dialogue. UNCTAD organized a side event at the World Trade Organization Public Forum, to discuss how countries in Africa could reduce vulnerability to external shocks by strengthening regional markets, investing in digital infrastructure and improving regional connectivity and value chains (September 2025).

4. ***The Least Developed Countries Report 2025: Are Services the New Path to Structural Transformation?*** UNCTAD, in this publication, noted that services were playing an increasingly important role in the global economy and examined whether and under what conditions services could drive structural transformation in the least developed countries, 33 of which are in Africa. UNCTAD, in the report, stated that services were not a shortcut to development and that services could only contribute to transformation when linked to manufacturing, agriculture and other productive sectors and when supported by investment in digital skills and infrastructure. In this regard, UNCTAD noted that active trade and investment policies were required, along with regional cooperation and stronger multilateral support aligned with the supply capacities of the least developed countries.

5. **Trade, poverty and inequality**. UNCTAD issued three analytical studies to support vulnerable countries in reducing poverty and inequality. UNCTAD, in the report titled "Towards a prosperous and equitable Chad: Economic and social policies to reduce poverty and inequality", identified the factors driving poverty and discussed macroeconomic, social and sectoral policies with which to achieve poverty and inequality reduction. UNCTAD, in cooperation with the Geneva office of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, convened a dialogue on inequality, poverty and trade in Africa and the least developed countries, which brought together over 60 African policymakers from capitals, delegates from permanent missions and experts from international organizations, as well as trade union and civil society representatives and academics, to share experiences and lessons learned on policies and measures to reduce poverty and inequality (September 2025). UNCTAD held a webinar on disability and poverty in Africa, attended by over 80 participants (59 per cent women), including policymakers, civil society representatives, academics and persons with disabilities (March 2026). Finally, UNCTAD conducted a course on key international economic and development issues for delegates from permanent missions to the United Nations Office at Geneva and the World Trade Organizations, titled "Understanding poverty in developing countries: Trends, drivers and policy options" (March 2026).

[1] TD/561/Add.2, paragraph 80.78.

6. **Vulnerability profiles**. UNCTAD delivered the national validation workshop of the vulnerability profile of Djibouti, with 56 participants (17 women) from the Government, the private sector, civil society and academia (May 2025). UNCTAD undertook inception missions for the vulnerability profiles of the United Republic of Tanzania (September 2025) and Uganda (29 September–1 October 2025), following pre-qualification for graduation from the least developed country category during the 2024 triennial review. The missions served as the official launches of the vulnerability assessment process and helped ensure that national authorities were informed of graduation requirements. UNCTAD delivered a presentation on trade vulnerabilities and opportunities ahead of the potential graduation of Rwanda, at a national workshop on enhancing trade resilience, held in Kigali, co-organized by the Ministry of Trade and Industry of Rwanda and the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (September 2025).

7. **Support for graduation from the least developed country category**. Under the United Nations Development Account project titled "Supporting structural economic progress towards and beyond graduation from least developed country status by the pre-qualified African and Asian countries" (2023–2026), UNCTAD, in collaboration with national authorities, organized training workshops in Lusaka (May 2025) and Dakar (September 2025), which brought together 20 participants from each country (including 6 and 7 women, respectively) and were based on a training manual developed by UNCTAD and updated in 2024–2025. UNCTAD developed industrial policy profiles for each country; held consultations with authorities in Senegal on a draft smooth transition strategy and on maximizing the use of international support measures during the pre-graduation and post-graduation periods; and, over a three-month period in 2025, delivered advisory services on industrial policy in Zambia. In addition, UNCTAD conducted a course on key international economic and development issues for delegates from permanent missions to the United Nations Office at Geneva and the World Trade Organizations, on the economic and social outlook for the least developed countries, including discussions on graduation criteria, special and differential treatment, vulnerability profiles and financing and strategies to overcome structural development barriers (December 2025).

8. **National productive capacity gap assessments**. UNCTAD completed an assessment and a holistic productive capacities development programme for Zimbabwe, validated at a national workshop (May 2025). UNCTAD drafted an assessment for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and conducted workshops on fostering productive capacities and on the utilization of the productive capacities index, as well as a productive capacities policy sensitization mission (March 2026). UNCTAD, together with the Benguela Current Commission and the United Nations Development Programme, is implementing the Global Environment Facility project titled "Mainstreaming climate-resilient blue economy in the Benguela current large marine ecosystem region", covering Angola, Namibia and South Africa. Following the inception workshop held in Namibia (November 2025), UNCTAD initiated research on the blue economy products in each country with the potential for value addition, inclusion and exports and a mapping of suitable third-party certification schemes and blue finance options. In addition, UNCTAD designed a training programme on value addition in fisheries and aquaculture in Angola; and completed a draft study on the non-tariff measures faced by selected agriproduct exports from Mozambique.

9. **Commodities and development**. As part of the project titled "Critical energy transition minerals: Rapid assessment of value addition and diversification capacity in Southern Africa", funded by Japan, UNCTAD prepared assessment studies for Madagascar, Namibia and Zambia, identifying opportunities for value addition and economic diversification linked to critical energy transition minerals. The studies identified over 250 diversification opportunities across at least 10 sectors, including at least 39 opportunities directly linked to critical energy transition minerals, in each country. The assessments were presented at national consultations and technical workshops, and supported the identification of priority actions in industrial policy, investment promotion and value chain development. UNCTAD contributed to an international consultation, held in Accra, on the energy transition, critical minerals and structural economic transformation in Africa, organized by Friends of Lake Turkana, Southern African Resources Watch and

Third World Network Africa (December 2025). UNCTAD examined how the mining sector could drive intersectoral linkages, particularly in services and manufacturing. In addition, UNCTAD participated in the task force on the establishment of a food stockholding mechanism for the least developed countries, led by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, including providing technical advice at an expert meeting, held in order to consider operational requirements, governance and institutional frameworks, financing models and logistical systems (February 2026).

10. **Competition and consumer protection**. UNCTAD, since 2019, has supported Angola, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and Sao Tome and Principe through the technical cooperation project titled “Technical assistance and capacity-building in competition and consumer protection for African Portuguese-speaking developing countries and Timor-Leste”, with financial support from Portugal. UNCTAD held a webinar addressing competition law enforcement challenges in less experienced jurisdictions, competition in the digital economy and cooperation between competition authorities in the region (September 2025). UNCTAD also organized a webinar on consumer protection, bringing together representatives from ministries, consumer protection agencies, regulators and consumer associations to exchange experiences on strengthening consumer literacy and developing communications strategies tailored to local realities (September 2025). UNCTAD provided advisory services to the newly established competition authority of Cabo Verde and assistance to Guinea-Bissau with regard to future institutional development. The project has contributed to new bilateral collaboration arrangements between competition authorities in Angola, Brazil, Cabo Verde, Mozambique and Portugal. The gender balance of participants in project events has improved from 30 to 50–55 percent and beneficiaries have consistently highlighted the value of the technical assistance. Under the project, UNCTAD conducted the voluntary peer review of the consumer protection law and policy of Angola in 2025; the findings and recommendations were discussed at the Ninth United Nations Conference to Review All Aspects of the Set of Multilaterally Agreed Equitable Principles and Rules for the Control of Restrictive Business Practices (July 2025) and were disseminated in Luanda to government authorities, consumer and business associations, chambers of commerce, academia and the media, including through a live radio broadcast, to raise awareness of consumer protection as a development issue (October 2025).

11. **Sustainable Manufacturing and Environmental Pollution Programme**. Under this programme, funded by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, UNCTAD supported the development of a draft bill on single-use plastics, being considered by the East African Legislative Assembly. To promote South–South trade, investment and technology transfer on mutually agreed terms, UNCTAD supported the attendance of entrepreneurs from Ghana and Kenya at a workshop on the bioeconomy, which UNCTAD co-hosted with Chatham House in São Paulo, Brazil, as an official side event at World Circular Economy Forum 2025. In addition, the entrepreneurs visited relevant industry actors for information exchanges with regard to pineapple fibre production and alternative plastics in agriculture. UNCTAD hosted a symposium in Nairobi on alternative fibres in East Africa, bringing together key producers, buyers and enablers of the alternative and natural fibres sector across East Africa, to accelerate collaboration and investment (October 2025). This initiative led to the creation of a regional stakeholders directory and the establishment of the East Africa Alternative Fibre Forum. UNCTAD issued a report titled “Plastic substitution in developing countries: Sectoral opportunities and challenges”, discussing the cases of Ghana, Kenya and Nigeria, and a report titled “Solutions in traditional knowledge: How gravity water filters could help reduce single-use plastics in sub-Saharan Africa”.

12. **Green export strategies**. Under the United Nations Development Account project titled “Innovative climate action to accelerate green industrialization in the Southern Africa region”, UNCTAD is working with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the United Nations Environment Programme to strengthen capacity in Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe in implementing green economy policies for inclusive and sustainable industrialization. Activities include the preparation of four regional studies on the green energy transition, microenterprises and

small and medium-sized enterprises and the circular economy, renewable energy and innovation; and the delivery of national workshops in each project country. UNCTAD continued work on supporting the implementation of *Trade Policies to Advance National Climate Plans: Guide for Policymakers* and organized a technical consultation in Senegal on the use of trade as a driver for climate action (February 2026). UNCTAD enabled 40 policymakers from the Gambia to participate in an electronic-learning (e-learning) course on harnessing trade to advance on national climate and development goals, delivered in partnership with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and other international entities (7 November–16 December 2025). Finally, UNCTAD has begun to prepare a diagnostic report on food security, trade and climate change in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development region.

13. **Beyond gross domestic product (GDP)**. UNCTAD is a key contributor to the Beyond GDP initiative, led by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, to develop indicators that capture well-being, sustainability and inclusivity beyond GDP. Senegal is among the intended national pilot beneficiaries. A parallel event at the sixteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XVI; October 2025), engaged member States in Africa on the new framework, which was finalized at an expert meeting (January 2026).

14. **E-trade readiness assessments**. UNCTAD issued an assessment for Zimbabwe; the launch was attended by 65 participants and complemented by a round table with development partners, to create momentum for implementation (May 2025). The Government of Zimbabwe requested UNCTAD support in developing a national e-commerce strategy and the adoption of the e-trade reform tracker. In the Gambia, UNCTAD worked with the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment on the conduct of an alignment assessment of national laws against the "stabilized text" of the joint statement initiative on e-commerce; the findings were validated at bilateral meetings with public and private sector stakeholders held in Banjul (November 2025).[2]

15. **E-commerce strategies and implementation support**. UNCTAD assists countries in Africa in the development of national e-commerce strategies, to help ensure that e-commerce supports development goals. UNCTAD-supported e-commerce strategies were validated at national workshops in Ghana (June 2025) and Mauritania (October 2025). In Ghana, the national e-commerce committee, comprised of 26 members from the public sector, the private sector and academia, discussed implementation and sought donor support (November 2025). In Mauritania, the strategy was formally launched in Nouakchott (April 2026), followed by meetings held to mobilize technical and financial support for implementation. In Tunisia, building on the e-trade assessment and action plan developed in 2021, UNCTAD is supporting the Ministry of Trade and Export Development in developing a national e-commerce strategy; initial planning meetings were held to define the strategic priorities of the Government (31 March–2 April 2026). UNCTAD continued to support countries in the implementation of digital economy reforms, including through the e-trade reform tracker. UNCTAD organized a training session on the e-trade reform tracker for the national e-commerce strategy implementation committee of Kenya (November 2025) and provided training on the e-trade reform tracker tool for officials from the Economic Community of West African States involved in implementing the regional e-commerce strategy, held in Lagos, Nigeria (July 2025) and Abuja (November 2025).

16. **Science, technology and innovation**. As part of the project "Science, technology and innovation parks for sustainable development: Building expertise in policy and practice in selected Asian and African countries", financed through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Sub-Fund, and implemented with China, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the resident coordinator offices in the beneficiary countries, UNCTAD has continued to provide support to Ghana and Mozambique. UNCTAD organized a multi-stakeholder workshop on the road map to support science, technology and innovation

[2] See document dated 26 July 2024, available at https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/ecom_e/joint_statement_e.htm.

parks in Ghana (August 2025). UNCTAD launched a science, technology and innovation park expert network, including three experts from Africa (October 2025) and held a pilot session of an e-learning course titled “Science, technology and innovation parks: Policies and practices” (February 2026). UNCTAD issued three technical notes on strengthening science, technology and innovation parks and proposed guidelines for policy and institutional frameworks for such parks. UNCTAD continues to implement the Crop Watch Innovative Cooperation Programme, with technology expertise provided by the China Academy of Sciences, supporting 14 countries in Africa[3] in using satellite data to monitor crop conditions. In Nigeria, the tool is used to issue quarterly bulletins on crop conditions, to inform agricultural policy and, in 2025, Nigeria began to use the tool to identify crops for agricultural value chain support and to provide targeted support to women farmers. UNCTAD held an e-learning course on science, technology and innovation policy and practice, with 91 registered participants (40 women) from 26 countries in Africa (October 2025–February 2026). Finally, UNCTAD, as co-coordinator of the Inter-agency Task Team Workstream on Capacity Building in Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals, co-organized an online training course on science, technology and innovation policy and policy instruments for the Sustainable Development Goals in Africa, with 208 participants (92 women) from 35 countries in Africa (May 2025).

17. **Statistics on the digital economy**. UNCTAD, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa Secretariat and the World Trade Organization organized a regional workshop in Nairobi, with 30 participants (16 women) from 16 member countries of the Common Market, on improving the availability of statistics on the digital economy (December 2025).

18. **Investment in health**. UNCTAD issued a report on investment in local pharmaceutical production in Africa and participated in the third World Local Production Forum organized by the World Health Organization and in the first Ministerial Conference on Local Production of Medicines and Health Technologies in Africa, highlighting financing and investment solutions with which to scale pharmaceutical manufacturing. UNCTAD collaborated with the Africa Economic Zones Organization on a webinar presenting the findings from the report titled “Attracting pharmaceutical manufacturing to Africa’s special economic zones”. UNCTAD contributed a lecture at the African Special Economic Zones Academy, on pharmaceutical investment strategies. In addition, UNCTAD provided technical input for a policy brief issued by the Africa Economic Zones Organization and participated in the annual meeting of the Organization. These interventions helped to raise awareness of policy approaches to attracting pharmaceutical manufacturing investment.

19. **Investment promotion**. Under the United Nations Development Account project titled “Attracting finance and investment for the energy transition in Africa”, UNCTAD partnered with the Ethiopian Investment Commission and the Namibia Investment Promotion and Development Board to deliver workshops on the bankability of energy transition projects, with 75 participants from investment agencies, regulatory bodies, development finance institutions and the private sector; the workshops received consistently high satisfaction ratings and were reported as highly relevant to the work of the participants (December 2025). UNCTAD, jointly with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, developed training modules on project bankability and participated in the Sustainable Development Goals investment fair during the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (30 June–3 July 2025), with beneficiary countries showcasing energy transition projects to potential investors. Under the United Nations Development Account project, UNCTAD facilitated country investment showcases for Ethiopia, Malawi and the United Republic of Tanzania at Future Investment Conference 2025, held in Xiamen, China (September 2025). Training on the bankability of energy transition projects was delivered in Malawi (February 2026) and Seychelles (April 2026). UNCTAD contributed to the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (April 2026). As part of the Enhanced Integrated Framework capacity-development

[3] Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Mauritius, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

programme for investment promotion agencies in the least developed countries, UNCTAD contributed to the annual one-week training workshop for investment promotion officials, organized jointly with four entities,[4] and bringing together 26 participants (12 women) from 21 countries and the Commission of the West African Economic and Monetary Union, with training focused on facilitating investment for the energy transition; transmission mechanisms; foreign direct investment and sustainable development policies; and assessing bankable projects (May 2025). UNCTAD and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa Secretariat organized a webinar on risk perception, risk mitigation and national branding as key factors in attracting sustainable investment, with 120 participants (33 per cent women) from the commerce, economic development, finance, investment and tourism agencies of member States of the Common Market; 88 percent of respondents to the post-webinar survey rated the webinar as useful or very useful (November 2025).

20. **Entrepreneurship**. As part of its work on strengthening entrepreneurship in Africa, UNCTAD collaborated with Learn Logistics of the Kühne Foundation and local Empretec centres in order to deliver two five-day “Logi Hub Pre-Accelerator” workshops in Uganda and South Africa (December 2025), to strengthen the capacities of entrepreneurs in smart logistics and collaborative platforms. The workshops leveraged peer learning by engaging alumni from Africa of the UNCTAD e-founders fellowship, as mentors, presenters and pitching judges. As a follow-up, a capacity-building course will be launched under the Empretec square for global goals platform, to support the incorporation of artificial intelligence technology into logistics business models.

21. **Accounting and reporting**. The African Regional Partnership for Sustainability and Sustainable Development Goals Reporting is a continental platform for knowledge exchanges among countries and international organizations, supported by UNCTAD, with 66 members from 31 countries as at 2025. UNCTAD provided training on the online platform, to strengthen reporting capabilities among members (April 2025). The Regional Partnership and the International Ethics Standards Board for Accountants co-hosted a webinar to introduce new ethics standards for sustainability reporting and assurance (May 2025). In addition, the Regional Partnership convened an online regional workshop on best practices for adopting the international sustainability reporting standards, bringing together experts from the International Sustainability Standards Board, the Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa and the Pan African Federation of Accountants (October 2025).

22. **Business facilitation**. UNCTAD digital government platforms support business and investment facilitation by helping to simplify and automate administrative procedures. During the reporting period, Angola, Benin, the Gambia, Kenya, Lesotho, Mali, Nigeria and Zimbabwe benefited from such platforms.

23. **Climate and development**. UNCTAD, in collaboration with the Chair of the Group of 77 and China in Geneva, organized two workshops in Rome for climate finance negotiators of developing countries (September 2025), ahead of the thirtieth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Representatives from Algeria, the Gambia, Mali, Namibia, South Africa, Tunisia and Zimbabwe participated in at least one of the two workshops. UNCTAD supported climate negotiators from countries in Africa on different workstreams at the thirtieth session of the Conference of the Parties.

24. **Debt and development finance**. UNCTAD served as the technical secretariat to the United Nations Secretary-General’s Expert Group on Debt, which developed 11 proposals to address the debt crisis and unlock development financing, including the Borrowers’ Platform, launched in Washington, D.C. (April 2026). UNCTAD organized a workshop in Lusaka, which brought together 30 policymakers from Ethiopia and Zambia to discuss debt restructuring under the Group of 20 Common Framework (28 July–1 August 2025). UNCTAD organized a workshop on sovereign credit ratings and market communications,

[4] International Labour Organization, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies.

to facilitate exchanges between debt management and investor relations officers from Brazil and Zambia on market engagement strategies (December 2025). UNCTAD provided support to the Presidency of the Group of 20 (South Africa). UNCTAD completed the implementation of the United Nations Development Account project titled "Mobilizing external financial resources beyond the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) for greener, more equal and sustainable development in selected vulnerable small island developing States in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean", beneficiaries of which included Cabo Verde and the Comoros, which were both provided with national external financing strategies and road maps for implementation, discussed at national and regional workshops (December 2025).

25. **Debt Management and Financial Analysis System (DMFAS)**. In 2025, South Sudan adopted DMFAS 7, bringing the number of countries in Africa using DMFAS to 27.[5] DMFAS support ranged from debt recording, monitoring and operational risk management to reporting and analysis. The DMFAS Programme delivered over 50 training and capacity-building opportunities to 350 debt management officials (over 30 per cent women) in Africa, covering the use and maintenance of the software, debt data validation, debt statistics, debt portfolio analysis, effective back-office procedures and DMFAS integration with public financial management information systems. As a result of DMFAS Programme support, 89 per cent of user countries in Africa had comprehensive central government external debt records, 62 per cent had comprehensive domestic debt records in DMFAS and 93 per cent reported to the World Bank Debtor Reporting System database during the period.

B. Regional integration

26. In the reporting period, UNCTAD supported countries in Africa in harnessing regional integration for sustainable development through the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement and subregional agreements.

27. **Integrating small and medium-sized enterprises into regional value chains**. Under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Sub-Fund project titled "Enhancing the capacity of African vulnerable countries in adopting policy incentives and innovative instruments for small and medium-sized enterprises' participation in regional value chains", UNCTAD prepared national impact studies identifying priority sectors offering opportunities for the upgrading of small and medium-sized enterprises and integration into regional value chains, which were validated at national workshops in Benin, Burundi, the Central African Republic and Uganda. UNCTAD finalized analytical reports for Cabo Verde, highlighting opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises in fisheries and blue economy sectors; and for Togo, identifying opportunities in agro-industry, textiles and logistics services. Building on the national studies, UNCTAD organized capacity-building activities in collaboration with national authorities. In Cabo Verde, a training workshop for small fisheries businesses was held in Mindelo, focused on entrepreneurship, certification requirements, access to finance and regional market opportunities (November 2025). A regional training programme for small and medium-sized enterprises from Benin and Togo was held in Cotonou, Benin, in partnership with Empretec, to address quality standards, certification, entrepreneurship and access to regional markets under the Economic Community of West African States and the African Continental Free Trade Area (March 2026).

28. **Innovative finance and digital solutions for microenterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises**. UNCTAD issued a report titled "Leveraging digital technologies for microenterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises' integration into regional value and supply chains: The cases of Ethiopia, Malawi, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda", drawing on research conducted with the United Nations Capital

[5] Algeria, Angola, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Mauritania, Niger, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Development Fund (October 2025). UNCTAD issued a report titled “Unlocking growth: Determinants of supply chain finance in African markets”, analysing supply chain finance patterns in 31 countries; examining mechanisms such as trade credit, factoring and digital finance platforms; and providing recommendations aimed at strengthening regulatory frameworks, promoting digital financial solutions and leveraging supply chain finance in order to support regional trade resilience (December 2025). UNCTAD contributed to a capacity-building workshop on the use of digital technologies under the African Continental Free Trade Area, to foster intra-African trade and regional value chains, co-organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and Trade Mark Africa, in Addis Ababa (November 2025). In addition, UNCTAD participated in the launch of the Africa Regional Chapter of the Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Finance Forum, contributing to discussions on scaling finance, promoting innovative financial solutions and strengthening the ecosystem supporting access to finance by small and medium-sized enterprises across the region (December 2025).

29. **Improving the measurement of informal cross-border trade**. The mobile application “My Africa Cross-Border Trade Assistant”, developed by UNCTAD and the United Nations International Computing Centre, to improve the collection and analysis of informal cross-border trade data, was presented during UNCTAD XVI. It was pilot tested at five border-crossing points in Benin, demonstrating its operational feasibility and serving to highlight technical issues related to connectivity and product classification, to be addressed in subsequent refinements (December 2025). Further pilot testing took place in Togo in collaboration with the national statistical institute (March 2026). A business profile module is being developed, to allow small and medium-sized enterprises to record transactions and access market information.

30. **Non-tariff measures**. UNCTAD continued to strengthen regulatory transparency under the African Continental Free Trade Area. Data collection on non-tariff measures was completed in Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria, South Africa and Zimbabwe; the total number of countries in Africa covered is 35. This constitutes the most comprehensive mapping of non-tariff measures undertaken to date in Africa, providing a critical foundation for enhancing transparency, reducing information asymmetries and supporting more predictable trade conditions. UNCTAD continues to work with the African Continental Free Trade Area Secretariat in order to operationalize transparency commitments, to reduce trade costs and strengthen regional value chains.

31. **Non-tariff barriers online monitoring, reporting and eliminating mechanism**. The African Continental Free Trade Area mechanism continued to deliver results for traders and national administrations, with 18 cases of non-tariff barriers resolved with the assistance of UNCTAD, demonstrating the increasing effectiveness of the mechanism in facilitating the timely removal of obstacles to intra-African trade. In parallel, 19 new non-tariff barriers were reported through the mechanism, reflecting increasing awareness and confidence in the mechanism, supported by targeted outreach and sensitization activities jointly conducted by UNCTAD, the African Continental Free Trade Area Secretariat and national Governments. The number of registered users increased from 1,408 to 1,942, representing the greatest annual increase since the launch of the platform. This sustained growth underscores the increasing relevance of the mechanism for the private sector in supporting more transparent and predictable trading conditions across the continent.

32. **Strengthening the role of parliaments in implementing the African Continental Free Trade Area**. Under the framework of the Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum, UNCTAD contributed to an online capacity-building training session for parliamentarians in the Community region (November 2025–April 2026).

C. People-driven development, with an emphasis on women and youth

33. In the reporting period, UNCTAD supported people-driven development in countries in Africa, with a focus on women and youth.

34. **Support for women-led and youth-led enterprises**. Under the opportunity and issues-based coalitions of the Africa Regional Collaboration Platform, UNCTAD contributed to the preparation of a joint United Nations, African Union Commission and African Development Bank initiative on catalysing structural transformation in Africa through regional value chains and scaling the integration of youth, women and microenterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises into markets, including the African Continental Free Trade Area. The initiative is aimed at supporting participation by women-led and youth-led microenterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises in priority value chains such as agrifood systems, critical minerals and green manufacturing, contributing to the development of integrated regional production ecosystems across Africa (February 2026).

35. **E-trade for women**. Since the launch of this initiative in 2019, over 140 women digital entrepreneurs have participated in the seven masterclasses organized in Africa in collaboration with e-trade for women advocates. A workshop held in Lagos, Nigeria, including 10 women digital entrepreneurs based in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Senegal and Togo, brought together representatives from the ministries of trade of member States of the Economic Community of West African States, the private sector, e-commerce experts and development partners, to discuss the implications of the e-commerce strategy of the Community for the private sector and to identify recommendations on increasing women's participation in digital trade (July 2025). A 14-day workshop on e-commerce and digital economy capacities of women entrepreneurs, organized with the Ministry of Commerce of China and the Academy for International Business Officials, included 17 participants from e-trade for women communities in Benin, Cameroon, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria and Uganda; sessions with 15 leading enterprises, site visits to particular enterprises and meetings with senior women leaders, as well as participation in the fourth Global Digital Trade Expo, provided participants with insights into the fast-evolving digital and artificial intelligence landscape in China (September 2025). UNCTAD issued a report titled "Breaking down barriers for women digital entrepreneurs: Insights from Africa", presenting new evidence of the challenges and opportunities faced by women digital entrepreneurs, based on surveys of 94 entrepreneurs from 33 developing countries and 33 interviews with women founders from 13 countries in sub-Saharan Africa; highlighting persistent barriers faced by women digital entrepreneurs, including limited access to finance, digital infrastructure gaps and gender bias in fundraising; noting that, in sub-Saharan Africa, high operational costs, uneven connectivity and significant care responsibilities impeded scaling; and providing policy recommendations in order to enable women digital entrepreneurs to fully participate in the digital economy (August 2025).

D. Integration into the world economy

36. In the reporting period, UNCTAD supported participation by countries in Africa in the global economy.

37. **Foreign direct investment trends**. UNCTAD, in *World Investment Report 2025: International Investment in the Digital Economy*, highlighted significant fluctuations in foreign direct investment in Africa; in 2024, inflows to Africa increased by about 75 per cent, to an estimated $97 billion, largely driven by a few large projects, such as major urban development investments in Egypt, yet flows excluding such projects also increased, by roughly 12 per cent from 2023. UNCTAD noted, however that the share of Africa in global foreign direct investment remained modest and that investment continued to be concentrated in a small number of middle-income economies. UNCTAD prepared an investment report for the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, analysing recent developments in foreign direct investment, sectoral trends, special economic zones, project finance and the overall investment environment across Eastern and Southern Africa; examining infrastructure, renewable energy and other sustainable development-related investment; and highlighting concentration patterns, regional integration challenges and diversification opportunities. UNCTAD continues to assist the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa in implementing the recommendations in the report.

38. **Investment policy reviews**. UNCTAD completed a regional investment policy review for the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa, recommending the shift of investment from hydrocarbons towards more diversified, sustainable and inclusive sectors, to build economic resilience; and providing options for revising the regional investment charter, a key legal instrument governing investment across the Community. UNCTAD presented the findings of the regional investment policy review for the West African Economic and Monetary Union at the online launch of the region's investment guide, including the recommendations, which supported greater regional alignment on legislative, institutional and operational reforms, particularly in business establishment, taxation, labour regulation and competition policy (May 2025). UNCTAD participated in an annual meeting with investment promotion agencies, sharing updates on foreign direct investment trends and policy guidance, to boost international investment in the digital economy. UNCTAD delivered four training sessions on sustainable investment policy design and investor targeting in the digital economy for the investment promotion agency of Côte d'Ivoire, with the participation of 66 agency staff members (August–September 2025). UNCTAD briefed policymakers from the Agency for the Administration of Special Economic Zones in Chad on investment promotion approaches for special economic zones (October 2025). Finally, UNCTAD continued to support outreach activities on the investment policy review of Tunisia, including briefings for national stakeholders and the United Nations country team.

39. **International investment agreements**. UNCTAD supported member States of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa and its Secretariat in aligning the common investment area of the Common Market with continental frameworks and international best practices. Following a validation workshop held in Nairobi (May 2025), revisions to the draft agreement were developed, with a further technical meeting scheduled in 2026, to reach consensus. UNCTAD delivered a review of the international investment agreement network of the United Republic of Tanzania, including clause-by-clause analysis and policy options aligned with sustainable development priorities (June 2025). The review was complemented by a capacity-building workshop for government officials, which helped to strengthen understanding of global international investment agreement trends, investment facilitation provisions and reform options (September 2025). In Egypt, UNCTAD delivered a capacity-building workshop for officials of the General Authority for Investment and Free Zones, covering negotiations of development-oriented provisions in international investment agreements, investment facilitation and investor–State dispute settlement (September 2025). The training supported ongoing efforts to reform and modernize the international investment agreement framework of Egypt in line with sustainable development objectives. At the regional level, UNCTAD, in partnership with the International Institute for Sustainable Development, convened an online workshop with over 100 African policymakers, negotiators and investment promotion agencies, to discuss investment facilitation provisions in international agreements, drawing on experiences with regard to the Protocol on Investment of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement and other regional frameworks and highlighting opportunities under emerging global instruments such as the Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement under the World Trade Organization (September 2025).

40. **Support for World Trade Organization accession**. UNCTAD supported the Comoros in the implementation of a post-accession strategic plan of action, identifying priority activities related to sanitary and phytosanitary standards and technical barriers to trade, and developed a detailed work programme, securing financial contributions to support this work from the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade and the Islamic Development Bank. In addition, UNCTAD provided legal and technical inputs to Ethiopia in order to support the revised offer on market access for financial and telecommunications sectors under the General Agreement on Trade in Services.

41. **Preparation for the fourteenth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization**. UNCTAD gave a presentation on prospects for countries in Africa in global trade at a preparatory event organized by the Organisation internationale de le Francophonie in Yaoundé (April 2025). UNCTAD, in cooperation with the European University Institute, organized a preparatory workshop in Florence, Italy, on least developed country positioning in advance of the Ministerial Conference, including for

representatives of the least developed countries in Africa (October 2025). UNCTAD contributed to a regional preparatory workshop for member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (February 2026). Finally, UNCTAD co-organized an information session in Geneva for trade experts from the least developed countries, including representatives of several countries in Africa, on the theme “Leveraging the multilateral trading system for least developed country development”; at the session, trade and development challenges in the least developed countries and least developed country priorities ahead of the Ministerial Conference were discussed (March 2026).

42. **Transport and logistics**. UNCTAD, in *Review of Maritime Transport 2025: Staying the Course in Turbulent Waters*, provided an assessment of developments in seaborne trade, ports and shipping industries, freight markets and transport costs, as well as legal and regulatory frameworks and an analysis of maritime trade patterns and sectoral performance in Africa. UNCTAD completed the implementation of the United Nations Development Account project titled “Sustainable smart ports for African countries, including small island developing States, to ‘recover better’ from COVID-19”. The project supported three ports in Africa, namely, Tema, Ghana, Port Louis, Mauritius, and Tanger Med, Morocco, in integrating renewable and low-carbon energy solutions and green and smart technologies; national validation and capacity-building workshops were held in Port Louis (May 2025), Tangier (November 2025) and Tema (December 2025). In total, over 150 participants were trained in implementing key assessment recommendations, such as scaling solar energy, electrifying port equipment, planning for future fuel pathways and implementing energy management systems. Under the United Nations Development Account project titled “Harnessing trade policy and transport and logistics to build sustainable and resilient food supply chains in the Caribbean and the Arab region”, UNCTAD organized a workshop in Morocco, in cooperation with the Ministry of Industry and Trade, to validate the national assessment on trade and transport and logistics policies for the resilience of the food supply chain (November 2025).

43. **Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA)**. In Africa, 39 countries and territories continue to operate or implement ASYCUDA technologies. The ASYCUDA Programme is implementing several projects, to deploy new technologies in user countries in order to improve customs efficiency. In the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa region, a project funded by the European Union is aimed at implementing the ASYCUDA regional transit solution in road corridors in Central Africa. In Madagascar, a self-funded project will implement the ASYCUDA system developed to assist the parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora that do not have access to an electronic permit management system. Single window systems based on ASYCUDA technology are currently running in Burundi, the Comoros, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Uganda and Zimbabwe. In Zimbabwe, an additional partner government agency, the ozone-depleting substances unit, joined the ASYCUDA-based electronic single window. Single window systems will be enhanced in Burundi, with financial support from the European Union, and in Zimbabwe, as a self-funded project. The Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles and Zambia signed technical assistance projects for the enhancement and upgrade of ASYCUDA World; the projects are self-funded by the respective Governments, the European Union, the International Maritime Organization, Trade Mark Africa and the World Bank. The implementation of ASYCUDA creates significant efficiencies in terms of increased customs revenue and shorter customs clearance times, as follows, for example: in Djibouti, the customs clearance procedure has become 100 per cent paperless; in Equatorial Guinea, customs revenue increased by 89 per cent in Malabo Port in 2024–2025; in Eswatini, the average customs processing time was reduced from 90 minutes in 2021 to 28 minutes in 2025; and in the Gambia, customs revenue increased by 21 per cent in 2024–2025 and by 96 per cent after the implementation of ASYCUDA World in 2022.

44. **Rules of origin**. UNCTAD continued to provide the group of the least developed countries at the World Trade Organization, including 27 countries in Africa, with capacity-building and technical support on rules of origin negotiations, including through a workshop (May 2025). UNCTAD, in cooperation with the European University Institute, organized an executive meeting for the group on negotiating and drafting rules of origin (October 2025). With funding from the United Kingdom, UNCTAD issued a study titled

"Evidence and potentialities of regional value chains in Sub-Saharan Africa using cumulation: A quantitative and firm-level approach".

45. **Statistics**. In 2025, UNCTAD, jointly with the United Nations Statistics Division and the World Trade Organization, trained 3,625 participants (43.6 per cent women) through the Train for Trade e-learning course on merchandise and services trade statistics. Countries in Africa, including Cameroon, Egypt and Ghana, were among the leading participating States. Under the United Nations Development Account project titled "Quantifying South–South cooperation for the Sustainable Development Goals", UNCTAD held an engagement workshop in Nigeria (December 2025), to support data collection on South–South cooperation flows. UNCTAD presented a South–South cooperation measurement framework at international forums, including the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, at which a community of practice for member States was launched. UNCTAD continued a long-standing project with the West African Economic and Monetary Union on improving trade-in-services statistics across eight member states.[6] In 2025, Benin and Côte d'Ivoire completed full enterprise surveys using the UNCTAD Trade-in-Services Statistics Information System.

46. **Measuring and addressing illicit financial flows**. Under a project titled "Statistical measurement of tax and commercial illicit financial flows to enable more targeted policy action" funded by the Open Society Foundation, UNCTAD conducted policy workshops in Namibia (May 2025), Zambia (June 2025) and Ghana (September 2025), to train national technical working groups in applying the UNCTAD assess, analyse and apply framework, to translate the measurement of illicit financial flows into evidence-based policy action. Outcomes included the establishment of a dedicated measurement unit in Zambia and the development of national action plans in each country. A closing workshop was held in order to share findings across the three countries (March 2026). Under the United Nations Development Account project titled "Measuring and curbing illicit financial flows", implemented jointly with the regional commissions and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, UNCTAD supported Burkina Faso and Senegal in translating results from the measurement of illicit financial flows into policy action, with policy workshops organized in Ouagadougou (December 2025) and Dakar (January 2026), supporting the preparation of national action plans and reports. UNCTAD developed e-learning modules on methods for the measurement of illicit financial flows in English and French. Finally, UNCTAD presented the policy framework and results from pilot countries at a briefing for delegates from permanent missions to the United Nations Office at Geneva, organized in cooperation with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (December 2025).

III. Financial resources committed to Africa

47. In 2025, 33.9 per cent of the total project expenditure of UNCTAD, amounting to $19,979,521, was spent on projects in support of sustainable development in Africa. This represents a record in terms of value in the last 15 years, and a 7.4 percentage point increase in the share of total project expenditure devoted to Africa compared with in 2024, when the share was 26.5 per cent, amounting to $14,971,598. It also represents a reversal of the downward trend in expenditure dedicated to projects benefiting Africa since 2022.

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[6] Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Togo.