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Investment facilitation: Progress, prospects and policy options**Summary prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat**

1. In his opening remarks, the Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD underscored investment facilitation as a policy priority, to attract sustainable investment, noting progress made at the national, regional and multilateral levels, including with regard to the negotiations on the investment facilitation for development initiative at the World Trade Organization. He emphasized the gap between increasing global investment needs and the decline in flows. He further stated that mobilization of investment at scale required a holistic approach that moved from project-level to economy-wide facilitation. Digitalization had been at the centre of progress made on reforms, yet there was a need to move beyond the technical and into the systemic, to anchor investment in predictability, cooperation and shared prosperity. UNCTAD supported such efforts through technical assistance, guidance instruments and practical tools aimed at reducing costs and delays, enhancing transparency and accelerating reform implementation.

2. The parallel event, following opening remarks by the Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD and moderated by the Director of the Division on Investment and Enterprise of UNCTAD, featured the following panellists: Senior Adviser to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Nigeria; Minister of Commerce and Industry, Panama; State Secretary, Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy, Germany; Ambassador, Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations Office at Geneva; Deputy Director General, World Trade Organization; and Director, Directorate-General for Trade, European Commission.

3. One panellist stressed the need to attract not merely higher volumes of investment but qualitative investment aligned with development objectives. She noted that the policy landscape was shifting, with nearly 300 international investment agreements including facilitation provisions, thereby signalling momentum and anchoring reforms in emerging international practices. The investment protocol of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement served as a comprehensive framework, integrating investment promotion, facilitation, protection and sustainable development, and the panellist noted the role of UNCTAD in its formulation. In addition, the panellist stated that, to avoid regulatory fragmentation, vertical and horizontal coherence was required. Finally, the panellist described domestication steps in Nigeria and the expanded mandate of the investment agency.



4. Another panellist suggested applying the principles of the investment facilitation for development initiative, pending their formal incorporation. He emphasized that effective investment facilitation required a comprehensive approach, to create a predictable and supportive environment for investors.
 5. One panellist, with regard to effective investment facilitation, noted the need to enhance legal certainty, reduce administrative burdens and facilitate partner-matching through a continuous public–private dialogue mechanism. He also noted that effective investment facilitation required a comprehensive approach. In addition, he cited the Sustainable Investment Facilitation Agreement between the European Union and Angola as a practical example and highlighted complementary initiatives such as, under the Group of 20, the trade and investment working group, at which UNCTAD led discussions on investment policies, and Compact with Africa 2.0, aimed at deepening private investment.
 6. Another panellist noted emerging regional peer review and monitoring platforms. She also emphasized the need for a comprehensive approach, to ensure effective investment facilitation.
 7. One panellist highlighted the work of the World Trade Organization on needs assessments related to the investment facilitation for development initiative and cooperation with the International Trade Centre, UNCTAD and other international organizations, to support peer learning. He commended UNCTAD for technical assistance in relation to international investment facilitation commitments; work on reforming international investment agreements, to shape treaty design; and work on developing practical digital tools and international investment agreement databases.
 8. Another panellist also noted the Sustainable Investment Facilitation Agreement between the European Union and Angola, demonstrating how bilateral pacts could help the operationalization of the principles of the investment facilitation for development initiative, while embedding more sustainability standards.
 9. During the ensuing discussion, many panellists identified investment facilitation as a pro-development solution, to close widening investment gaps, rebuild investor confidence and invite private capital. Several panellists, with regard to effective investment facilitation, noted that common measures included streamlined entry procedures, coordinated approvals, one-stop investment services, focal points and ombudsperson-style grievance resolution, complemented by targeted support and financial tools, to de-risk projects and sustain reinvestment. Many panellists stressed the complementarity of action across the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels, to create a cohesive investment landscape; and noted that the investment facilitation for development initiative could serve as an essential global benchmark, with positive impacts on foreign direct investment flows. Several panellists stated that digitalization was a fundamental enabler of investment facilitation.
 10. Many panellists emphasized that moving from agreement to practical implementation was critical; measures included institutional arrangements, needs assessments to identify gaps and priorities, capacity-building aligned with national agendas and structured public–private consultations, to ensure that reforms met real business needs. Finally, several panellists commended UNCTAD technical assistance on international investment facilitation commitments and work on reforming international investment agreements. They noted that UNCTAD could intensify efforts and enhance multilateral cooperation aimed at translating facilitation commitments into predictable, transparent investor services and sustainable development outcomes.
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