



Agenda item: 7

General Debate

Statement by:

Japan



Statement by Mr. Norifumi KONDO

Minister, Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Japan

on the Occasion of the Sixteenth Session of the United Nations

Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD16)

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, Japan would like to thank the Government of Switzerland and the UNCTAD Secretariat for co-hosting UNCTAD16.

Trade has always been a central pillar to the global economy and to the economic development of countries, just as it was when UNCTAD was first founded. It remains one of the strongest drivers of growth and is an essential tool for Member States seeking to improve their economic prospects. Japan's own path toward economic development, much like that of many of its Asian neighbors, clearly demonstrates the power of trade to transform economies.

Around 60 years ago, UNCTAD was established to promote development, addressing trade-related problems faced by developing countries that called for derogations from the non-discriminatory, and most-favored-nation principles under the GATT. Reflecting on UNCTAD's contribution to the creation of the Generalized System of Preferences, we are reminded of how dramatically the global landscape of trade and development has evolved. The number of UN Member States has since doubled, and countries that were not Members at the time have since emerged as major actors in international trade.

We are seeing big changes, but big challenges persist. Indeed, issues surrounding trade and development have grown more complex due to the recent geopolitical tensions: the slowing of economic growth, the widening gap between rich and poor, climate change, environmental degradation, technological transformation, the digital divide, and debt and financial crises. As the value and *raison d'être* of the entire UN system, including UNCTAD, are being

tested in the quest to achieve the SDGs by 2030, it is essential for UNCTAD in particular, whose mandate deals with increasingly complex trade and development challenges, to reaffirm its important role.

Against this backdrop, it is timely that the theme for UNCTAD16 is “Driving Economic Transformation”. This should be a great opportunity for us to return to the original aspiration of this organization’s establishment and to send a strong message on trade and development to the international community.

Madam Chair,

To address more complex challenges, in light of the shift in the international community, UNCTAD must foster co-creation and solidarity with all partners more than ever. Without fully mobilizing the dynamism, innovation and technological capabilities of the private sector, it will be impossible to achieve “equitable, inclusive and sustainable development” in line with the SDGs and their core

principle of leaving no one behind.

In this regard, no single development model fits all countries. We must move beyond the traditional dichotomy of developing and developed countries, recognizing the diverse interests and needs of countries at different stages of development. It is essential to fully respect each country's ownership and to pursue win-win outcomes that serve our shared interests. In this spirit, discussions on development should be restructured.

We expect that UNCTAD can utilize its potential and expertise in analytical work and technical assistance within its core mandate of trade and development, and can become a catalyst that bridges Member States and relevant stakeholders.

Madam Chair,

As an initiative addressing trade and development, and connecting numerous stakeholders, we would like to highlight the Ninth Tokyo

International Conference on African Development (TICAD 9), which was convened in Japan this August.

Since 1993, Japan has been hosting TICAD, an international forum dedicated to promoting Africa's development. At TICAD 9, leaders from Japan and Africa, together with the co-organizers, reaffirmed the importance of advancing Africa's economic integration and connectivity, as well as improving the business environment to strengthen the role of the private sector as a key driver of productive transformation toward boosting trade across the continent.

To promote these efforts, Japan has announced a new initiative to enhance trade and investment to Africa through collaboration with countries in the Indian Ocean region, such as India and Middle Eastern nations—the Economic Region Initiative of Indian Ocean-Africa.

The TICAD's unique strength is that it is not a one-way, donor-client conference, but rather a platform for “co-creation.” While the concept behind TICAD has evolved over time, the core principles of African ownership and international partnership have consistently remained at its foundation. Guided by this enduring philosophy, Japan firmly believes that shifting the focus “from aid to investment” is a crucial mindset for developing economies to unlock their potential and accelerate sustainable and inclusive growth.

Finally, as a concrete initiative linking Japan and UNCTAD, Japan is contributing to a technical assistance project implemented by UNCTAD to enhance value addition and diversification in value chains of critical energy transition minerals across Southern Africa—specifically in Zambia, Namibia and Madagascar. This effort aims to foster a resilient and sustainable green transition.

Looking ahead, Japan remains committed to exploring effective and meaningful avenues of collaboration with UNCTAD, in support of African countries achieving the SDGs.

Madam Chair,

To conclude, I would like to refer to the ongoing UN80 initiative. In keeping with the UN80 spirit, we hope that UNCTAD will take this opportunity to review its mandate, enhance its efficiency and transparency, and further strengthen its governance in order to reinforce its credibility and impact.

We trust that UNCTAD16 will deliver a clear and forward-looking mandate for the coming four years and bring renewed hope to those in the most vulnerable situations.

I thank you, Madam Chair.