



Council of the  
European Union

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#### OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

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From: General Secretariat of the Council

On: 26 October 2015

To: Delegations

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Subject: UNCTAD XIV: The European Union's priorities for the 14th Conference on Trade and Development  
- Council conclusions (26 October 2015)

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Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on UNCTAD XIV: The European Union's priorities for the 14th Conference on Trade and Development, as adopted by the Council at its 3420th meeting held on 26 October 2015.

**Council conclusions**

**UNCTAD XIV: The European Union's priorities**

**for the 14th Conference on Trade and Development**

**EU priorities for UNCTAD XIV**

1. These conclusions set out the European Union's key objectives and priorities for the 14<sup>th</sup> United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XIV; time and place to be determined), which will establish UNCTAD's work programme for the next four years (2016-2020).
2. The Council welcomes the main theme of UNCTAD XIV: "From decision to action: moving toward an inclusive and equitable global economic environment for trade and development". The Council is committed to an outcome-orientated approach at UNCTAD XIV and underlines that the future work programme should build on the Doha Mandate (UNCTAD XIII, 2012).
3. The Council welcomes the Commission Staff Working Document 'To prepare an EU position in view of UNCTAD XIV Conference' as a useful input, including its analysis of the potential priorities of the EU, and the theme and sub-themes of the Conference.
4. The Council underlines that UNCTAD's activities should remain focused on its 'core'<sup>1</sup> mandate in order to avoid any overlap with the mandates of other international organisations and concentrate on areas where it has built a competitive advantage.

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<sup>1</sup> 'UNCTAD remains the focal point in the United Nations for the integrated treatment of trade and development, and interrelated issues in the areas of finance, technology, investment and sustainable development' (Paragraph 18, Doha Mandate, April 2012).

5. The Council considers that UNCTAD's mandate, with its three pillars of consensus-building, research and technical assistance, provides a useful platform for dialogue between developed and developing partners, and can also play a crucial role in the identification of comparative advantages for the organisation's activities in the areas of trade, sustainable development, technology, investment, finance and productive sectors of the economy.
  
6. In this light, the Council considers that UNCTAD should play an important role in the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. UNCTAD should use its long-standing expertise in capacity building, policy dialogue and research analysis to provide effective support to promote prosperity in developing countries by supporting the achievement of specific targets across the relevant SDGs. The Council recognises that environmental sustainability and tackling climate change are essential for developing countries' sustainable growth and invites UNCTAD to take into account these issues in its research work and in technical cooperation within its 'core' mandate.
  
7. As one of the key pillars of UNCTAD is technical cooperation and capacity building, the Council recognises that the organisation should help its Member States to define inclusive and sustainable development strategies in the areas of trade and development, and interrelated issues in the areas of investment, finance, technology and sustainable development. The Council considers that UNCTAD, through its research and technical assistance, can contribute specifically to the implementation of the SDG 'Revitalise the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development'.

8. The EU is committed to achieving gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment. It should be mainstreamed in all of UNCTAD's work. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda offer us a real and unique opportunity to emphasise the essential role of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, both as an individual goal and as a cross-cutting issue. The Council considers that UNCTAD should support and stimulate this process. UNCTAD should also focus on encouraging women's entrepreneurship, and provide support – through its research and policy dialogue – in efforts to improve access to finance and services aimed at Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).
  
9. The Council supports UNCTAD's main focus on the most vulnerable economies, in particular the LDCs. The Council considers that UNCTAD should also pay attention to the situation of Landlocked Developing Countries, Small Island Developing States, African economies and fragile states. The Council welcomes UNCTAD's engagement on LDC graduation and the advisory services provided for this purpose.
  
10. The Council invites UNCTAD to provide research work on the integration of MSMEs in developing countries into global and regional value chains. Other areas of interest where UNCTAD should undertake research, provide technical assistance or collaborate with other international organisations are Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), maritime transport, trade facilitation, trade in services and in commodities, linkages between trade and gender, competition law, consumer protection, and Information and Communications Technology (ICT). It is important that the EU's developing partners diversify their economies, foster the development of productive capacities to obtain job-rich growth, and improve the productivity of traditional sectors. UNCTAD could foster the further development of relations between emerging economies and developing countries by encouraging the development of their productive and trading capacities and by advocating for greater transparency on such cooperation.

11. The Council considers that UNCTAD should help in enhancing the cooperation between the private and the public sector and further encouraging the participation of the private sector in the economies of developing countries, including integrating them into the global economy – in particular through public-private partnerships and innovative financial instruments. UNCTAD's cooperation with civil society is also beneficial as it supports civil society actors, improving their advocacy role in support of sustainable development.
  
12. The Council considers that UNCTAD's work programme should foresee the enhancement of cooperation with other international organisations such as the ILO, the WTO, the OECD, regional and international financial institutions, the International Trade Centre (ITC), and knowledge institutions. UNCTAD should also collaborate with academia in research activities, inter alia trade-related statistics. This collaboration would not only help avoid duplication between the works of those international organisations but also clarify their respective responsibilities in each area of interest. Synergies could possibly be created through their cooperation, and more sustainable results achieved. In the same vein, UNCTAD's work programme should take into account the agreed outcomes of major international conferences, including those of the upcoming Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21).

13. The Council underlines the need to ensure that UNCTAD's results-based management is strengthened and that the recommendations set out by the Joint Inspection Unit are implemented by the UNCTAD Secretariat in order to increase the organisation's efficiency. In that sense, while acknowledging the efforts already undertaken, the Council believes that there is further room for improvement and encourages UNCTAD to continue building upon the specific measures taken by the Secretariat across the work plan's seven areas<sup>2</sup>, and upon the additional measures introduced by the Secretary General since September 2014 to strengthen internal accountability. The UNCTAD Trade and Development Board (TDB) should continue considering and evaluating, on an annual basis, the progress of the implementation of the recommendations set out in the Joint Inspection Unit review report and take action as appropriate. The Council considers that UNCTAD XIV should affirm that the TDB also has to report on the progress in implementation to the next conference (UNCTAD XV). UNCTAD should also continue reducing fragmentation of its project portfolio and maintain the process of consolidation of individual trust funds (TF) into broader thematic multi-year multi-donor TF.
14. The Council expects UNCTAD to continue delivering high-quality research and analysis, and further improve the quality of its technical assistance through the entire programme cycle. In addition, the Council considers that better linkages between UNCTAD's research outputs and its technical assistance work could enhance synergies between these two pillars. Efficiency and impact of the consensus-building pillar should also be further improved.

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The implementation of the work plan for enhancing the management and administration of UNCTAD focuses on seven areas: (1) an integrated results-based management framework; (2) enhancing monitoring and evaluation capacity; (3) enhancing outreach and communications, including with the Geneva-based missions; (4) enhanced coordination of activities internally and externally, including through improved processes and procedures; (5) equitable geographic and gender representation, and transparent and effective human resources management; (6) an effective fundraising strategy; and (7) the possibility of the establishment of a non-earmarked trust fund.

15. The Council reiterates the EU's commitment to a successful outcome of the UNCTAD XIV that will confirm UNCTAD's central role in promoting trade and development.
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