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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 between May 2023 and April 2024. 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 global economy. Of the total project expenditure of UNCTAD, 28 per cent was directed towards these activities, amounting to \$15,584,107 as at January 2024.



I. Introduction

1. In 2015, African Heads of State and Government adopted Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, a shared strategic framework for inclusive growth and sustainable development on the continent, with the following seven 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 of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law; a peaceful and secure Africa; an Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics; 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.

2. 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 between May 2023 and April 2024; the amount of project-related resources directed to these activities is highlighted. The activities are grouped under the four aspirations in Agenda 2063 that they support, which are directly relevant to the mandate of UNCTAD, namely, aspirations 1, 2, 6 and 7.

II. Key activities

A. Inclusive growth and sustainable development

3. In the reporting period, UNCTAD leveraged its research and analysis and technical cooperation capacities to support inclusive growth and sustainable development in countries in Africa.

4. ***Economic Development in Africa Report 2023: The Potential of Africa to Capture Technology-intensive Global Supply Chains.*** UNCTAD, in the report, notes that multiple global crises have affected Africa disproportionately compared with other regions, despite the low level of integration of African economies into global supply chains. An analysis is provided of possible opportunities in Africa for engaging in supply chains and thereby creating employment opportunities, inclusive growth and sustainable development, and at the same time providing responses to global supply chain disruptions by contributing to the diversification of supply chains. The report was launched in Dakar and Nairobi in August 2023; the launch in Nairobi was followed by a high-level dialogue with the President of Kenya. Based on the report, UNCTAD organized a side event on the margins of the ninth Africa Think Tank Summit, held in Lusaka in November 2023.

5. ***The Least Developed Countries Report 2023: Crisis-resilient Development Finance.*** UNCTAD, in the report, notes that multiple global crises, the climate emergency, growing debt burdens, dependence on commodities and declining foreign investments have strained the finances of the 45 least developed countries, 33 of which are in Africa, and that, as a result, progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and a low-carbon transition has been jeopardized. UNCTAD, in the report, emphasizes the need for a lasting, multilateral solution to the debt crisis in these countries and for the mobilization of the development and climate finance required.

6. **National productive capacity gap assessments.** In the reporting period, UNCTAD completed assessments in five countries,² providing policy recommendations to help advance structural transformation and sustainable development. Holistic productive capacities development programmes were completed for three countries and validated by the respective Governments.³ These comprehensive programmes are multidimensional and

¹ TD/541/Add.2, paragraph 127 v (vi).

² Comoros, Djibouti, Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal.

³ Ethiopia, Kenya, Zambia.

multi-annual; they emanate from the national productive capacity gap assessments, building on evidence-based and data-driven assessments using the productive capacities index, and are designed to tap comparative advantages in countries and help relieve binding constraints to development. Two capacity-building workshops were organized in Malawi on productive capacities for policymakers in Africa, one for policymakers and one for expert statisticians, and additional capacity-building activities took place in the three programme countries during the validation workshops of the holistic programmes. Beneficiaries indicated that the workshops had helped improve expertise among national policymakers and statisticians and to persuade various stakeholders to focus on productive capacities and to utilize the index in addressing development challenges.

7. **European Union–UNCTAD joint programme of support for Angola: Train for Trade II.** The cross-divisional programme aimed to foster productive capacities and structural transformation, including diversification, and support Angola in linking to regional and global value chains through training, technical advice and support for policy development and implementation. The steering committee meeting was organized at the ministerial level. The programme has helped build the capacities of 3,300 Angolans (34 per cent of whom were women). From May 2023 to the end of the programme in December 2023, 22 activities were implemented, with the participation of 975 stakeholders. In total, 73 trainers were trained, and their capacities were refreshed in 2023 in the areas of apiculture sector development, entrepreneurship, identification of green sectors for diversification, trade facilitation and non-trade measures. In 2023, research and training material published under the programme included the following: *A Sustainability Integration Framework for Institutional Investors*; *Mapping of Cultural and Creative Industries in Angola*; and *Report on the Multi-stakeholder Dialogue of the Elaboration of the National Entrepreneurship Strategy*. The programme provided analysis, technical advice and drafting support for 15 different policy processes and helped to map the value chains of eight green products and support their development towards exportability. Among entrepreneurs trained through Empretec, 85 per cent reported increased revenues and a 72 per cent annual increase in job creation in their enterprises. UNCTAD work in Angola has contributed to improved policy coordination, formulation and implementation, by bringing together 23 ministries and public and private institutions. In 2022, the Programme was selected as a global success story in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and inspired the Transforming for Trade high impact initiative on accelerating progress towards achieving the Goals. In this regard, UNCTAD organized a high-level panel discussion as a side event during the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly, featuring several ministers and State secretaries, as well as representatives of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the private sector and civil society, and attended by about 200 participants, following which 30 countries expressed interest in having the high impact initiative implemented in their countries.

8. **Coherent strategies for productive capacity development.** Under a United Nations Development Account project titled “Coherent strategies for productive capacity development in African least developed countries” implemented by UNCTAD in three countries,⁴ UNCTAD organized two study tours for policymakers on best practices and lessons learned on the regulation, design and operation of special economic zones in countries leveraging industrial parks for productive transformation and economic development, in Morocco in May 2023⁵ and in Mauritius in October 2023⁶ (81 per cent of participants of the tour in Mauritius rated the event as “excellent”).

9. **Trade, poverty and inequality.** With regard to the nexus of trade, poverty and inequality and as part of identifying policies to help address poverty and inequality in Africa and in the least developed countries, in 2023, UNCTAD issued *Reducing Inequality and Poverty in Malawi: Policy Analyses and Options*, a study on the role of economic and

⁴ Burkina Faso, Rwanda, United Republic of Tanzania.

⁵ For policymakers from Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Madagascar, Mali and Morocco.

⁶ For policymakers from Botswana, Mauritius, Rwanda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

social policies in understanding the evolution of poverty and inequality in Malawi over the past three decades. UNCTAD is preparing a similar study for Burkina Faso and, in January 2024, organized, with the Permanent Mission of Burkina Faso in Geneva, a seminar to discuss an initial draft, bringing together representatives from relevant ministries, think tanks and civil society, to provide insights that will be reflected in the study.

10. **Promoting value addition in commodities.** UNCTAD supports commodity-dependent countries in strengthening value addition, to better harness resources for development; 45 of 54 countries in Africa are dependent on commodities for over 60 per cent of export revenue. In 2023, UNCTAD issued the following with regard to commodities matters in Africa: *The State of Commodity Dependence 2023*; *Commodities and Development Report 2023: Inclusive Diversification and Energy Transition*; *Commodities at a Glance: Special Issue on Access to Energy in Sub-Saharan Africa*; and *Caractéristiques associées à l'accès aux intrants agricoles dans le secteur du coton: Le cas de la région de Kara au Togo [Characteristics Associated with Access to Agricultural Inputs in the Cotton Sector: The Case of the Kara Region in Togo]*. The fourteenth session of the Multi-Year Expert Meeting on Commodities and Development was held in October 2023 and the nineteenth Annual General Meeting of the Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals and Sustainable Development, on the theme “Sharing mining benefits in the energy transition”, was held in November 2023.

11. **Sustainable manufacturing and environmental pollution programme, 2019–2026.** UNCTAD implemented a series of projects in countries in Africa as part of its partnership in this programme, established by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, with a commitment of £24.6 million. The programme aims to help improve knowledge and generate scientific studies on the environmental health and socioeconomic impacts of selected manufacturing sectors in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia; identify technology-based tools to help address the most pressing environmental health issues associated with manufacturing in focus countries; and invest in developing business processes and systems to promote the uptake of identified pollution control tools. Under the programme, UNCTAD supported a workshop for policymakers from the seven member countries of the East African Community, to discuss how national laws and experiences could help build a regional harmonized policy for reducing single-use plastics in East Africa, and mapped single-use plastics policies across the member countries.

12. **Competition and consumer protection.** UNCTAD continued work on strengthening competition and consumer protection policies in Africa. As part of a three-year project on reinforcing the legal and policy frameworks governing competition and consumer protection in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, UNCTAD organized a fact-finding mission in September 2023, findings from which formed the basis of recommendations on strengthening the institutional and regulatory framework. UNCTAD continued to provide technical assistance and capacity-building for Lusophone countries in Africa under a project financed by Portugal; in 2022 and 2023, six webinars were organized on competition and consumer protection-related topics, helping to promote further regional cooperation through the participation of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa Commission and the West African Economic and Monetary Union Secretariat. Since 2022, UNCTAD has been assisting the competition authority of Cabo Verde. Implemented activities have brought together more experienced and younger and small authorities, boosting bilateral cooperation, and beneficiaries report bilateral cooperation arrangements in the field of competition.⁷ Under a memorandum of understanding with the African Continental Free Trade Area Secretariat, UNCTAD organized two regional capacity-building workshops in collaboration with the Economic Community of Central African States and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, to strengthen the knowledge of 120 participants on the Protocol on Competition Policy and prepare for negotiations on the determination of thresholds for mergers and acquisitions and abuse of dominance under the African Continental Free Trade Area. UNCTAD supported the

⁷ Angola–Cabo Verde; Angola–Portugal; Cabo Verde–Mozambique; Mozambique–Angola; Mozambique–Brazil; Mozambique–Portugal.

conduct of the voluntary peer review of the consumer protection law and policy of Gabon by Morocco, the United States of America and Viet Nam; following one of the recommendations of the review, UNCTAD is collaborating with the Capital Development Fund on the promotion of financial consumer protection in Gabon and seeking to involve civil society and businesses in the dissemination of the peer review report.

13. **E-trade readiness assessments.** UNCTAD has conducted assessments in 22 countries in Africa, offering diagnostics and policy advice, to foster an enabling environment for electronic commerce (e-commerce). In the reporting period, assessments were completed in Ghana and Mauritania; assessments in Algeria and Zimbabwe are ongoing.

14. **National and regional e-commerce strategies and action plans.** UNCTAD assisted with the implementation of the e-trade readiness assessment action plan in Tunisia, including a capacity-building workshop, and the development of a regional e-commerce strategy for the Economic Community of West African States, adopted in April 2023. Côte d'Ivoire and Kenya have launched national e-commerce strategies.

15. **Technical assistance in producing digital economy statistics.** UNCTAD collaborates with international organizations on enhancing digital economy statistics in developing countries. Workshops were held in Botswana and the United Arab Emirates, aimed at improving understanding of measuring e-commerce and digital trade.

16. **UNCTAD eWeek 2023.** UNCTAD organized eWeek under the theme “Shaping the future of the digital economy” in December 2023. There were over 3,500 participants worldwide, including stakeholders from 18 countries in Africa. Future collaboration with the African Export-Import Bank is being explored.

17. **Science, technology and innovation.** UNCTAD conducted an in-depth review of the science, technology and innovation policy environment in Seychelles. Assessment projects in Seychelles, South Africa and Zambia focused on agrovoltaic, hydrogen and biogas technologies, respectively.

18. **Crop Watch innovative cooperation programme.** Several countries in Africa⁸ participate in this initiative, aimed at transitioning from manual agricultural surveys to remote-sensing crop monitoring.

19. **Courses on key issues on the international economic agenda.** UNCTAD delivered the three following courses for permanent missions in Geneva, in September and November 2023: shaping the future of supply chains in Africa, optimizing opportunities and strategic value and *Economic Development in Africa Report 2023*; challenges and opportunities of green innovation and sustainability; and unlocking the potential of the creative economy for resilience and sustainable development. Twenty-two delegates from 11 African permanent missions⁹ attended the three courses. A regional course for the Middle East and North Africa was held in Egypt in November–December 2023, with 25 participants, 16 of them from seven countries in Africa.¹⁰ A regional course for Africa was held in Kenya in April 2024, in collaboration with the University of Nairobi.

20. **Investment in health.** The United Nations Development Account project titled “Investment incentives for local production of essential antibiotics in East Africa” concluded in December 2023 with the adoption of an East African Community regional policy framework on the production and supply of antibiotics and a regional mechanism for information exchanges in this area. The framework introduces incentives that address the current bottlenecks in the local production of antibiotics, and the information exchanges will help enable the development and updating on a regular basis of a shortlist of essential antibiotics experiencing shortages, recurrent interruptions of supply, excessive pricing and other supply-related challenges. UNCTAD issued advisory reports on improving the investment landscape for the local production of essential antibiotics for three countries.¹¹

⁸ Including Algeria, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Mauritius, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

⁹ Angola, Burkina Faso, Comoros, Congo, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Morocco, Nigeria, Sudan, Togo.

¹⁰ Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia.

¹¹ Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda.

21. **Business facilitation.** The UNCTAD digital government platforms for business and investment facilitation help Governments simplify and automate administrative procedures. In the reporting period, support was provided for 10 countries in Africa.¹²

22. **Entrepreneurship.** UNCTAD and the Africa Economic Zones Organization jointly prepared a guide for practitioners, exploring the opportunities and challenges involved in promoting entrepreneurship, titled *Promoting Microenterprise and Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Development and Entrepreneurship In and Around Special Economic Zones in Africa*. UNCTAD is assisting the Government of Angola in the design of a national entrepreneurship strategy and the Government of Uganda with the review of the entrepreneurship policy. Both initiatives aim to support the countries in boosting entrepreneurship and supporting microenterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises in increasing contributions to national efforts to diversify and build more resilient economies. In Angola, in collaboration with a local non-governmental organization that supports grass-roots farming communities with a view to improving livelihoods, UNCTAD organized three farming-as-a-business workshops on horticulture value chains and fish farming for 90 smallholders, including 60 women. UNCTAD, in collaboration with the Department of Small Business Development, developed *Entrepreneurship Strategy Review: South Africa*, analysing the entrepreneurial ecosystem in South Africa, based on the UNCTAD Entrepreneurship Policy Framework, and providing policy options in an action plan aligned with the national integrated small enterprise development master plan.

23. **Empretec.** UNCTAD works with local counterparts in six countries in Africa¹³ to help improve the provision of professional business development services to microenterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises through Empretec centres, which work with Governments in the provision of training, advisory and consulting services, piloting and, in some cases, public-funded initiatives, to help stimulate entrepreneurship and innovation, particularly among vulnerable groups such as women and youth.

24. **Accounting and reporting.** UNCTAD created a regional partnership for the promotion of sustainability and Goals-related reporting in Africa, to help facilitate the exchange of good practices in the implementation of sustainability reporting standards and the identification of lessons learned, to improve the quality of sustainability reporting. At present, the partnership has over 55 members from 28 countries. UNCTAD assists several countries in Africa, including Cameroon and Uganda, in reinforcing accounting and reporting infrastructure.

25. **Debt Management and Financial Analysis System (DMFAS).** The programme continued to support countries in Africa in public debt management. The software is used in managing public liabilities on a day-to-day basis in 25 debt management offices in Africa.¹⁴ UNCTAD provides support in building comprehensive debt databases for operational purposes, analysis and reporting. The programme also provided nearly 40 training and capacity-building opportunities for debt management officials in Africa in the use and maintenance of the software, debt data validation, debt statistics, debt portfolio analysis and DMFAS integration with public financial management information systems. As a result, in the reporting period, 96 per cent of user countries in Africa had comprehensive central government external debt records; and 73 per cent, comprehensive domestic debt records. With UNCTAD support, countries continued to progress in the area of debt reporting and debt analysis, with 19 countries in Africa producing debt statistical bulletins (one more than in the previous period) and 16 countries producing debt portfolio reviews (one more than in the previous period), thereby enhancing debt data transparency. In addition, 10 countries have up-to-date procedural manuals and eight countries have disaster recovery plans that cover the DMFAS database. In relation to reporting to international debt databases, in the

¹² Angola, Benin, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gambia, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, Togo, Zimbabwe.

¹³ Angola, Benin, Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, Zimbabwe.

¹⁴ Algeria, Angola, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Mauritania, Niger, Rwanda, Sudan, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

reporting period, 88 per cent of DMFAS user countries in Africa reported to the World Bank debtor reporting system database.

26. **Mobilizing development finance.** The United Nations Development Account project titled “Mobilizing external financial resources beyond [the pandemic] for greener, more equal and sustainable development in selected vulnerable small island developing States in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean” is aimed at strengthening the national capacities of four countries¹⁵ to mobilize affordable external financial resources. A mission to Cabo Verde was conducted in April 2024 and a mission to the Comoros is planned.

27. **Debt grant initiative.** UNCTAD is implementing this extrabudgetary programme aimed at improving the sovereign debt landscape. UNCTAD aims to support countries in Africa that are part of the Global Sovereign Debt Round Table of the International Monetary Fund through an experience and information-sharing platform. The Secretary-General of UNCTAD has convened two meetings on this issue to date, attended by representatives of Ethiopia, Ghana and Zambia.

B. Regional integration

28. UNCTAD supports countries in Africa in the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area and in harnessing regional integration for sustainable development. UNCTAD also supported subregional integration efforts on the continent.

29. **Supporting national African Continental Free Trade Area implementation strategies.** In collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa and the German Development Cooperation agency, UNCTAD provides advisory support to four countries¹⁶ on national implementation strategies, including through the provision to Governments of information and tools in order to map domestic and regional value chains; unlock export potential under the African Continental Free Trade Area, with sectoral considerations of the participation of women and youth; identify feasible product space and diversification opportunities (e.g. targeting green products or products with benefits for social development such as health-care products); and engage in policy dialogues with the private sector, civil society and other stakeholders on better understanding challenges in and opportunities for export diversification, implementing industrialization policies, mobilizing domestic resources and investments and building productive capacities.

30. **Opportunity and issue-based coalitions.** As co-convenor of the Opportunity and Issue-based Coalition on ensuring effective and efficient macroeconomic management and accelerated inclusive economic transformation and diversification, UNCTAD, in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa and the United Nations Development Programme, contributed to understanding of the African Continental Free Trade Area among several actors, including policymakers, parliamentarians, private sector entities, small and medium-sized enterprises, women and youth. The coalition task force provided advisory support to member States and regional economic commissions, to develop national strategies and help implement the African Continental Free Trade Area through knowledge products offering evidence-based recommendations to policymakers.

31. **E-commerce.** UNCTAD contributed to capacity-building sessions for African Continental Free Trade Area negotiators, addressing customs duties on electronic transmissions and cross-border data flows. UNCTAD participated in the conference on national implementation strategies held in January 2024.

32. **Non-tariff measures regulatory transparency initiative.** Non-tariff measures can be 3–4 times more costly than traditional tariffs, and disproportionately affect developing countries and small and medium-sized enterprises. Many non-tariff measures address public policy goals, yet there is a need for greater transparency. The African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement requires regulatory transparency in the annexes on customs

¹⁵ Belize, Cabo Verde, Comoros, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

¹⁶ Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Malawi, Niger.

cooperation and mutual administrative assistance, trade facilitation, technical barriers to trade and sanitary and phytosanitary measures. As the lead entity for the collection of data on non-tariff measures, UNCTAD serves as a technical partner of the African Continental Free Trade Area Secretariat in implementing the required transparency on such measures and working towards the elimination of unnecessary measures. In 2023, UNCTAD completed data collection on non-tariff measures in 18 countries.¹⁷ Data collection in five countries is scheduled for completion in 2024.¹⁸ Funding in this regard was provided by Germany, the national metrology institute of Germany, the Islamic Development Bank and the World Bank, and activities were conducted in collaboration with the Tripartite Free Trade Area of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the East African Community and the Southern African Development Community. UNCTAD helped raise awareness of the importance and benefits of regulatory transparency at nine third-party events with a total of 231 participants.

33. Eliminating non-tariff barriers in the African Continental Free Trade Area.

UNCTAD worked with member States to develop the online non-tariff barriers reporting, monitoring and elimination tool, launched by African Heads of State in 2019, which the private sector, including microenterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises, informal traders, women and youth entrepreneurs, can use to highlight barriers they face in intra-African trade, which are then addressed through national focal points that have been trained by UNCTAD. The mechanism has, to date, succeeded in eliminating several non-tariff barriers. The effectiveness of the mechanism has been further enhanced through the hiring of two local trade information officers in Cameroon and Chad, who interact with traders at borders and facilitate the notification of non-tariff barriers. In 2023, UNCTAD and the African Continental Free Trade Area Secretariat, in collaboration with national and regional economic community focal points, organized a series of awareness-raising workshops; two national workshops were conducted in Cameroon and Chad and two regional workshops were conducted in Lomé for the Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire–Lagos, Nigeria corridor (in collaboration with the Directorate of Customs and Trade Facilitation of the African Continental Free Trade Area) and in Gabon for the Economic Community of Central African States region (in collaboration with the Commission of the Community). The workshops focused on demonstrating the use of the non-tariff barriers reporting mechanism and the resolution of barriers, and served as platforms for identifying existing non-tariff barriers and other challenges noted by private sector business associations and individuals from the States and regions. Traders also noted various non-tariff barriers related to customs delays at border posts and ports and to sanitary and phytosanitary measures.

34. International investment agreements. UNCTAD is part of the task force assisting the African Continental Free Trade Area Secretariat in negotiations on the Investment Protocol and the annex on investment dispute settlement. In May 2023, UNCTAD provided policy options on drafting practices for investor–State dispute settlement and other dispute settlement mechanisms in new-generation international investment agreements. In January 2024, UNCTAD provided a capacity-building workshop for government officials from 18 countries in Africa on trade negotiations, with a focus on the African Continental Free Trade Area; best practices and recent trends in international investment agreements, including the recent turn towards investment facilitation; and innovations in the Investment Protocol, discussions on the dispute settlement annex and next steps for implementation.

35. Promoting green value chains in national implementation strategies. UNCTAD, in cooperation with the Economic Commission for Africa, continued to implement a project on the inclusion of green initiatives in the national implementation strategies of 40 countries in Africa, funded by the Government of Denmark, aimed at selecting priority green value chains for support at the national and regional levels and identifying challenges and opportunities for expanding sectoral production in the context of the African

¹⁷ Botswana, Burundi, Comoros, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Gambia, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Niger, Rwanda, Seychelles, Togo, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia.

¹⁸ Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Zimbabwe.

Continental Free Trade Area. By end-2023, among the 20 project countries, four countries¹⁹ had completed project activities. In North Africa, draft national strategies have been prepared and national workshops will be held in 2024 to present them to stakeholders. In Chad and Gabon, national experts are finalizing the preparation of recommendations for national strategies.

36. **Africa Dialogue Series 2023.** UNCTAD worked with the United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, the Permanent Observer Mission of the African Union to the United Nations and the African Continental Free Trade Area Secretariat in preparing and delivering on the Dialogue Series on the theme “Market and scale: Unlocking industrialization through intra-African trade”, held in New York in May 2023. UNCTAD prepared a policy paper and organized a virtual high-level panel on the theme “Boosting trade facilitation and rethinking the foundations of Africa’s export diversification”.

37. **Strengthening value chains and market access in the Economic Community of West African States region.** This project, financed by the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa and the Islamic Development Bank, is aimed at promoting intra-African trade and regional integration in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area; focuses on the analysis of value addition, market access and regional cooperation opportunities in agrifood value chains; and seeks to support the formulation of bankable projects, including in the Gambia, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. In 2023, UNCTAD completed national value chain diagnostics and consultations with government institutions and exporting businesses, and organized a regional workshop with public and private sector representatives, the Economic Community of West African States and the International Organization for Standardization, to review identified projects, share lessons from national diagnostics and build capacities among stakeholders to promote agrifood value chain development and intra-African exports.

38. **Investment facilitation.** UNCTAD and the Southern African Customs Union, in collaboration with all member States of the Union, developed an investment facilitation digital monitor. Following an online inception workshop held in June 2023, UNCTAD completed a comprehensive mapping of all procedures pertaining to investor registration and investment licencing across the region, with a verification process during which each member State confirmed the accuracy of the collected information. The monitor was officially launched at a regional stakeholder workshop held in November 2023 that provided a platform for discussing best practices and identifying gaps in investment facilitation in the region and served as an opportunity to offer policy recommendations and technical assistance and to deliberate on the forthcoming phases of the project.

39. **Enhancing transit, transport and trade facilitation in West Africa.** In the reporting period, UNCTAD completed the implementation of this Enhanced Integrated Framework project, aimed at strengthening regional cooperation on transit and transport through the quadrilateral declaration signed by commerce and transport ministers of the four project countries²⁰ and helping to simplify customs and border regulations along the Lomé–Ouagadougou and Cotonou, Benin–Niamey corridors. The project leveraged the Agreement on Trade Facilitation and single windows to help improve legislation, harmonize steps and reduce operational and logistics-related costs. A study on the interoperability of single windows was developed to encourage further subregional integration across countries in West Africa. The project provided training to local actors involved in transit, transport and trade facilitation, and a working group on transit and transport under the national trade facilitation committees of the four countries will continue the coordination work.

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

40. In the reporting period, UNCTAD implemented a series of activities aimed at supporting people-driven development in Africa, with a focus on gender-related issues.

¹⁹ Burkina Faso, Gambia, Senegal, Togo.

²⁰ Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger, Togo.

41. **Online courses on trade and gender.** UNCTAD, in cooperation with the Enhanced Integrated Framework, delivered an online course on trade and gender in the least developed countries in March–April 2023, aimed at equipping policymakers, academics and civil society representatives in developing countries and the least developed countries with analytical tools to analyse the two-way relationship between trade and gender and produce gender-aware policy, research and advocacy. UNCTAD delivered an online course on trade and gender with a focus on e-commerce in May–June; 89 per cent of participants indicated that the course had been “extremely or very successful” in enhancing understanding of the two-way relationship between trade and gender with respect to e-commerce. Both courses were delivered in English and French, and benefited 269 stakeholders from 38 countries in Africa.²¹ In September 2023, UNCTAD delivered an online master class in English and French, to further train 30 stakeholders from 18 countries in Africa,²² who had already participated in an UNCTAD course on trade and gender, to become champions on trade and gender and assist national policymakers dealing with trade and gender and women’s economic empowerment issues. The master class covered the following topics: small-scale and informal cross-border trade; non-tariff measures and opportunities and challenges for women entrepreneurs; logistics-related services and trade facilitation; e-commerce and women’s economic empowerment; intellectual property rights and women’s economic empowerment; and market access for women entrepreneurs in Africa.

42. **Supporting women cross-border traders in Mozambique.** Informal and small-scale cross-border trade is a major characteristic of the economic and social landscape in Africa, representing up to 40 per cent of regional trade. Women make up the largest share of cross-border traders, representing 70–80 per cent in some countries. To support women cross-border traders and associations, UNCTAD, in cooperation with Trade Mark Africa, carried out four training sessions in Mozambique for a total of 113 participants, to raise awareness of trade rules and customs procedures and to strengthen entrepreneurial skills among traders; the presence of border officers provided an opportunity for dialogue between authorities and traders. Participants indicated that the session had improved understanding of their rights and obligations and of regional trade rules; as a result, 78 per cent of participants expressed confidence in crossing borders through the usual channels and 72 per cent stated that they would be able to formalize their businesses within the next 12 months. UNCTAD organized a policy dialogue in Maputo in July 2023 with the Ministry of Industry and Commerce of Mozambique and Trade Mark Africa, to present the main findings in *Mozambique’s Integration into Regional Value Chains and the Role of Women Small-scale Cross-border Traders* and to discuss the potential benefits of establishing a subcommittee of the national trade facilitation committee, on small-scale and informal cross-border trade.

43. **Empowering women in the ocean economy.** In cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Global Seaweed Coalition, UNCTAD organized an event at the Public Forum of the World Trade Organization in September 2023 titled “Empowering waves: An ocean of opportunities for women in the blue economy” that addressed the role of women in three key sectors of the blue economy, namely fisheries, aquaculture and seaweed; examined existing gender gaps and barriers; and discussed best practices and innovative approaches to better supporting women’s participation in these sectors. Several success stories were presented, including an initiative in the United Republic of Tanzania on women’s participation in fisheries and aquaculture, promoting women’s involvement in leadership positions, to lead to better representation and the development of gender-responsive policies and practices in the sector.

²¹ Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Chad, Cameroon, Comoros, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

²² Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Togo, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia.

44. **Gender and digital trade.** UNCTAD, the Permanent Mission of Italy in Geneva, and the Standards and Trade Development Facility co-organized an event during eWeek in December 2023 titled “Trade regulations in the digital environment: Is there a gender component?”, focused on the fact that a wide range of measures, policies and practices regarding consumer protection, data privacy, market access and export procedures can create opportunities and barriers for women in accessing and benefiting from e-commerce; and that recognizing the gender-related effects of international trade rules is critical in fostering an environment in which women-led businesses can benefit from e-commerce opportunities.

45. **E-trade for women initiative.** This initiative, launched in 2019, helps empower women digital entrepreneurs. Master classes were organized in Africa, involving 92 participants, and regional communities for women digital entrepreneurs were established.

46. **UNCTAD collaboration with Okayama University, Japan.** Under this programme, joint research and training courses are offered to young women scientists from developing countries. In the reporting period, researchers from Madagascar and South Africa were selected to participate in the programme.

47. **Workshop on science, technology and innovation.** UNCTAD, in partnership with Thailand, organized a workshop focused on exploring the bio-circular-green model for sustainable solutions and empowering women researchers from three countries.²³

D. Integration into the global economy

48. In the reporting period, UNCTAD implemented a series of activities aimed at supporting participation by countries in Africa in the global economy.

49. **Foreign direct investment (FDI) trends.** UNCTAD, in *World Investment Report 2023: Investing in Sustainable Energy for All*, analysed FDI on the continent and noted that investment flows to Africa dropped to \$45 billion in 2022, the level in 2019, from a record \$80 billion in 2021, and accounted for 3.5 per cent of global FDI. Despite the decrease in FDI inflows, investment activity in Africa is on the rise. The number of greenfield project announcements rose by 39 per cent, to 766. Six of the top 15 greenfield investment megaprojects (worth over \$10 billion) announced in 2022 were in Africa. In contrast, international project finance deals in Africa showed a decline of 47 per cent in value (\$74 billion, down from \$140 billion in 2021), despite a 15 per cent increase in project numbers, to 157. Investors from Europe remain the largest holders of FDI stock in Africa.

50. **Investment policy review programme.** UNCTAD continued to provide assessments of the investment environment and policy recommendations, to further facilitate and help improve the conditions for domestic and foreign investment. UNCTAD completed an investment policy review for the West African Economic and Monetary Union that showed that development challenges in the region remained significant and required significant investment, particularly in education and infrastructure and to ensure security, including food security. National development plans and strategic regional initiatives highlight the importance of investment and the private sector as levers of economic transformation. In the reporting period, UNCTAD provided assistance to beneficiaries of the programme in assessing the implementation of recommendations and delivered a review of the implementation of the investment policy review of Mauritania, showing that the Government had taken initiatives to support private sector development by simplifying the process for business creation, strengthening the competition regime and revising the tax policy framework. Similar work is ongoing for Angola, Cabo Verde and the Gambia. In the reporting period, Tunisia and member States of the Southern African Customs Union also benefited from investment policy review activities.

51. **International investment agreements.** In cooperation with the Islamic Development Bank Group, UNCTAD held a capacity-building workshop for government

²³ Egypt, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania.

officials from 15 countries in Africa and members of the Bank on new approaches to international investment policymaking in Africa, discussing trends in policymaking, to address global challenges, including challenges related to climate change, health and interactions with taxation measures. In December 2023, UNCTAD, in cooperation with the General Authority for Investment and Free Zones of Egypt, organized a capacity-building workshop on new reform elements for international investment agreements, to shed light on a wide range of issues, including international investment policy reforms in Egypt; investment facilitation; climate change; global tax reform; and the regionalization of investment law.

52. **Small and medium-sized enterprises and FDI.** In 2023, UNCTAD prepared a report on international investment by small and medium-sized enterprises that included case studies from three countries,²⁴ presented an innovative view of how to reduce the common investment policy bias towards large multinational enterprises in host and home countries, considered the role of small and medium-sized enterprises in South–South and intraregional FDI and provided practical recommendations on how to maximize the development impact of small and medium-sized enterprise FDI.

53. **World Investment Forum 2023.** The Forum included the participation of the President of Togo and ministers from 14 countries in Africa.²⁵ Sessions were held on showcasing reforms to promote Goals-related investment, at which government officials from Mauritania, Togo and the West African Economic and Monetary Union region presented policy reform initiatives and investment opportunities and emphasized strategic policy decisions and key actions for improving the business climate and increasing the contribution of domestic and foreign investment to national development objectives and the Goals. UNCTAD, in cooperation with the African Continental Free Trade Area Secretariat, held a session titled “Protocol on investment: Towards a new generation of investment policies in Africa” that, in line with the road map on the African Union Theme of the Year for 2023, brought together stakeholders to discuss the innovative features of the protocol and next steps in its implementation, aimed at stimulating public and private action on investment for sustainable development in Africa. A high-level event on mobilizing institutional investment in Africa addressed sustainable investment opportunities for institutional investors, as well as the actions that African Governments and sovereign and public financial institutions can take to attract international investment for sustainable development. UNCTAD and the Africa Sovereign Investors Forum, a network of key African sovereign investors, announced a partnership to support countries in Africa and sovereign funds in facilitating long-term institutional investment for sustainable development on the continent.

54. **Commercial diplomacy.** Under the European Union–UNCTAD joint programme of support for Angola: Train for Trade II, UNCTAD continued to support the Government of Angola in trade negotiations, regional integration and economic partnership agreement negotiations with the European Union. Under a European Union and United Nations Industrial Development Organization project, UNCTAD provided technical and advisory support to the Government of Mozambique, to help build capacity in trade remedies and safeguards.

55. **Capacity-building for negotiations on trade in services.** UNCTAD contributed to the capacity-building programme on trade negotiations organized by the Government of Singapore for trade officials from 11 countries in Africa²⁶ through a course held in January 2024, covering trade in services, investment and e-commerce and digital trade. Under the European Union–UNCTAD joint programme of support for Angola: Train for Trade II, UNCTAD developed and delivered an online course on trade in services for development for Angola in November–December 2023, the main participants of which were officials from the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. The course was complemented by a webinar

²⁴ Ghana, Morocco, South Africa.

²⁵ Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Egypt, Gambia, Guinea, Mauritania, Mauritius, Namibia, Seychelles, Togo, United Republic of Tanzania, Zimbabwe.

²⁶ Angola, Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Morocco, Namibia, Kenya, Seychelles, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania.

held in December 2023 aimed at helping to enhance knowledge among officials on regional and multilateral trade frameworks on services and raise awareness of the role of trade in services for economic development in Angola (attended by 27 participants).

56. **Creative economy.** Under the European Union–UNCTAD joint programme of support for Angola: Train for Trade II, UNCTAD supported Angola in diversifying production and exports, including by harnessing new sustainable growth areas such as the creative industry. UNCTAD developed a mapping of cultural and creative industries and organized six online training sessions for public and private sector stakeholders on various related issues, such as governance, entrepreneurship, culture diplomacy and branding.

57. **Train for Trade programme.** This programme, spanning e-commerce, trade statistics and port management, aims to help develop local capacities and promote international trade, and has reached over 1,300 trade practitioners from 52 countries in Africa. The port management component helped enhance the capacities of over 300 trade operators (about 30 per cent of whom were women) from 34 countries in Africa. Activities included the coordination of activities for the English-speaking and French-speaking port management programme networks. A course on building port resilience against pandemics was delivered in English, French and Spanish in March 2024. Under the trade statistics component, capacity-building activities on merchandise and services trade statistics were organized in collaboration with the United Nations Statistics Division and the World Trade Organization for over 1,024 trade practitioners (about 31 per cent of whom were women) from 52 countries in Africa. The programme benefits from collaboration with the Inter-Agency Task Force on Statistics of International Trade. Under the e-commerce component, capacity-building activities on digital identity for trade and development and legal aspects of e-commerce were organized for over 31 trade practitioners (about 64 per cent of whom were women) from four countries in Africa.

58. ***Review of Maritime Transport 2023: Towards a Green and Just Transition.*** The annual flagship publication includes analysis of maritime trade patterns and sector performance in Africa, providing a critical review and assessment of the structural and cyclical changes affecting seaborne trade, ports and shipping industries, freight markets and transport costs.

59. **Technical assistance in transport and logistics.** UNCTAD focus areas include maritime transport, transport and transit corridors, sustainability, finance and public–private partnerships. Activities related to sustainable freight transport were conducted in Angola and on the implementation of sustainable smart ports in Ghana, Mauritius and Morocco. Under a United Nations Development Account project on integrated national financing frameworks, capacity-building workshops on public–private partnerships in the transport sector are planned for Burkina Faso and Zambia.

60. **Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA).** This programme was formed in Africa and has worked with member States in Africa for over 40 years. ASYCUDA aims to help reform, streamline and automate customs clearance processes and has delivered trade facilitation benefits and increased revenues among landlocked developing countries, the least developed countries and small island developing States worldwide, including 39 countries in Africa (29 of the least developed countries, 13 landlocked developing countries and four 4 small island developing States). The programme provides tools for digitalizing trade procedures and increasing customs revenue and transparency among member States, reducing the time needed and costs of trade procedures and helping to improve human resources capacities through the implementation of the flagship customs management software ASYCUDA World. This involves the sharing of experiences across countries and regions, South–South cooperation, the use of national expertise from ASYCUDA countries to the extent possible and the building of knowledge networks, to facilitate continued exchanges and assistance.

61. **Illicit financial flows.** Under a United Nations Development Account project on measuring and curbing illicit financial flows, UNCTAD worked with the Economic Commission for Africa on strengthening capacities in Burkina Faso and Senegal to develop evidence-based policy responses, to curb illicit financial flows and strengthen domestic resource mobilization, including by analysing trade tax policies in order to mitigate

incentives encouraging such flows. UNCTAD works with the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative in Burkina Faso, to help strengthen the capacity of national experts on applied research strategies for measuring such flows in the extractives sector. In 2023, UNCTAD organized three workshops on trade and illicit financial flows linked to extractive industries, taking into account links between artisanal gold mining and the financing of terrorism-related activities. Training and technical support activities include identifying bilateral trade gaps that merit further investigation, initiating and finalizing pilot testing for key mining products (e.g. gold, silver and zinc), defining the lower and upper bounds of estimators by considering low and high-risk scenarios and integrating the results of the approach and methods used in a study on artisanal mining in Burkina Faso.

III. Financial resources committed to Africa

62. Of the total extrabudgetary project expenditure of UNCTAD, 28.0 per cent, amounting to \$15,584,107 as at January 2024 (provisional), was spent on projects in support of sustainable development in Africa. This represents a decrease of 8.5 per cent in absolute value compared with the total project expenditure in 2022 in Africa, at \$17,028,014. The relative weight of UNCTAD project expenditure in Africa in total project expenditure has continued on a downward trend since 2019. The share has continuously dropped since 2019, with the difference from 2019 (40.4 per cent) to 2023 (28.0 per cent) amounting to 12.4 percentage points.
