



# United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

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**Trade and Development Board**  
**Trade and Development Commission**  
Eleventh session  
Geneva, 25–28 November 2019


## **Report of the Trade and Development Commission on its eleventh session**

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 25 to 28 November 2019

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## Introduction

The eleventh session of the Trade and Development Commission was held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 25 to 28 November 2019.

### I. Action by the Trade and Development Commission

#### A. Trade and vulnerability

##### Agreed conclusions

##### *The Trade and Development Commission*

1. *Reiterates* the importance of international trade as a key means of economic growth, poverty eradication and implementation for the Sustainable Development Goals, and calls upon UNCTAD to continue to assist developing countries to gain benefits from their participation in it;
2. *Reaffirms* the importance of a non-discriminatory, transparent, inclusive, rules-based multilateral trading system that supports sustainable development;
3. *Recognizes* the importance of incorporating a gender perspective in the promotion of inclusive and sustainable economic growth, and the key role that gender-responsive trade policies can play in realizing the social and economic targets embodied in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and requests the UNCTAD secretariat to continue its efforts to mainstream gender into its work;
4. *Stresses* the importance of synergies between UNCTAD, the relevant organizations of the United Nations system and the World Trade Organization, within their respective mandates and resources, with regard to inclusive international trade, with a view to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and leaving no one behind;
5. *Acknowledges* the note on trade and vulnerability, and underlines that vulnerability can challenge the developmental path of all developing countries;
6. *Welcomes* the first-ever United Nations Trade Forum: Sustainable Development Goals and Climate Change, on 9–13 September 2019, as a new platform to explore options to accelerate the design and implementation of trade and climate-resilient policies and measures in developing countries, particularly the most vulnerable;
7. *Calls upon* the UNCTAD secretariat to continue its work on trade and development while keeping in mind the impact of climate change, disasters and natural catastrophes as cross-cutting issues;
8. *Calls upon* UNCTAD to continue supporting developing countries, in particular structurally weak and vulnerable small economies, to build resilient economies by supporting their trade diversification efforts;
9. *Notes with concern* the weak participation in the value chain of local producers of certain commodities, and highlights the importance of cooperation between private and public sector and other stakeholders to enhance their participation in global value chains;
10. *Recalls* the commitment by the international community in the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, and reaffirms that small island developing States remain a special case for sustainable development in view of their unique and particular vulnerabilities, and that they remain constrained in meeting their sustainable development goals, reaffirming the commitment to strengthening cooperation with and support to small island developing States in the context of sustainable development, in line with their national development strategies and priorities;

11. *Welcomes* UNCTAD research on commodity dependence and its implications for development;
12. *Expresses concern* about rising uncertainties regarding future trade prospects in light of tensions in trade relations among countries and rising protectionism which negatively affect international trade flows, and place the multilateral trading system at risk, and highlights the importance of multilateralism;
13. *Calls upon* the UNCTAD secretariat to continue to monitor and report on trade trends and trade policy, including tensions affecting the multilateral trading system;
14. *Further calls upon* the UNCTAD secretariat to continue its analysis of the contribution of international trade to sustainable development in the context of environmental vulnerabilities and rising inequalities within and between countries;
15. *Recognizes* the relevance of, inter alia, environmental and economic vulnerabilities in determining finance access for developing countries;
16. *Commends* the in-depth policy research and analysis conducted by the UNCTAD secretariat on trade and sustainable development and its innovative work on emerging issues, including the gender impact of trade reforms, and encourages the UNCTAD secretariat to continue its work;
17. *Notes with appreciation* the capacity-building initiatives carried out by the UNCTAD secretariat in all developing regions on issues such as non-tariff measures, the green and the blue economy, trade and gender, as well as the aspects related to youth and young people of education and empowerment for entrepreneurship promotion, electronic commerce readiness promotion, competition law and policy, consumer protection and voluntary sustainable standards, and encourages UNCTAD to continue its work on these areas;
18. *Expresses concern* about the vulnerabilities of developing countries in transport and trade facilitation, in particular the negative effects and vulnerabilities caused by inherent systemic vulnerabilities such as low transport connectivity and high transport costs as well as external shocks causing disruptions to transport and supply chains, notably climatic factors such as extreme weather events and rising sea levels, in particular when it comes to highly exposed countries with low adaptive capacity;
19. *Welcomes* initiatives taken by small island developing States, including those aimed at reducing emissions from the transport and maritime transport sector, increasing the efficiency of shipping fleets and switching to hybrid fuels, as well as protecting vulnerable coastal communities and infrastructure from rising sea levels and extreme weather events;
20. *Welcomes* trade facilitation reforms undertaken by developing countries as a useful mechanism to improve the trading conditions of developing countries;
21. *Acknowledges* the market concentration in the container shipping industry and the relevance of the appropriate policies, national capacity-building and regional and multilateral cooperation to prevent potential anticompetitive practices;
22. *Reiterates* the importance of holistic approaches underpinned by effective mainstreaming of climate change and sustainable transport considerations into countries' broader developmental policies and plans;
23. *Calls upon* the UNCTAD secretariat to continue its policy-oriented analytical work and capacity-building activities to support implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other relevant international agreements;
24. *Appreciates* UNCTAD research, consensus-building and technical assistance work on sustainable and climate-resilient transportation systems, as well as trade facilitation, as key for the sustainable economic growth of developing countries and their integration in the global economy;

25. *Recognizes with appreciation* the role of technical cooperation provided by UNCTAD, such as the port management programme, Train for Trade and the Automated System for Customs Data, and invites partners for continuous support;

26. *Underlines* the importance of technology transfer on mutually agreed terms, to allow developing countries to face climate change threats and their economic impact, in line with the technology framework established by the Paris Agreement;

27. *Commends* UNCTAD on the *Review of Maritime Transport*, published since 1968, and the importance of its analysis, insights and maritime statistics for sound maritime transport policymaking, and acknowledges with appreciation the usefulness and pertinence of the maritime country profiles derived from this important publication, and encourages the continuation of the work on climate change mitigation and adaptation in developing countries;

28. *Emphasizes* the relevance of UNCTAD support to member States in the definition and analysis of policy options to overcome their vulnerabilities.

*Closing plenary meeting  
28 November 2019*

## **B. Other action taken by the Commission**

### **Reports of expert meetings**

(Agenda item 3)

1. The Trade and Development Commission, at a plenary meeting on 27 November 2019, considered agenda item 3.

#### **(a) Reports of the multi-year and single-year expert meetings:**

##### *Multi-year Expert Meeting on Commodities and Development*

2. On behalf of the Chair of the eleventh session of the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Commodities and Development, the Vice-Chair-cum-Rapporteur presented the report.

3. The Trade and Development Commission took note of the report, as contained in document TD/B/C.I/MEM.2/47.

##### *Multi-year Expert Meeting on Trade, Services and Development*

4. On behalf of the Chair of the seventh session of the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Trade, Services and Development, the UNCTAD secretariat presented the report.

5. The Commission took note of the report, as contained in document TD/B/C.I/MEM.4/21.

##### *Multi-year Expert Meeting on Enhancing the Enabling Economic Environment at All Levels in Support of Inclusive and Sustainable Development, and the Promotion of Economic Integration and Cooperation*

6. On behalf of the Chair of the third session of the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Enhancing the Enabling Economic Environment at All Levels in Support of Inclusive and Sustainable Development, and the Promotion of Economic Integration and Cooperation, the UNCTAD secretariat presented the report.

7. The Commission took note of the report, as contained in document TD/B/C.I/MEM.8/9.

##### *Multi-year Expert Meeting on Transport, Trade Logistics and Trade Facilitation*

8. On behalf of the Chair of the sixth session of the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Transport, Trade Logistics and Trade Facilitation, the Vice-Chair-cum-Rapporteur presented the report.

9. The Commission took note of the report, as contained in document TD/B/C.I/MEM.7/18.

10. On behalf of the Chair of the seventh session of the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Transport, Trade Logistics and Trade Facilitation, the Vice-Chair-cum-Rapporteur presented the report.

11. The Commission took note of the report, as contained in document TD/B/C.I/MEM.7/21.

**(b) Report of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Competition Law and Policy**

12. On behalf of the Chair of the eighteenth session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Competition Law and Policy, the UNCTAD secretariat presented the report.

13. The Trade and Development Commission took note of the report, as contained in document TD/B/C.I/CLP/55, and endorsed the agreed conclusions as contained therein.

**(c) Report of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy**

14. On behalf of the Chair of the fourth session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy, the UNCTAD secretariat presented the report.

15. The Trade and Development Commission took note of the report, as contained in document TD/B/C.I/CPLP/20, and endorsed the agreed conclusions as contained therein.

## **II. Chair's summary**

### **A. Opening plenary meeting**

16. In his opening remarks, the Secretary-General of UNCTAD noted that the session was being held at a uniquely challenging moment, when there were diverse vulnerabilities around the world. All populations were exposed to different vulnerabilities, but whether environmental, economic or social, some regions and some population categories were more vulnerable than others. In addition to the challenges of rising sea levels and violent hurricanes, fluctuating commodity prices and rising debt levels, persistent inequalities were giving rise to discontent, visible particularly in middle-income and higher-income countries. A new uncertainty and discontent enveloping the world, was being complicated by the increasing challenge of trade tensions and unilateralism on the international platform that further threatened vulnerable countries, as did unpredictable outlooks in international trade and emerging challenges. Importantly, policy uncertainty had already had negative repercussions, for example, on global foreign direct investment which had seen a decline of 23 per cent in 2017 and 13 per cent in 2018. The overall challenges to multilateral cooperation reduced the ability to find solutions on many fronts that required collective action, such as the climate crisis. Action could begin with the integration of sustainable development dimensions into trade policy, negotiations and agreements. International cooperation on trade should widen to include trade, development, finance and environmental policies, helping vulnerable countries. The Trade and Development Commission had to explore how trade could enhance resilience for all, particularly for those most exposed to risk. At the session, the challenge would be considered from three perspectives: the vulnerabilities faced by small economies, particularly small island developing States, at the forefront of the battle against climate change; the persistent, pervasive challenge of commodity dependence and the vulnerabilities that it entailed; and how trade and transport facilitation could address those vulnerabilities.

17. The following delegations made opening statements: the representative of Ecuador, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China; the representative of Togo, on behalf of the African Group; the representative of Iraq, on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group; the representative of Panama on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean

Countries; the representative of the Russian Federation; the representative of Malawi, on behalf of the least developed countries; the representative of Barbados; the representative of China; the representative of Pakistan; the representative of the State of Palestine; the representative of Nigeria; the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran; the representative of Fiji; the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic; and the representative of Morocco.

18. The representatives of several regional groups and one delegate underscored the income volatility of small States arising from commodity dependence. They welcomed the UNCTAD contribution to research on the topic, particularly through the *Commodities and Development Report 2019: Commodity Dependence, Climate Change and the Paris Agreement*. The representative of another regional group stated that eligibility criteria for concessional finance should include the special economic, geographical and environmental vulnerabilities of small island developing States. UNCTAD could identify ways to measure and address special vulnerabilities of small island developing States in international policymaking processes.

19. One delegate said that, in order to compensate for their geographic distance, small island developing States needed to introduce proactive investment policies to attract foreign direct investment. In that vein, UNCTAD could analyse in greater detail the modalities of trade, economic and investment cooperation between small island developing States and other regions to expand their integration into world markets. Another delegate proposed that UNCTAD, through its intergovernmental meetings, should help increase the capacity of least developed countries to make use of the provisions of the World Trade Organization services waiver. Another delegate provided information on a new training centre for peacekeeping activities and providing a rapid response to climate-induced disasters in the South Pacific region.

20. The representatives of many regional groups recognized the inherent vulnerability of developing countries, particularly the risks for and vulnerabilities of small island developing States, landlocked developing countries and least developed countries arising from their unique economic and developmental challenges. Those vulnerabilities were exacerbated by exposure to external shocks. They acknowledged the importance of sustainable and resilient transport and trade facilitation for the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and noted the work of UNCTAD in the field. Expressing concern about the vulnerabilities of developing countries, the regional groups likewise recognized UNCTAD efforts to support developing countries in shifting towards sustainable and resilient freight transportation and to enable a facilitative trade environment.

21. Some delegations noted that initiatives such as reducing emissions from the transport sector, increasing efficiency of shipping fleets and protecting vulnerable coastal communities and infrastructure from rising sea levels and extreme weather events were critically important for small island developing States. Mainstreaming issues of climate change and sustainable energy into development policies and improving climate change adaptation and mitigation in small island developing States were crucial.

22. Many regional groups underscored the importance of efficient, reliable, environmentally friendly, sustainable and climate-resilient transportation systems and trade facilitation. Several regional groups said that analytical and technical cooperation work on sustainable freight transport and trade facilitation was valuable; many least developed countries were currently benefiting from the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) and the UNCTAD empowerment programme for national trade facilitation committees. UNCTAD was encouraged to continue efforts in the field. Some regional groups also underscored the value of the annual UNCTAD *Review of Maritime Transport*.

23. In her presentation, the Director of the UNCTAD Division on International Trade and Commodities said that small countries faced environmental and economic vulnerabilities that affected their progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Climate change triggered disasters that had a disproportionate effect on small States. There was an urgent need to equip them with resilient infrastructure. She underlined that small States, particularly small island developing States, registered high economic

vulnerability based on high debt, commodity dependence and lack of diversification. They needed to improve their debt management capacity by undertaking fiscal risk assessment and boosting financial resilience. In the face of climate change impacts on agricultural products, commodity-exporting countries had to explore the possibilities for diversification. Some of the countries, especially small island developing States, could transition from commodities directly to services activities, without passing through manufacturing. Small States depended on access to concessional financing to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. In concluding, she called on the international community to make trade work for all, including small countries, by protecting the environment, building economic resilience and providing a renewed push to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

24. In her presentation, the Director of the UNCTAD Division on Technology and Logistics highlighted key aspects of divisional work on transport and trade facilitation and its relation to trade and vulnerability. By ensuring sustainable and resilient trade logistics, the economies of developing countries became less vulnerable to shocks. Trade logistics infrastructure and services themselves were potentially vulnerable to shocks. Challenges spanned inefficient cross-border procedures, transport infrastructure deficits, limited transport connectivity, prohibitive transport costs, environmental degradation and climate change.

25. UNCTAD work supported countries through transport systems and logistics that were efficient, low-carbon, affordable, reliable and environmentally sound; by climate-proofing strategic infrastructural assets such as ports and their hinterland connections; and by ensuring effective implementation of trade facilitation measures and improving customs automation and revenues through ASYCUDA.

## **B. Trade and vulnerability**

(Agenda item 4)

26. The multi-year expert meeting held three panel discussions under the agenda item.

### **Small island developing States: Small countries, big challenges**

27. Four panellists discussed the vulnerability of small island developing States and ways to strengthen their economies to be more resilient to economic and environmental shocks.

28. The panellists highlighted that, as small, isolated open economies, dependent on a narrow range of exports, small island developing States were particularly vulnerable to external shocks. Moreover, although their contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions was negligible, small island developing States were challenged by the world's most destructive impacts of climate change, including more frequent and powerful storms, with devastating effects on the natural environment and physical infrastructure. Examples of recent category 5 hurricanes that had struck the Bahamas and Dominica were given.

29. Some panellists stressed that damage resulting from extreme storms could wipe out an entire year of agricultural production and major shares of tourism and transport infrastructure. From one day to the next, economic self-sufficiency and prosperity could turn into economic dependency with crippling food security and foreign income crises. One panellist emphasized that the small geographical size of many small island developing States meant that storm damages impacted an island as a whole, leaving the entire population with nowhere to escape from a storm and leaving no one in the country to provide relief after a storm passed.

30. One panellist said that rebounding from extreme storms obliged small island developing States to rely on external financial support provided by donor countries and multilateral banks. However, for most small island developing States, which were not classified as least developed countries, such support was offered only through non-concessional loans. Most panellists noted that small island developing States could not support growing accumulations of loans and the high debt-servicing requirements created by short repayment periods and high interest charges. They criticized the criteria based on



gross domestic product (GDP) per capita used by donors and multilateral banks, which restricted concessional financing to low-income countries without taking vulnerability into account. All panellists emphasized the need to accelerate ongoing efforts to include a vulnerability index alongside GDP per capita in loan considerations, which could allow small island developing States access to concessional loans when financing natural disaster recovery efforts.

31. Many delegates highlighted the importance of the topics covered by the panel, particularly the need for the vulnerabilities of small island developing States to be considered in order to allow them access to concessional financing for natural disaster recovery and climate change adaptation. They also called for improved statistics to help design a vulnerability index for financial purposes. Several delegates stressed the need for greater economic diversification and the development of export-oriented services sectors to increase the resilience of small island developing States to the impacts of climate change. Some delegates also acknowledged growing interest among small island developing States in exploring the commercial opportunities presented by the blue economy.

### **Commodity dependence: A vulnerable state**

32. The panel discussion focused on trade and the vulnerabilities of commodity-dependent developing countries, and how they could be effectively addressed.

33. One panellist highlighted various vulnerabilities faced by commodity-dependent developing countries (export- and import-dependent) in trade. He noted that some commodity-dependent developing countries focused on one-commodity exports, which made them highly vulnerable to price shocks. Import-dependent countries were vulnerable to the trade policies of commodity-exporting countries, such as export restrictions. He highlighted negative associations between commodity dependence and development through channels, such as declining terms of trade and short-term price volatility, Dutch disease through real exchange rate appreciation and microeconomic effects on households and firms. Climate change was another area of vulnerability.

34. Another panellist highlighted the outcomes of the Aid for Trade monitoring and evaluation exercise of the World Trade Organization. The exercise revealed that there had been a high rate of diversification in least developed countries in terms of the number of markets reached and the number of products exported, but the increase had started from a small base. In the context of commodity dependence and policy shocks, he noted that there had been a jump in the import restriction measures taken by Group of 20 members, which had impacted trade. Furthermore, trade tensions were beginning to take a toll on goods traded, which were expected to be below trend in the last quarter of 2019. He also noted that hydrometeorological events were increasing and had severely impacted some countries.

35. Some panellists agreed that the vulnerabilities of developing countries to weather events would increase and lead to difficulties in planning and investment at the government level. They also agreed on the need for adaptation to climate change and supported advocacy activities to mitigate vulnerability.

36. Another panellist presented initiatives taken by Cameroon to diversify its economy after exports of the country's major commodities, such as coffee, dropped. Cameroon had improved the labelling and packaging of agricultural products such as coffee, but he acknowledged that the effort was not enough to access markets. Diversification was important but could not be successful if there was a lack of access to markets, as trade standards increased the difficulty of accessing markets.

37. The panellists proposed the following solutions to limit vulnerabilities to trade in commodity-dependent developing countries: vertical diversification strategies (producing a new product by adding value to a primary product, e.g. petrochemical industries) and horizontal diversification strategies (producing new products that were not necessarily from the same raw materials); in the short term, use of market-based financial instruments, such as options, futures, forward contracts and swaps, to mitigate exposure to price fluctuations and ensure a steady income; international dialogue on fair trade for producers; and creation of a conducive environment for building stronger resilience to climate change, by increasing climate finance and setting funding for adaptation where most developing countries faced challenges.

38. One delegate noted that unilateral policies, sanctions and protectionism were contributory factors to price fluctuations and vulnerabilities, which needed urgent attention. He outlined the strategy of the Islamic Republic of Iran to address diversification through structural reforms, such as overhauling the tax system and avoiding tax evasion. The country was reforming domestic rules and regulations and adjusting internal structures, and the national budget would be entirely non-dependent on oil revenues.

39. In response to a question from another delegate on how risk management financial instruments could be beneficial to commodity producers, one panellist explained that using futures markets established a future price for delivery, which guaranteed income when prices fell. The downside came when prices rose above the price set in the hedge. The main issue was to have technical knowledge of those instruments and know the market.

40. One delegate asked how African countries could benefit from the African Continental Free Trade Area and how countries could be helped to strengthen knowledge on commodities. One panellist noted that the market for raw materials was not big on the continent, and therefore it would be difficult to take advantage of the free zone by keeping the same production and export structure. However, it would be beneficial if structures were created that brought countries and large firms together to transform raw materials into downstream products. In addition, economies should be transformed to have more use for those value added products. Regarding the building of knowledge on commodities, he acknowledged that policies were often not well informed by evidence and suggested the set-up of an African commodity institute to disseminate knowledge across the continent, including research done by individual countries. Another panellist added that knowledge dissemination should extend to the distribution chain.

#### **Addressing multifaceted vulnerability: Trade and transport facilitation**

41. The Director of the UNCTAD Division on Technology and Logistics presented the key finding of the *Review of Maritime Transport 2019*, conveying the central message that maritime trade was entering a “new normal” that permeated demand, supply, markets, infrastructure and the regulatory framework, creating both opportunities and challenges for developing countries, illustrating the situation with data and examples.

42. World maritime trade lost momentum in 2018, due to developments in the world economy and trade activity. Among those developments were a weakening of the global economy and trade activity, increased trade tensions and protectionism, the economic transition in China, geopolitical turmoil and supply-side disruptions, such as in the oil sector. Volumes in the sector grew by only 2.7 per cent in 2018, below the historical average of 4.1 per cent recorded in 2017. In 2018, developing countries continued to account for most global maritime trade flows, both in terms of exports and imports. Containerized trade volume increased by a modest 2.6 per cent in 2018, down from 6.0 per cent in 2017, and thus reduced volumes were being handled by container ports. According to UNCTAD projections, international maritime trade would increase by 2.6 per cent in 2019 and continue rising at a compounded annual growth rate of 3.4 per cent over 2019–2024. On the supply side, there was a persistent oversupply of global ship-carrying capacity despite a decline in fleet growth. Ship recycling was becoming more environmentally friendly and safer. There was also increased importance placed on environmental sustainability, with technology and services playing a greater role. In addition, interlinkages between oceans, sustainable development and climate change mitigation and adaptation were increasingly recognized and emphasized by the international community.

43. A five-member panel discussion followed. One panellist highlighted the challenges faced by landlocked developing countries, such as high trade and transport costs and limited possibilities, and identified ways to overcome those challenges, including a change of mindset, appropriate policies, trade facilitation reforms, export diversification, and private sector development. Another panellist pointed out that new models of globalization needed to be adopted at a time when the services sector was expanding, while trade in goods was losing ground, and indicated a need to place the issue of maritime transport in the broader context of institutional capacity-building and logistics.

44. Some panellists presented regional perspectives of ASYCUDA and infrastructure development in regional trade corridors. Sharing their experiences, they outlined challenges

faced in regional transport corridors and made recommendations on how to address those challenges. They also highlighted the benefits of implementing ASYCUDA and related software, which could improve government revenue, reduce clearance time and costs, improve cooperation among border agencies through facilities such as national single windows, reduce fraud and control the entry of restricted and prohibited goods.

45. Another panellist focused on the experience of trade and vulnerability in small island developing States, which were highly exposed to natural hazards, and particularly on the implications of extreme weather events due to climate change on the seaports and airports of those countries. He underscored the need to urgently factor in climate change considerations in port development, operation and management and to take an integrated/network approach to climate change, in order to strengthen overall resilience.

46. Many delegates highlighted that vulnerabilities related to transport and trade facilitation were major challenges that were affecting the integration of developing countries in international trade. They underlined the need for promoting reforms and continued cooperation with UNCTAD in those areas, including through supporting national trade facilitation committees and through implementation of ASYCUDA, by supporting regional programmes that facilitated the faster movement of goods through customs reforms, regional customs transit guarantee schemes, transit corridors and electronic cargo tracking. Another delegate expressed concern about the competitiveness of maritime transport and ports in developing countries, which was being negatively affected by concentration in the global maritime industry. Some delegates noted the need for greater transport infrastructure investments in developing countries and small island developing States, including through increased private funding, as well as the need for policy solutions aimed at enhancing the adaptive capacity of the coastal transport infrastructure of small island developing States to the effects of climate change. One panellist highlighted the importance of electronic commerce, which was increasingly contributing to trade flows and economic growth potential, including for small and medium-sized enterprises. Many delegates and panellists noted the quality of the UNCTAD *Review of Maritime Transport*, as well as other research and analytical work and publications addressing issues of transport and trade facilitation and related legal and regulatory issues.

### **C. Progress report on promoting and strengthening synergies among the three pillars**

(Agenda item 5)

47. The UNCTAD secretariat presented overviews of work conducted under the three pillars of work of research and analysis, consensus-building and technical cooperation.

#### **Presentation of the activity report of the Division on Technology and Logistics**

48. The UNCTAD secretariat presentation on work conducted by the Division of Technology and Logistics centred on synergies among the three pillars in the context of trade facilitation and transport, capacity-building and customs automation.

49. Under the technical cooperation pillar, the Division's work had focused broadly on sustainable freight transport, corridor management and performance monitoring, determinants of transport costs, climate resilience, ASYCUDA, the Train for Trade programme, port management, the trade facilitation programme and national single windows, aimed at strengthening developing countries' resilience and inclusion in the global trading system.

50. Regarding research and analysis, the Division's work included the *Review of Maritime Transport*, key performance indicators in maritime transport, the sustainable freight transport framework and portal, policy briefs and technical notes, the transport and trade facilitation newsletter, good practices in trade facilitation studies and climate change adaptation for coastal transport infrastructure.

51. Under the consensus-building pillar, Division efforts included work towards the Trade and Development Commission and various expert meetings on transport and trade facilitation. The secretariat collaborated with other United Nations entities, such as the United Nations Environment Programme, Economic Commission for Europe, Economic

and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and International Maritime Organization, as well as other regional and non-United Nations entities, such as the Global Maritime Forum, on issues including trade facilitation reforms, carbon emissions, sustainable ports and climate change adaptation for international transport.

52. Many delegates, expressing appreciation of the Division's work and support and assistance to developing countries, encouraged the secretariat to continue its efforts. One delegate requested the continuation of ASYCUDA service in his country after a disruption. Some delegates highlighted the benefits of UNCTAD assistance to their countries and expressed a need for increased support with expanded scope, including technical assistance and capacity-building towards ensuring compliance with the Agreement on Trade Facilitation of the World Trade Organization, through the UNCTAD empowerment programme for national trade facilitation committees, ASYCUDA and port management programme and in relation to maritime transport and climate resilient transport infrastructure. Many delegates highlighted the positive synergies between the three pillars, especially regarding the benefits of sound and effective technical assistance and in-depth UNCTAD research and analysis.

### **Presentation of the activity report of the Division on International Trade and Commodities**

53. The UNCTAD secretariat presented the work of the Division on International Trade and Commodities on executing the three pillars. The division had conducted several initiatives, spanning various regions and trade-related areas. Among the work highlighted were division efforts to support the removal to barriers to trade, contribute to the mainstreaming of environmental issues in trade policy, foster competition and consumer policies, facilitate the beneficial integration of developing nations into the international trading system and explore avenues to promote inclusive trade for women, developing countries, least developed countries and microenterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises.

54. The representatives of some regional groups and many delegates expressed approval of and support for the division's work.

55. One delegate commended the division's prompt response to her country's request for assistance in updating national trade policy and legislation to accommodate a planned structural transformation of the local economy. She also called for increased funding from external sources to help smaller economies to integrate into the global trading system.

56. One regional group recognized the division's work in the area of commodity dependence, as the area posed a common challenge for many developing countries. The regional group encouraged continued research on the subject and noted the importance of the blue economy and climate change as priority areas.

57. One delegate commended the division's work, particularly on climate change and competition and consumer protection, and collaboration in the area of services. The workshops that had been held were helpful in improving the delivery of services in his country. He looked forward to more technical assistance in trade-related areas.

58. Some delegations expressed support for the multilateral trading system and urged the division to continue to monitor developments in Africa. UNCTAD should be the point of convergence to discuss multilateral trade issues and consider the interests of developing countries.

59. One regional group expressed appreciation for the division's support during negotiations of the African Continental Free Trade Area. In that regard, UNCTAD could increase its interventions in the area.

60. One delegate expressed the satisfaction of her country with the division's work in the area of gender under the initiative, "Informal cross-border trade for empowerment of women, economic development and regional integration in Eastern and Southern Africa".

61. On the forthcoming UNCTAD Illicit Trade Forum, another delegate requested a focus on illicit trade in commodities, such as petroleum and minerals.

62. Some delegations called for increased promotional efforts by the secretariat for key events. The secretariat acknowledged the concerns of member States; efforts would be made to communicate more directly to keep them informed of future events.

### III. Organizational matters

#### A. Opening of the session

63. The eleventh session of the Trade and Development Commission was opened at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on 25 November 2019 by Mr. Abderrahim Ait Slimane (Morocco), Vice-Chair of the Commission at its tenth session.

64. The Vice-Chair of the Commission at its tenth session informed delegates that, as Group D did not have a nomination for the position of Chair, according to the normal cycle of rotation, following consultations, a nominee from Group A would be considered.

#### B. Election of officers

(Agenda item 1)

65. At its opening plenary meeting, on 25 November 2019, the Commission elected the following officers to serve on its Bureau:

*Chair:* Mr. Khalil Hashmi (Pakistan)

*Rapporteur:* Ms. Johana Méndez (Panama)

*Vice-Chairs:* Ms. Baturu Camara (Gambia)

Ms. Cecilia Gutiérrez Mideros (Ecuador)

Ms. Irina Medvedeva (Russian Federation)

#### C. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

(Agenda item 2)

66. At its opening plenary meeting, the Commission adopted its provisional agenda as contained in document TD/B/C.I/47, with one modification.<sup>1</sup> The agenda was thus as follows:

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
3. Reports of expert meetings:
  - (a) Reports of the multi-year and single-year expert meetings:
    - (i) Multi-year Expert Meeting on Commodities and Development;
    - (ii) Multi-year Expert Meeting on Trade, Services and Development;
    - (iii) Multi-year Expert Meeting on Enhancing the Enabling Economic Environment at All Levels in Support of Inclusive and Sustainable Development, and the Promotion of Economic Integration and Cooperation;
    - (vi) Multi-year Expert Meeting on Transport, Trade Logistics and Trade Facilitation.

<sup>1</sup> The Expert Meeting on Promoting Value Addition and Enhancement of Domestic Productive Capacity through Local Economic Empowerment was postponed to December 2019.

- (b) Report of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Competition Law and Policy;
  - (c) Report of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy.
- 4. Trade and vulnerability:
  - (a) Small island developing States: Small countries, big challenges;
  - (b) Commodity dependence: A vulnerable state;
  - (c) Addressing multifaceted vulnerability: Trade and transport facilitation.
- 5. Progress report on promoting and strengthening synergies among the three pillars.
- 6. Other business.
- 7. Adoption of the report of the Commission to the Trade and Development Board.

#### **D. Other business**

(Agenda item 6)

- 67. There were no other pending issues before the Commission.

#### **E. Adoption of the report of the Commission to the Trade and Development Board**

(Agenda item 7)

- 68. At its closing plenary meeting, on 28 November 2019, the Trade and Development Commission authorized the Chair to finalize the report after the conclusion of the meeting. The report would be submitted to the Trade and Development Board.

## Annex

### Attendance\*

1. Representatives from the following States members of the Conference attended the session:

Albania	Malawi
Bahamas	Malaysia
Bangladesh	Maldives
Barbados	Mauritania
Belgium	Mexico
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mongolia
Bulgaria	Montenegro
Burkina Faso	Morocco
Cabo Verde	Mozambique
Cameroon	Myanmar
China	Nepal
Congo	Niger
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Pakistan
Djibouti	Panama
Dominican Republic	Peru
Egypt	Philippines
El Salvador	Poland
Fiji	Russian Federation
Finland	Saudi Arabia
France	Serbia
Gabon	Spain
Gambia	State of Palestine
Georgia	Syrian Arab Republic
Germany	Togo
Guatemala	Tunisia
Guyana	Turkey
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Uganda
Jamaica	United Republic of Tanzania
Kuwait	Yemen
Lebanon	Zimbabwe
Madagascar	

2. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented at the session:

African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States  
Organization of Islamic Cooperation

3. The following specialized agencies and related organizations were represented at the session:

International Labour Organization  
Universal Postal Union

4. The following non-governmental organizations were represented at the session:

*General category*

International Network for Standardization of Higher Education Degrees

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\* This attendance list contains registered participants. For the list of participants, see TD/B/C.I/INF.11.