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Summary of the Creative Africa free dialogues

I. Free dialogue 1: Promoting partnerships and concrete initiatives for enhancing the creative economy in Africa

1. The dialogue provided a platform for informal discussions around the proposal put forward by the UNCTAD secretariat to launch the Creative Africa initiative as a tool to bring greater pragmatism to the policy debate around the potential of the creative economy to foster development. The concept of the initiative was based on African ownership and partnerships involving stakeholders from distinct areas of creative industries. The aim was to highlight the originality of African creative products, emphasizing that activities such as music, dance, painting, crafts and fashion were big business capable of generating income, employment and social inclusion. It was noted that Creative Africa combined a series of cultural activities with policy debates and actions. The secretariat briefly presented the rationale behind Creative Africa, which was for it to be seen as a tool to promote government and business interests, paving the way for concrete deliverables during and after UNCTAD XII.

2. It was hoped that Creative Africa would become a feasible option to put in place a results-oriented development strategy. In order to ensure African ownership, the UNCTAD secretariat invited participants to share views on how to shape, frame and ensure sustainability of this bold and far-reaching initiative. The idea was to seize opportunities for forging partnerships to promote business initiatives or joint projects, technical cooperation, investment promotion and capacity-building programmes, as well as to assist Governments in policymaking, with a view to building a vigorous creative capacity in Africa. A lively exchange of views followed, involving government representatives, creative entrepreneurs, cultural promoters, academics and representatives from professional associations such as the Pan-African Federation of Film-makers, African Council of Music, Federation of Fashion Designers, and the African Network of Cultural Journalists. The Commissioner for Culture of the African Union recalled the Union's role and the objectives of the Nairobi Plan of Action.

Deliverables

3. Proposals included (a) the British Council's Creative Live project, which was being implemented in several African countries and could be supportive of the

Creative Africa initiative; (b) information about the European Union–African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States grant programme for creative industries, to facilitate potential applications for 2008; (c) a collaborative model for establishing local creative industries with global distribution reach, proposed by the United Kingdom Royal College of Art; and (d) an African Union proposal to work jointly with the UNCTAD secretariat to develop a roadmap to ensure that Creative Africa was understood by Africans.

II. Free dialogue 2: From fashion to African communities and the Millennium Development Goals

4. It was noted that the rich culture, diverse traditions and skills of Africa have long been sources of inputs for the international fashion industry. Equally, the industry had benefited from African materials such as cotton and leather. However, it was rare that the communities from where inspiration and inputs were derived had benefited from the successes of the world of fashion. In the free dialogue – organized by the International Trade Centre, in partnership with the African Federation of Fashion Designers and Agoralumiere International – discussions centred on opportunities for change. The dialogue focused on participants' positive and negative experiences in the global fashion industry and on the obstacles they had encountered. The International Trade Centre shared lessons learnt from its Ethical Fashion programme.

Deliverables

5. Proposals included (a) a pathway for linking designers and retailers/distributors in fashion markets with African designers, producers (especially community projects or informal manufactures) and business, to develop win–win supply chain models; (b) ideas on how to remove obstacles encountered at the root producer level and at the small and medium-sized enterprise level; (c) ideas on how to strengthen the production of socially and environmentally beneficial materials and ensure that value added took place in Africa; and (d) initiatives for building partnerships and sharing experiences among non-governmental organizations for South–South cooperation.
