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Draft report

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Addendum

Programme questions: proposed programme budget for 2026

(Item 3 (a))

Programme 10

Trade and development

1. At its 11th meeting, on 19 May 2025, the Committee considered programme 10, Trade and development, of the proposed programme plan for 2026 and programme performance in 2024 ([A/80/6 \(Sect. 12\)](#) and [A/80/6 \(Sect. 13\)](#)).

Discussion

2. Delegations expressed appreciation for the presentation of the proposed programme plan and programme performance information. Several delegations stressed the importance of the work of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the International Trade Centre (ITC) and expressed support for the proposed programme plan.

3. The view was expressed that UNCTAD played a crucial role in global economic governance, particularly by strengthening the voice and participation of developing countries in global decision-making on trade issues and by providing data analysis and technical assistance so that those countries could participate in and benefit from a fairer and more productive global economy in a manner that supported their achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

4. The importance of UNCTAD regional workshops and flagship reports, which remained indispensable tools for developing countries and served as a global benchmark for evidence-based policymaking, was underscored. Delegations reaffirmed their commitment to the fundamental pillars of the work of UNCTAD and



expressed gratitude for the ongoing support of UNCTAD for the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and other vulnerable economies, including middle-income countries.

5. A delegation expressed appreciation for intergovernmental consultations in Geneva on the draft proposed programme plan for 2026 of UNCTAD. The view was expressed that a constructive and depoliticized approach needed to be the key principle for UNCTAD, especially in the context of the sixteenth quadrennial conference, during which the new four-year mandate would be adopted. The delegation expressed appreciation for the work of UNCTAD on regional integration and noted that the regional integrations were catalysts for many countries for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. UNCTAD was called upon to more proactively cooperate with regional organizations and associations. The view was expressed that the liberalization of trade and the streamlining of non-tariff and bureaucratic obstacles would provide the most benefit to those countries that could trade high value-added products. The delegation expressed the view that UNCTAD support to developing countries in the development of their own technologies and innovative sectors was necessary.

6. In the context of the UN80 Initiative, a question was raised as to what the contribution of UNCTAD would be over the next four years and where UNCTAD could add best value. Another delegation sought clarification on how UNCTAD saw the coordination with the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in the area of support to the least developed countries. The delegation noted that its country was confident that UNCTAD would wisely navigate challenging times and implement reforms as needed, for example, those evolving from the UN80 Initiative.

7. A delegation expressed that priorities of its country's development policy included the fight against hunger, poverty and inequalities in developing countries and a just transition towards sustainable ecosystems where "sustainable" meant ecologically, socially and economically viable. The delegation expressed that UNCTAD was an important partner as it provided new information, advised countries on economic and trade-related strategies and policies and helped to lower trade barriers and make them easier to navigate, and because it was a driver for regional economic integration.

8. A delegation expressed the view that a review of duplications must be conducted on the UNCTAD programme plan. It was highlighted that UNCTAD had an entire subprogramme devoted to Africa and the least developed countries while there were entire programmes dedicated to Africa (programme 9) and the least developed countries (programme 8). The view was expressed that the work of subprogramme 5, Africa, least developed countries and special programmes, clearly overlapped with the global role of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in development. A review and elimination or streamlining of duplications was requested.

9. A delegation expressed the view that free trade was key to economic development in developing countries and highlighted that its country strongly supported the global multilateral trade system. It was noted that UNCTAD was committed to safeguarding the interests of developing countries, played an important role in promoting trade and development in developing countries and in facilitating North-South dialogue, and served as a think tank for developing countries and a repository of ideas for the global South. The delegation noted that its country and UNCTAD had maintained good relations and carried out productive cooperation in trade and investment. The delegation expressed the hope that UNCTAD would continue to focus on its three pillars of work and promote trade growth and economic

development in all Member States, especially developing countries, with a view to accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

10. A delegation sought information on how UNCTAD and ITC were implementing results-based management frameworks with strategic, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound indicators. The delegation expressed that such information would help Member States to better assess the effectiveness and impact of programmes.

11. In reference to paragraph 12.5, a question was asked as to how UNCTAD aimed to achieve the goal of transforming multilateralism despite a clear divergence of views on it. Another delegation expressed appreciation for the efforts of UNCTAD to strengthen multilateralism.

12. A delegation highlighted that the proposed programme plan of UNCTAD had no mention of the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on global trade and development. UNCTAD was requested to pay due attention to that topic. The view was expressed that ensuring resilient and inclusive global trade could not be achieved when countries imposed unilateral restrictions on trade which ran counter to the norms of the World Trade Organization (WTO). The delegation expressed the view that financial and economic restrictions imposed by some developed countries obstructed access for developing and the least developed countries to food, fertilizers and vital medicines, complicating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals 2 and 3. Another delegation emphasized the need for UNCTAD to intensify its work in assessing the impact of unilateral economic, financial and trade measures, and highlighted that such an assessment should be captured in comprehensive reports and be supported by a platform for dialogue on the adverse effects of such measures.

13. A delegation noted that its country had concerns regarding some climate change and trade-related elements of the proposed programme plan of UNCTAD. The view was expressed that while environmental considerations were important, trade policy should not be subordinated to multilateral climate frameworks, and countries must retain sovereign authority over domestic trade and economic priorities. The delegation highlighted that its country preferred wording that acknowledged the complementary nature of trade and environmental policies without prescribing specific approaches. Another delegation called upon UNCTAD to adopt a more cautious approach to climate issues and expressed the view that priority attention should be paid to the impact of climate on trade and development. The delegation expressed the view that UNCTAD needed to focus on economic and trade aspects of the green economy, specifically on ensuring the resilience of production and value chains as they faced climate change and on the risks of ecological protectionism and protectionism in global trade and their impact on developing countries.

14. In the light of ongoing global challenges, including debt distress, slow growth and various economic shocks, a delegation expressed appreciation for the focus of UNCTAD on helping developing countries to integrate beneficially into the global economy. The delegation expressed that its country recognized the important role that trade could play in fostering growth and wealth creation, and expressed appreciation for the work of UNCTAD on productive capacity-building and economic diversification.

15. A delegation stressed the importance of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development and the sixteenth quadrennial conference of UNCTAD, and expressed the view that those events provided critical opportunities to advance achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Another delegation noted ongoing progress for the planned adoption of a new mandate at the sixteenth

quadrennial conference, and expressed that UNCTAD could count on its country's continued support for the quadrennial conference and its outcomes.

16. A delegation expressed the view that open, fair and predictable trade was an essential force for economic development and that over the past 30 years it had helped to lift 1 billion people out of poverty. The delegation expressed appreciation for the focus of UNCTAD on digital trade and investment, a key driver of future economic opportunity, especially in developing countries, particularly for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises and women traders, and for the mainstreaming of gender perspectives throughout the proposed programme plan. The focus in the programme plan of UNCTAD on investment was appreciated, and the delegation expressed hope to see Member States work towards incorporating the Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement, which would generate significant economic benefits for developing countries. Another delegation expressed appreciation for the work of UNCTAD with WTO to support developing countries' integration into the multilateral trading system.

17. With regard to result 1 under subprogramme 1, Globalization, interdependence and development, appreciation was expressed for the work of UNCTAD in supporting priority industrial policy measures in Latin America, and further details were sought on the concept of informal policy networks. Another delegation noted with interest the work of UNCTAD on debt vulnerability and sustainability and on enhancing debt data transparency. The same delegation highlighted that its country had long emphasized the importance of fiscal responsibility and transparency in supporting sustainable economic growth. Another delegation acknowledged the significant challenges posed by debt vulnerability and climate change as developing countries endeavoured to transition to low-emission economies.

18. A delegation expressed the view that enhanced attention and resources were required for subprogramme 1 due to its foundational and cross-cutting importance in helping developing countries to navigate complex global challenges. In reference to table 12.6, clarification was sought as to why the planned activities for deliverables 16 and 19 had been reduced from 5 for 2025 to 2 for 2026 and from 5 for 2025 to 3 for 2026, respectively. The delegation expressed the view that the reductions were concerning and seemed misaligned with global development priorities, and that those areas required increased attention or at least a continuation at current levels, not a reduction.

19. In the context of subprogramme 2, Investment and enterprise, a delegation commended the emphasis placed by UNCTAD on investment facilitation and enterprise development, and noted that the focus on digital government tools for streamlining administrative procedures aligned well with its country's priorities on enhancing the business environment through transparency and efficiency. Another delegation noted that UNCTAD had a specific mandate for development of investment and enterprise, and expressed the view that analytical materials and conferences addressing those issues continued to remain important informational bedrocks for decision-making.

20. In reference to table 12.12, under subprogramme 3, International trade and commodities, a delegation highlighted that the number of planned activities under deliverable 18 was expected to drop from 6 in 2025 to 5 in 2026. The delegation highlighted the complexity of trade negotiations and the pressing need for tailored support, particularly for the least developed countries and developing economies, and expressed hope to see those activities expanded. It was noted that the annual meeting of the Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals and Sustainable Development was not scheduled for 2026 despite its relevance to resource-rich developing countries. In view of the aforementioned trends, UNCTAD was urged to

reflect the evolving needs and aspirations of the global South for the delivery of robust, inclusive and data-driven technical cooperation and analytical outputs.

21. A delegation sought further information on UNCTAD field and technical cooperation projects in the areas of trade facilitation and debt management, including the Automated System for Customs Data and the Debt Management and Financial Analysis System, and on the target delivery for those two projects for 2026.

22. UNCTAD was requested to strengthen its contribution to the Committee for Development Policy and cooperate closely with the group of experts for developing criteria beyond gross domestic product and the advisory group of experts on critical minerals.

23. With regard to subprogramme 6, Operational aspects of trade promotion and export development, a delegation commended the work of ITC on digital trade and its efforts to enable micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises to adopt digital technologies. Another delegation expressed the view that technical assistance programmes for staff training for the development of trade and international entrepreneurship initiatives to benefit micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises was necessary. The delegation welcomed the focus of ITC on the least developed countries and countries with economies in transition, and encouraged ITC to more actively cooperate with institutions responsible for decision-making, including through workforce development programmes to increase the indirect coverage of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises in developing countries. The view was expressed that the mention of the Pact for the Future should be removed since it was not a consensus-based document. In that connection, use of wording from the Addis Ababa Action Agenda was proposed as an alternative. In reference to paragraph 13.10, the delegation expressed that its country did not support the idea of reforming public procurement systems aimed at gender mainstreaming, and that the economic considerations, not gender, should play a decisive role in public procurement.

24. A delegation expressed the hope that ITC would continue to strengthen Aid for Trade cooperation with developing countries and countries with economies in transition, and would support developing countries to expand exports and improve imports. The delegation noted that its country would continue to support various aspects of the work of ITC, including economic and trade cooperation and capacity-building in developing countries to support economic and social development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Another delegation expressed appreciation for the focus of ITC on women and micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises.

25. A delegation expressed deep concern about reports of abuse, harassment and discrimination at ITC. The serious approach taken by the ITC leadership in addressing the reports was applauded, and it was highlighted that transparency would continue to be key. The delegation expressed that its country would be monitoring the progress made by ITC and needed to see tangible results addressing underlying causes of any abuse, harassment and discrimination.

Conclusions and recommendations

26. **The Committee recommended that the plenary or the relevant Main Committee or Main Committees of the General Assembly, in line with Assembly resolution 79/247, consider the programme plan for programme 10, Trade and development, of the proposed programme budget for 2026 under the agenda item entitled “Programme planning” at the eightieth session of the Assembly.**