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on its sixtieth session**

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## President's summary

### **Economic Development in Africa: Intra-African Trade: Unlocking Private Sector Dynamism**

(Agenda item 6)

1. At the plenary session of Sessional Committee II, chaired by the President of the Trade and Development Board, the Director of the Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes introduced the *Economic Development in Africa Report 2013: Intra-African Trade: Unlocking Private Sector Dynamism*.
2. Several delegates expressed appreciation for the concept of developmental regionalism put forward in the Report. The Report was a direct response to the call of the African Union for the United Nations system to support the region in creating a Continental Free Trade Area. UNCTAD should intensify its trade-related capacity-building programmes to enhance the capacities of both government and the private sector in Africa and support members of the African Group in negotiating economic partnership agreements to reach win-win outcomes.
3. Other recommendations relating to UNCTAD's role in the regional integration agenda in Africa and in trade and development issues in general called for UNCTAD to play a role in the New Asia–Africa Strategic Partnership and continue serving as a bridge for the sharing of experiences and best practices between Asia and Africa. The Organization, in partnership with the International Trade Centre, should analyse ways of utilizing the analysis and recommendations of the Report to benefit African exporters and step up its managerial capacity-building activities aimed at African policymakers in LDCs.
4. The Chair of the Committee presided over the informal meeting that followed the plenary session. Drawing from the Report and its Overview (UNCTAD/ALDC/AFRICA/2013 and TD/B/60/4), the panel of experts from the Permanent Delegation of the African Union to the United Nations, the African Capacity Building Foundation and Africa Growth Initiatives of the Brookings Institution, discussed the opportunities for and challenges in boosting intra-African trade, Africa's approach to regional integration and the role of the African private sector in regional integration.
5. The Secretary-General via video link said that the theme of the Report was pertinent and timely, especially in view of the renewed political commitments of African governments, the current action plans of the African Union, the high economic growth of African countries and low intra-regional trade. Developmental regionalism, as proposed by the Report, deserved serious reflection by African governments, and a constant dialogue was needed between the private sector and the State to enable the private sector to play a more proactive role in regional integration.
6. According to the panellists, there were many opportunities for boosting intra-regional trade: investing in regional infrastructure and human capital, increasing value addition to raw materials, harmonizing national and regional policies, and enhancing institutional development. Other opportunities lay in improving the efficiency of small private enterprises, creating linkages between big and small firms

and between firms in the formal and informal sectors, developing local and regional value chains and reducing dependence on external donor resources.

7. Several delegates wished to know why some action plans had not been fully implemented. In response, the Secretary-General and panellists identified factors that could speed up the implementation of such plans. These included deeper political commitments with time frames for measurable outcomes, less dependence on tariff revenues, increased intra-regional foreign direct investment, a rise in middle incomes in Africa, and growing peace and stability in the region.
  8. The UNCTAD secretariat said that UNCTAD was working closely with the New Partnership for Africa's Development and assisting in tripartite agreements between subregional groupings in Africa.
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