

36th Regional Course

Key Issues on the International Economic Agenda

University of Mauritius, Mauritius

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Key note address by Mr. Guillermo Valles, Director of the UNCTAD's Division of International Trade in Goods and Services, and Commodities

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Mr. Simon SPINGETT, UN Resident Coordinator, Mauritius

Ladies and Gentlemen

Dear colleagues

It is my honour and pleasure to address you on the occasion of starting the UNCTAD 36th regional course on Key issues on the international economic agenda for developing, and least developed, economies of Africa.

Let me first express my sincere appreciation to the Department of Economics and Statistics, Faculty of Social Studies and Humanities of the University of Mauritius for hosting this course once again, after the selection of the Mauritius as a multi-year venue for the Africa region from 2013 to 2017. We wish to also express our thanks and gratitude to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade for their support for this regional course, covering Africa.

Since the last course held in Mauritius, UNCTAD is grateful to the Governments of Colombia, Mauritius, Serbia, Singapore, and Sultanate Oman for their partnership with UNCTAD in the design and delivery of this program. The support provided by these Governments, including that of Mauritius, is an important step that reflects the commitment and support extended to the various member States of UNCTAD in their efforts to bridge the trade capacity gap.

Ladies and Gentlemen

This flagship course is well known, not just in UNCTAD and the UN as a whole, but across the globe. Since adopting paragraph 166 in Bangkok 2000, this training course has targeted policy-makers in various capitals, increasing their knowledge on key economic matters, ensuring that policy-formulation is complemented and strengthened in line with best practices; you will see this highlighted over and over again in the course. This brings me to a related point: to emphasize that the adoption of the paragraph was based on the request of member States and thus it was generated through intergovernmental consensus. I am pleased to say that due to the success of this program, the mandate was renewed for this flagship course at the 11th Conference in Sao Paulo-Brazil; at the 12th Conference in Accra-Ghana and again at the 13th Conference in Doha-Qatar, and most recently in Nairobi, Kenya.

On the occasion of the 14th UNCTAD conference held last year, the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, Mr. Mukhisa Kituyi released a report on UNCTAD 14, entitled, from *Decisions to Actions*, in which he says, "in the previous two decades, trade expanded with unprecedented speed, new technologies transformed patterns of interaction and finance became a pervasive feature of everyday economic life. Governments have found the space and instruments to harness these forces in productive ways, and nearly 1 billion people have been lifted out of poverty". However, he then emphasizes, ".. yet for all our progress, we have a long way to go. Inequalities persist or have widened further, oftentimes linked to the same forces that have helped raise our capacity to generate wealth, and the gains from globalization have been unevenly distributed. " End of Quote

UNCTAD – initiated by the developing world, on behalf of the developing world, with a vision of prosperity for all – is equipped to address the challenges that jeopardize human dignity and economic growth. This report underscores four actions needed to fulfil the ambitions of the post-2015 development agenda: building productive capacity to transform economies; more effective States and more efficient markets; tackling vulnerabilities, building resilience; and strengthening multilateralism, and finding common solutions.

In this respect, P166 flagship course was and continues to be a part of this agenda, for getting to where we all should arrive. By this, I lay emphasis on the UNCTAD's unique mandate, as it continues with a vision of prosperity for all, empowerment, promoting an economically equitable world, and providing capacity building and technical assistance where it is needed.

Holding this course in February-March this year is also of significance as it happens to be the first regional course to be delivered in 2017. The last regional course was held in October 2016 in Oman for Arab economies. One of the participants to the course noted: "this course is a high ranking course that is very interesting and able to train future policy makers like us to better understand connections and interdependence between different policies and their impact on economic growth and development, and also widen knowledge on the economic situation of countries and learn from their experience in applying trade policy." Her name is Zeina Harakeh from Lebanon, working for the Ministry of Economy and Trade.

Ladies and Gentlemen

UNCTAD is the focal point in the UN system for the integrated treatment of trade and development and inter-related issues. One of UNCTAD's most important functions is to provide technical assistance to those member States that require it as to enable them to develop the type of macroeconomic framework that enables the development of economic policies that can sustain and achieve development objectives.

It is with this spirit that member States, in 2000 in Bangkok called upon UNCTAD to develop a course to share its economic research, analysis, findings and particularly their application of economic policies that can have an impact on development. There was recognition that there exists a capacity gap in trade and trade related areas amongst policy makers in developing economies particularly within the multilateral trading system. Implementation of trade and investment agreements continues to prove particularly challenging for developing, and least developed, economies. There is a broad consensus that technical assistance for trade-related policies among developing countries can strengthen their overall capacity to identify and pursue their own trade objectives under the broader framework of their development objectives.

Today, this UNCTAD flagship course is number 36 since 17 years, with approximately 750 trade and economic officials and academics in the five developing regions trained. This figure doesn't include the multiplier effect, which I depend on you to take back to your respective capitals and institutions, ensuring that knowledge dissemination is a common practice amongst you. This course is designed to give you, as policy makers, an overall view of the various economic policy issues and interconnectedness between them and assist in the development of appropriate policies that support and enhance development. This interrelated nature of trade and development issues lies at the heart of UNCTAD's work. Subsequently, the course's focus on development gives it a unique touch in the field of capacity building in trade and development.

On a final note, this course provides an opportunity; indeed you will make the best of this three week course. I wish you a successful course and I am certain this programme will be a fruitful moment in your professional development.