



Agenda item: 7

General debate

Statement by:

**Botswana on behalf of the African Group**



UNITED NATIONS  
UNCTAD



**REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA**

**Statement by**

**Her Excellency Dr. Athaliah Lesiba Molokomme**

**Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of  
Botswana on behalf of the African Group**

**On the occasion of**

**The Fifteenth Session of the United Nations Conference on Trade  
and Development (UNCTAD 15)**

**General Debate**

**3-7 October 2021**

**Bridgetown, Barbados**

**Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government;**

**Distinguished Ministers and Representatives;**

**Secretary General of UNCTAD;**

**Madam President; Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen;**

1. I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the African Group. The African Group aligns itself with the statement made by Afghanistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.
2. I wish to express our sincere gratitude to the Government of Barbados for hosting this Conference amidst the challenges occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic which prevented the physical attendance in Bridgetown.
3. Allow me at this juncture **Madam President**, to convey on behalf of the African Group and indeed on behalf of the Government of Botswana, our warmest congratulations to the new Secretary-General of UNCTAD, Ms. Rebecca Grynspan of Costa Rica. Her appointment comes at an opportune time when there is a dire need to lead the urgent agenda of making international trade, finance and development more equitable and sustainable, especially in responding to the interconnected health, economic and ecological crises confronting humanity today.

4. The African Group will continue to support UNCTAD's efforts in this direction under her leadership.
5. **Madam President**, Reflecting on the theme for UNCTAD 15, "***From Inequality and Vulnerability to Prosperity for all***", our first sentiment is how timely and relevant it is to our developing economies. As the pandemic has amplified the already existing vulnerabilities of our economies, the African Group believes that more than ever, the role of UNCTAD in the next couple of years will be very critical in the trade and development agendas of our countries and ultimately in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 10.
6. In the backdrop of the Covid-19 Pandemic, solidarity is of utmost importance. We need to reaffirm our commitment to collectively address challenges and build a more development-centred globalisation that is inclusive and sustainable.

## **Madam President**

7. It is quite disheartening to say that while the whole world is grappling with the fight against Covid-19, developing countries are affected the most, the situation being exacerbated by inequitable vaccine distribution.

8. The need to re-align and recover from the pandemic is inevitable in order to address the stagnating development prospect and our vulnerabilities.

The record shows that poverty persists between and within states. Most of the world population living in extreme poverty live in middle income countries where economic growth remains sluggish and fragile. FDI does not always go to sectors with enormous multiplier effects, and therefore has not contributed meaningfully to sustainable development. Unemployment has risen, unhealthy dependence on debt remains, and diversification remains elusive.

9. Equally important are emerging issues emanating from the evolving environment we live in and cannot be overlooked in the process. These include, inter alia, climate change, peace and security, respect for human rights, gender equality, trade and health. It goes without saying that these are essential for sustainable and equitable growth and development.

Most of our countries face the inherent constraints of geographical isolation, and high vulnerability to natural disasters. Our strong reliance on trade, on food imports, and the limitations on economic and export diversification puts us at high risk in the face of exogenous shocks.

10. As we gather here today, encouraged by what is possible despite the complexity of our development challenges. The African Group is optimistic that the outcome of this conference will bring us closer to where we are headed. Our resolve to deliver on the promises we will make in this conference will definitely be put to the test as we continue to face emerging challenges. However, we should remain resolute in our pursuit to achieve the objectives we have set, and ultimately reach the sustainable development Goals.

11. With the opportunity presented by this conference to realign our priorities, we wish to emphasise that policy space remains a critical enabler to reaching our development objectives. We need to collectively come to the realisation and understanding, from a development perspective, of the difference between protectionism and the use of legitimate policy measures to promote industrial development. Sustainable Development Goal 10 provides a framework to fight against

inequality. However it must be rooted in the economic and political realities and contexts of our countries.

12. The Group expects the Conference to address the massive unmet trade, finance, investment and technology needs of developing countries, in our efforts to curtail the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic.

13. As I conclude, **Madam President**, let me reiterate the African Group`s commitment and support for the mandate and role that UNCTAD plays in the trade and development agenda, in our aspiration to effectively integrate and benefit from new and unfolding global developments.

14. The African Group therefore calls on the Conference to strengthen UNCTAD, including through the provision of adequate resources in order to effectively deliver on its mandate.

15. I thank you, **Madam President**