

Remarks by the Regional Commissions at the Launching of the CEB Interagency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity

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On behalf of the Regional Commission I am delighted to have this opportunity to highlight why this is an important initiative, given the continuing changes of how the UN is implementing its various mandates, including in the area of trade and productive capacity:

- The Regional Commissions welcome the idea of the Interagency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity and thank UNCTAD for their leadership. Given the overriding objective of ensuring coherence in UN activities at the country level, this cluster, at the CEB level, is well timed.
- This initiative will certainly contribute to strengthen the interlinkages between the normative and the operational work of the UN and between its country-level and regional and global operations, a concern we have already highlighted in the framework of the CEB reform.
- We are already starting to learn lessons from the “One UN” pilot countries, and the cluster can realize its stated objectives in a shorter time, thanks to the experience in these countries.
- The Regional Commissions recognize that to succeed in the effective operationalization of the “One UN” initiative, agencies must work synergistically building on their respective areas of expertise. Trade and productive capacity issues are broad, and this cluster can work as a catalyst for change based on the comparative advantage of the various agencies involved and provide a framework for coordination through the sharing of lessons.
- To give a contemporary example, Regional Commissions are involved in the implementation of the Aid for Trade initiative in their regions. Indeed they will meet at a side-event on 23rd April to bring and share regional perspectives. Through the Cluster, it will be possible to share more lessons on the progress (or on why it has been slow) in different regions and also provide a framework for coordination at the highest level. Furthermore, through this Cluster at the CEB level, it will be possible to not only see how the initiative fits in the Global Partnership for Development Goal but also encourage coherence and sharing of lessons.

- A part of this Cluster, the Regional Commissions are contributing to the development of a pilot training workshop on “Making Trade Work for the MDGs”, specifically designed for the Resident Coordinators and UN Economic Advisors of countries with economies in transition. This training workshop – to be held in Torino, Italy, next month – aims at enabling participants to better advocate for the role of Trade and Productive Capacities in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and hence their importance in the UN National Development Plans and UN Country Plans. We also aim at raising the awareness of participants about the resources that are available in the Cluster and specifically in the Regional Commission, for the realization of these goals.
- The Regional Commissions are also committed to this Cluster initiative because, besides the example given by the SG of UNCTAD, there are other initiatives that serve to uphold this direction. I have in mind here two examples, one of Regional Consultation Mechanism of the UN System-wide support to NEPAD in Africa, and the other is the promotion of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and efforts to address the issues of trade of the landlocked countries in which Regional Commissions play a major role.
- In the Regional Consultation Mechanism, most of the institutions represented here today are members of the Industry Trade and Market Access (ITMA) cluster, whose objective is to coordinate and deliver coordinated support to the African Union and its NEPAD Programme. There has been joint programming of some of the activities and also joint delivery, such as training in trade negotiations. The CEB Interagency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity is therefore coming at a higher level, to which ITMA and its support to Africa contribute towards. UN agencies in the Asia-Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean regions could benefit through this cluster from the experience of ITMA in Africa.
- Let me conclude by reiterating that this cluster will complement the “One UN” delivery mechanism in an area where developing countries, economies in transition and LDCs face major internal and external challenges—trade and productive capacities. For these countries to be positively integrated in the global economy, concerted and coordinated efforts must be realized, from rules to their implementation. And there is no better way to do so than to have all agencies engaged from the making of the rules, to guiding countries in preparing their agendas such as in the Doha Round, to the implementation. That way, it will also be more efficient to maximize gains from the resources provided to these countries towards meeting their regional and global obligations, without forgetting that at the end of the day, the ultimate objective is to improve the welfare of their peoples.