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Macroeconomic policy questions: international trade and development

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 19 December 2023

[on the report of the Second Committee ([A/78/459/Add.1](#), para. 25)]

78/134. International trade and development

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions [56/178](#) of 21 December 2001, [57/235](#) of 20 December 2002, [58/197](#) of 23 December 2003, [59/221](#) of 22 December 2004, [60/184](#) of 22 December 2005, [61/186](#) of 20 December 2006, [62/184](#) of 19 December 2007, [63/203](#) of 19 December 2008, [64/188](#) of 21 December 2009, [65/142](#) of 20 December 2010, [66/185](#) of 22 December 2011, [67/196](#) of 21 December 2012, [68/199](#) of 20 December 2013, [69/205](#) of 19 December 2014, [70/187](#) of 22 December 2015, [71/214](#) of 21 December 2016, [72/202](#) of 20 December 2017, [73/219](#) of 20 December 2018, [74/201](#) of 19 December 2019, [75/203](#) of 21 December 2020, [76/190](#) of 17 December 2021 and [77/151](#) of 14 December 2022,

Reaffirming its resolution [70/1](#) of 25 September 2015, entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, in which it adopted a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative Sustainable Development Goals and targets, its commitment to working tirelessly for the full implementation of the Agenda by 2030, its recognition that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, its commitment to achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions – economic, social and environmental – in a balanced and integrated manner, and to building upon the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals and seeking to address their unfinished business,

Reaffirming also its resolution [69/313](#) of 27 July 2015 on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, which is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, supports and complements it, helps to contextualize its means of implementation targets with concrete policies and actions, and reaffirms the strong political commitment to address the challenge of financing and creating an enabling environment at all levels for sustainable development in the spirit of global partnership and solidarity,



Recognizing the need to ensure that the benefits of trade are more widely shared,

Reaffirming World Trade Organization decision WT/MIN(15)/48-WT/L/982 of 19 December 2015 on the implementation of preferential treatment in favour of services and service suppliers of the least developed countries and increasing their participation in services trade and decision WT/L/508/Add.1 of 25 July 2012 on accession by the least developed countries, encouraging progress on the implementation of the World Trade Organization work programme on small economies, which supports their efforts towards sustainable development, as also reflected in the outcome document of the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway,¹ and stressing that Aid for Trade and targeted trade-related capacity-building are essential to integrating developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, into the international trading system,

Recognizing the critical role of women as producers and traders and the need to address their specific challenges in order to facilitate their full, equal and meaningful participation in domestic, regional and international trade,

Recognizing also that multilateral rules and disciplines are the best guarantee against protectionism and are fundamental to the transparency, predictability and stability of international trade,

Noting the commitments to working to ensure that bilateral, regional and plurilateral trade agreements complement the multilateral trading system, recognizing that they can play an important role in complementing global liberalization initiatives, and in this regard recalling, inter alia, the entry into force of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, on 30 May 2019, and welcoming ongoing efforts to fully operationalize the Agreement, including the commencement of actual trading under the Agreement aimed at doubling intra-African trade to deliver economic transformation and strengthen Africa's resilience, including food security and nutrition, COVID-19 recovery and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals,

Noting with great concern the severe negative impact on human health, safety and well-being caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, as well as the severe disruption to societies and economies and the devastating impact on lives and livelihoods, and that the poorest and most vulnerable are the hardest hit by the pandemic, reaffirming the ambition to get back on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by designing and implementing sustainable and inclusive recovery strategies to accelerate progress towards the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to help to reduce the risk of and build resilience to future shocks, crises and pandemics, including by strengthening health systems and achieving universal health coverage, and recognizing that equitable and timely access for all to safe, quality, effective and affordable COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics are an essential part of a global response based on unity, solidarity, renewed multilateral cooperation and the principle of leaving no one behind,

Noting with concern the fragile and highly uncertain global socioeconomic outlook, persisting negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical tensions and conflicts and current multiple crises, which increased pressure on food, energy and finance, affecting many countries around the world and their ability to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals,

Deeply concerned that the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted trade, transport, tourism, cross-border travel, commodity markets, investment, debt service and

¹ Resolution [69/15](#), annex.

financial flows, including remittances, with significant impacts on the poorest and the most vulnerable and the operation of global value chains, affecting all sectors of the economy, including micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises and people's lives, especially in developing and least developed countries, compounding the challenges posed by climate change, which have had a devastating impact on sustainable development and humanitarian needs, including on poverty eradication, reduction of inequalities, including gender inequality, livelihoods, ending hunger, food security and nutrition, education, environmentally sound waste management and access to health care, particularly in developing countries, including countries in special situations, as well as countries facing specific challenges and those most affected by the pandemic and its socioeconomic consequences, and that restrictive trade measures and the lack of transparency and cooperation within the multilateral trading system have affected access for all to safe, quality, effective and affordable COVID-19 vaccines, other essential goods and basic and nutritious foodstuffs,

Reiterating the pledge that no one will be left behind, reaffirming the recognition that the dignity of the human person is fundamental, and the wish to see the Goals and targets met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society, and recommitting to endeavour to reach the furthest behind first,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Trade and Development Board of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development² and the report of the Secretary-General;³

2. *Reaffirms* that international trade is an engine for inclusive growth and poverty eradication and that it contributes to the promotion of sustainable development, structural transformation and industrialization, particularly in developing countries;

3. *Underscores* that a universal, rules-based, open, transparent, predictable, inclusive, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system should contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, providing policy space for national development objectives, poverty eradication and sustainable development, consistent with relevant international rules and countries' commitments, and promote export-led growth in the developing countries through, inter alia, preferential trade access for developing countries, targeted special and differential treatment that responds to the development needs of individual countries, and the elimination of trade barriers that are inconsistent with World Trade Organization agreements;

4. *Recalls* the ministerial decision of 7 December 2013 on duty-free and quota-free market access for least developed countries,⁴ recognizes that nearly all developed country members of the World Trade Organization provide either full or nearly full duty-free and quota-free market access to least developed country products and that a number of developing country members of the World Trade Organization also grant a significant degree of duty-free and quota-free market access to least developed country products, and takes note of the adoption of trading arrangements that further extend preferential market access for the benefit of other developing States;

5. *Welcomes* the commitment of World Trade Organization members to work towards the necessary reform of the Organization, with the aim of improving all its functions, while reaffirming the foundational principles of the Organization, and to conduct discussions with a view to having a fully and well-functioning dispute settlement system accessible to all members by 2024, while taking advantage of the available opportunities, addressing the challenges that the Organization is facing and ensuring the

² [A/78/15 \(Part I\)](#) and [A/78/15 \(Part II\)](#).

³ [A/78/230](#).

⁴ World Trade Organization, document WT/MIN(13)/44.

Organization's proper functioning; the work shall be member-driven, open, transparent, inclusive and must address the interests of all members, including development issues; and notes the contribution of the multilateral trading system to promote the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development⁵ and its Sustainable Development Goals;

6. *Reaffirms* that maintaining stable trade flows is essential to urgently addressing the multiple global crises, inter alia, of food, energy and finance faced by developing countries, as well as enhancing food security and nutrition in these countries;

7. *Underscores* the urgent need to keep markets, including for food, fertilizer and agriculture, open, equitable, transparent, non-discriminatory and predictable by eliminating trade-restrictive measures and distortions, speculations and hoarding through the reform of the multilateral trade rules on agriculture, according to World Trade Organization mandates, and to ensure sustained food security and nutrition of countries, particularly the least developed and net food-importing developing countries;

8. *Encourages* cooperation among countries to improve agricultural productivity and trade with a view to increasing the availability, accessibility and affordability of food to help address global food security;

9. *Notes with concern* that certain forms of support for agricultural producers are either trade-distorting or harmful to nature and health, and reaffirms its commitment to correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets, including through the parallel elimination of all forms of agricultural export subsidies and all export measures with equivalent effect, highlights the need to address trade-distorting domestic support in agriculture, and looks forward to continuing the World Trade Organization negotiations consistent with existing mandates to further reform agricultural trade rules, with a view to achieving concrete and positive results at the thirteenth Ministerial Conference;

10. *Stresses* the continuing importance of the provision and mobilization of new and additional means of implementation, such as climate finance, technology transfer on mutually agreed terms and capacity-building to developing countries, for expanding trade in renewable energy, that can contribute to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy and in line with their national development priorities, including through making clean and renewable energy technologies available for all;

11. *Recognizes* the role of services to global economic output and employment and in supporting global and regional connectivity and business continuity in times of crises and post-crisis recovery, in this respect underlines the critical role of services, digital technology and creative economy, and notes that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on services trade and services sectors, particularly for developing countries, including the least developed countries;

12. *Underscores* the continuing need for international support to increase economic resilience and diversification of commodity-dependent developing countries in such a way that their structural transformation is sustainable and economically meaningful;

13. *Calls upon* Member States to take complementary actions at the national level to strengthen domestic enabling environments and implement sound domestic policies and reforms conducive to realizing the potential of trade for inclusive growth and sustainable development;

14. *Reaffirms* the importance of promoting regional economic integration of developing countries to foster trade recovery and development, and in this regard

⁵ Resolution [70/1](#).

welcomes ongoing efforts to fully operationalize the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, including the commencement of actual trading under the Agreement aimed at doubling intra-African trade to deliver economic transformation and strengthen Africa's resilience, including food security and nutrition, COVID-19 recovery and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and notes the progress made in the implementation of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement;

15. *Reiterates* that States will not be able to achieve the ambitious Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development without a revitalized and enhanced global partnership and comparably ambitious means of implementation and that a revitalized global partnership will facilitate an intensive global engagement in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, bringing together Governments, civil society, the private sector, the United Nations system and other actors and mobilizing all available resources;

16. *Reaffirms* the commitments made through the adoption of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development⁶ in, inter alia, international trade as an important action area for sustainable development, and looks forward to the convening of a fourth international conference on financing for development;

17. *Recommits firmly* to promoting a rules-based, non-discriminatory, open, fair, inclusive, equitable and transparent multilateral trading system, with the World Trade Organization at its core, as well as meaningful trade liberalization, and with a strong development dimension in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, while preserving the fundamental principles of the World Trade Organization;

18. *Encourages* the development and the implementation of inclusive trade policies that can contribute to advancing gender equality and women's economic empowerment, which has a positive impact on economic growth and helps to reduce poverty;

19. *Welcomes* the successful conclusion of the twelfth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization, held in Geneva from 12 to 17 June 2022, under the presidency of the Government of Kazakhstan, and looks forward to the convening of the thirteenth Ministerial Conference, to be held from 26 to 29 February 2024 in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates;

20. *Emphasizes* the need to continue combating protectionism in all its forms and to rectify any trade-distorting measures, including trade barriers, that are inconsistent with World Trade Organization rules, recognizing the right of countries, in particular developing countries, to fully utilize flexibilities consistent with their World Trade Organization commitments and obligations, and emphasizes that the work of the World Trade Organization shall continue to promote sustainable economic development with provisions for special and differential treatment remaining integral;

21. *Takes note with appreciation* of the ministerial decision on the TRIPS Agreement that was adopted at the twelfth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization to authorize the use of the subject matter of a patent required for the production and supply of COVID-19 vaccines without the consent of the right holder to the extent necessary to address the COVID-19 pandemic, in accordance with the provisions of article 31 of the TRIPS Agreement,⁷ and recognizes that paragraph 8 of the ministerial decision on the TRIPS Agreement (WT/MIN(22)/30) states that

⁶ Resolution 69/313, annex.

⁷ See World Trade Organization, ministerial decision on the TRIPS Agreement (WT/MIN(22)/30), adopted on 17 June 2022.

members of the World Trade Organization will decide on the extension of the ministerial decision to cover the production and supply of COVID-19 diagnostics and therapeutics;

22. *Calls for* enhancing the capacity of the multilateral trading system to increase pandemic and disaster preparedness and resilience through a multifaceted response, including by strengthening the resilience of global supply chains, including short-term measures such as trade facilitation, transparency and restraint in relation to export restrictions on vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics supplies, as well as the rapid scaling up and expansion of vaccine production globally, including in developing countries, and welcomes the ministerial declaration on the World Trade Organization response to the COVID-19 pandemic and preparedness for future pandemics, adopted on 17 June 2022;⁸

23. *Recalls* the decision at the twelfth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization not to impose export restrictions on foodstuffs purchased for non-commercial humanitarian purposes by the World Food Programme;⁹

24. *Urges* the members of the World Trade Organization to start the effective implementation and monitoring of the Marrakesh Ministerial Decision on Measures Concerning the Possible Negative Effects of the Reform Programme on Least Developed and Net Food-Importing Developing Countries,¹⁰ and notes the importance of having a dedicated work programme to operationalize it, according to World Trade Organization mandates, to ensure sustained food security and nutrition, including in the least developed and net food-importing developing countries;

25. *Underlines* that any emergency measures introduced to address food security concerns shall minimize trade distortions as far as possible, be temporary, targeted, transparent and be notified and implemented in accordance with World Trade Organization rules, and underscores that particular regard should be given to the effect that such measures have on developing countries, including the least developed and net food-importing developing countries;

26. *Welcomes* the adoption of the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies¹¹ at the twelfth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization regarding Sustainable Development Goal target 14.6, and urges the members of the World Trade Organization to promptly ratify or accept this agreement according to their domestic procedures, aiming for an expedited entry into force, and encourages members to continue negotiations on outstanding issues, with a view to making recommendations by the thirteenth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization for additional provisions that would achieve a comprehensive agreement on fisheries subsidies, including through further disciplines on certain forms of fisheries subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, recognizing that appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing country members and least developed country members should be an integral part of these negotiations;

27. *Underlines* the importance of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation annexed to the Protocol amending the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization in improving transparency, expediting the movement, release and clearance of goods, including goods in transit, and thereby reducing trade costs, and in this regard encourages its full and effective implementation, including through enhanced support towards its implementation;

⁸ World Trade Organization, document WT/MIN(22)/31.

⁹ See World Trade Organization, ministerial decision on World Food Programme food purchases exemption from export prohibitions or restrictions (WT/MIN(22)/29), adopted on 17 June 2022.

¹⁰ See World Trade Organization, ministerial declaration on the emergency response to food insecurity (WT/MIN(22)/28), adopted on 17 June 2022.

¹¹ World Trade Organization, document WT/MIN(22)/W/22.

28. *Urges* the international community to adopt urgent and effective measures to eliminate the use of unilateral economic, financial or trade measures that are not authorized by relevant organs of the United Nations, and that are inconsistent with the principles of international law or the Charter of the United Nations or that contravene the basic principles of the multilateral trading system and that affect, in particular, but not exclusively, developing countries;

29. *Notes* that the use of policy instruments for environmental purposes with potential impact on international trade can have unintended consequences for partner countries, especially the least developed countries, which need to be addressed to aid their pursuit of structural transformation and economic diversification;

30. *Welcomes* efforts to enhance South-South and triangular trade cooperation under interregional trade arrangements, such as the Global System of Trade Preferences among Developing Countries, as a vehicle to support export diversification, economic resilience and technological upgrading;

31. *Reiterates* the important role of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development as the focal point within the United Nations system for the integrated treatment of trade and development and interrelated issues in the areas of finance, technology, investment and sustainable development, and in contributing to supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda;

32. *Looks forward* to the celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development expected in June 2024;

33. *Recalls* the holding of the fifteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, held in Bridgetown from 3 to 7 October 2021, and the adoption of its outcome document, the Bridgetown Covenant;¹²

34. *Reaffirms* the commitment at the very heart of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind and commit to taking more tangible steps to support people in vulnerable situations and the most vulnerable countries and to reach the furthest behind first;

35. *Requests* the Secretary-General, in collaboration with the secretariat of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, to submit to the General Assembly at its seventy-ninth session a report on the implementation of the present resolution and developments in the international trading system, including concrete recommendations to accelerate the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda in this regard, and decides to include in the provisional agenda of its seventy-ninth session, under the item entitled “Macroeconomic policy questions”, the sub-item entitled “International trade and development”.

*49th plenary meeting
19 December 2023*

¹² United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, The Bridgetown Covenant: from inequality and vulnerability to prosperity for all ([TD/541/Add.2](#)), adopted on 7 October 2021.