



Statement from EUROPEAN BUSINESS COUNCIL FOR AFRICA (EBCAM) to the United Nation Conference for Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

EBCAM is the European Federation of national chambers and Associations conducting business in Africa. It brings together European investors and other operators engaged in economic activities on the continent and works to promote closer cooperation between the private sectors in both European and African countries. It closely monitors EU development policies and actions, as well as the foreign trade scene in Brussels, and, thanks to reciprocal agreements, also with partners in Washington and with various institutions in Africa.

Through its member Associations, EBCAM assists and advises those who are currently operating or who wish to operate in Africa, cooperating with the respective domestic private sector associations and national Governments in their plans to attract potential foreign investors. EBCAM also cooperates and represents the interest of its Associations through close liaison with the various Institutions of the European Union, i.e. the European External Action Service, the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee, the European Investment Bank (EIB), the European Development Finance Institutions (EDFI), as well as the Secretariat of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP Secretariat), other relevant organisations and Embassies of African Countries in Brussels.

The United Nations Agencies, and UNCTAD in particular, have advocated for some time now that economic and social development in the African member countries will not be achieved by public resources and ODA alone, the private sector needs to be more closely involved as the main engine of growth. Therefore, private sector investors and businessmen have to be mobilised to contribute more positively as a development partner to achieve these goals. For this to occur, the policies debates in UNCTAD and the resulting proposals have to allow constructive input from the business sector, to formulate relevant action plans for their greater involvement in economic development.

Although the relationship between public and private sector should be clear cut, there are many instances where ambiguities occur in the understanding of the role each plays. More specifically, it is quite often the case that public authorities expect private sector companies to behave as if they are donors, rather than as businesses operating primarily in the interests of their shareholders.



EBCAM supports the concept that the private sector should adhere to corporate social responsibility principles, but it should not be expected to act like a donor.

It is our collective opinion that the present system is not sustainable and that efforts towards improving the business environment on the continent is essential for more rapid economic development. We therefore propose the following: consider debating greater protection of private sector investments; recognise greater public-private dialogue (PPD) as a key instrument for development and growth accelerator; encourage dispute settlement mechanisms; assist the fight against tax fraud, tax evasion and fiscal harassment; encourage efforts to tackle corruption; give higher priority to South-South cooperation; improve trade access to developed markets; assist with the acceleration of the regional integration process in order to promote greater intra-Africa trade.

Acknowledging the vital role of the private sector in global trade flows is important. In this context, EBCAM calls for a more structured and sustained dialogue between the multilateral organisations and financial institutions and representatives from the private sector. The debate should not only be about improving the implementation of the present system but about a new collaborative and sustainable mutually beneficial trading partnership for the future.

In conclusion, EBCAM believes that it has a potentially important role to fulfil that serves both the interest of its members as well as those of the UN partners and its members, especially with regard to economic development in Africa. We strongly believe we can constructively contribute to the debate for the design of new development policies.