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(UNCTAD)



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PRESS RELEASE

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TRADE AND ENVIRONMENT TASK FORCE STRENGTHENED IN JOHANNESBURG

Johannesburg, 3 September 2002-- The second phase of a joint UNCTAD-UNEP Capacity-building Task Force on Trade, Environment and Development (CBTF) will be launched today in Johannesburg (Sandton Convention Centre, Ballroom 2, 18:30-20:00) during the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). Representatives from UNCTAD, UNEP and the WTO will highlight their collaboration on capacity-building activities on trade, environment and development. Ministers from Finland, Romania, Thailand, Uganda and other countries, and the Director-General of the European Commission's DG Development, will outline their expectations for extended activities in Phase II of the CBTF. Jan Pronk, Special Envoy to the UN Secretary-General on the Summit, will also speak.

Since its inception in 2000, the CBTF has supported a number of projects to assist developing countries in dealing with trade and environment-related development challenges. Training workshops in Cuba and Viet Nam centred on national case studies and discussed practical policy measures to help maximize the sustainable development gains of trade. An international policy dialogue allowed developing country governments to identify opportunities for increasing the production and export of organic food products. Ongoing country projects in Indonesia and Lebanon are assisting policy makers to assess the environmental and developmental impacts of trade and trade policies. And a subregional project is under way in 10 Central American and Caribbean countries on enhancing regional cooperation in sound collection and recycling of spent vehicle batteries. A major new financial contribution to be announced by the European Union at the Summit will enable the second phase of the CBTF to respond to the high demand for capacity-building in trade and environment. Phase II funding also includes contributions from Sweden and the United States.

Activities for Phase II which are either already under way or set to begin immediately after the Summit include:

- New country-based projects in Mozambique and Cambodia designed to enhance the poverty-reducing potential of trade;
- Country-based projects assessing the environmental and developmental effects of trade liberalization in the rice sector;

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- A policy dialogue for Lusophone countries on trade implications of climate change;
- A training workshop for African least developed countries (LDCs) on developing mutually supportive trade and environment policies;
- International policy dialogues on environment-related market access issues;
- Regional workshops on WTO-related issues organized in conjunction with WTO regional seminars;
- Regional training programmes implemented in partnership with regional and subregional institutions; and
- Workshops for Geneva-based negotiators.

A new call for project proposals will enable Phase II to address a range of priority issues, including those relating to the UN Programme of Action for the LDCs and the WTO Doha Work Programme in the area of trade and environment. The CBTF is involving UN regional economic and social commissions, regional environmental organizations, economic integration arrangements, academic and research training institutes, NGOs and the private sector. The CBTF is a WSSD "Type II" partnership, which will engage the expertise of a very broad range of stakeholders in its strengthened second phase.

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This press release can also be found on the Internet at the following address:
<http://www.unctad.org/en/press/pressref.htm>

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For more information on WSSD, see www.johannesburgsummit.org/. Additional information on the CBTF event will be posted by UNCTAD and UNEP at www.unctad.org/trade_env/ and www.unep.ch/etu/wssd/index.htm