

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT



UNCTAD 15 OUTCOME

The Spirit of
Speightstown and
The Bridgetown Covenant



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NOTE



The fifteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development was held in a hybrid (virtual and physical) format, in Bridgetown and Geneva, from 3 to 7 October 2021. At its closing plenary meeting, the Conference adopted the Spirit of Speightstown (TD/541/Add.1) and the Bridgetown Covenant (TD/541/Add.2). The Bridgetown Covenant forms the basis for the work of UNCTAD until the next quadrennial conference in 2024. These texts are reproduced here for ease of reference and as a working tool for all those involved in the activities of UNCTAD or in areas of work related to its mandates.



Our efforts to tackle the challenges facing developing countries today are guided by two of the most important texts of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in recent memory: the Spirit of Speightstown and the Bridgetown Covenant, the outcome documents of our fifteenth quadrennial conference.

UNCTAD XV, as I said at its closing ceremony, was unique for three reasons. First, for the context in which it happened, in the middle of a terrible pandemic that produced great suffering and was followed by a fragile, incomplete and divergent recovery. Second, for its many “firsts” – the first UNCTAD conference in a small island developing State, the first chaired by two women (Her Excellency Mia Motley, Prime Minister of Barbados, and myself), and the first to use a hybrid digital format. But most importantly, UNCTAD XV was unique for the spirit in which it took place. A spirit of solidarity, renewed hope and the desire of our membership to work beyond our differences for a common path forward.

Our two outcome documents are, together, the embodiment of that spirit – our why and how. Our political declaration – the Spirit of Speightstown – provides the argument, the *raison d’être* and the historical significance; the Bridgetown Covenant gives us the tools, the road map and the mandate of transformation. These documents are a testament to not only what was agreed at this historic conference, but most importantly, to the reasons and values that moved us to do so.



FOREWORD

In the complex times we still live, it is enriching and worthwhile to return to these texts that in their wisdom point to the many asymmetries that crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic reveal, that reflect on the vicious cycles of ever-increasing inequalities and how to break them, and that never lose hope in multilateralism, development and transformation.

As the Spirit of Speightstown says in its closing, “we have what it takes to bring us closer together through a revitalized covenant that can lead to a better tomorrow”. In Bridgetown, we signed that Covenant. And at UNCTAD we will work tirelessly to pursue it.

Rebeca Grynspan
Secretary-General of UNCTAD



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