

UNIDO

Partner for Prosperity



UNITED NATIONS
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

Contents

4 Introduction

6 Introduction

8 Growth with quality

10 Made to measure—adjusting to changing development needs

14 Growth in challenging times

16 Showcasing the success of UNIDO

18 UNIDO and Gender. Not just a women's issue

20 Building a leaner, more efficient UNIDO

22 How UNIDO makes a difference

24 Agribusiness: building the chain to cut poverty

27 Human security and youth unemployment—Promoting livelihoods

30 Trade Capacity Building—helping developing countries to make the grade

33 Corporate social responsibility: doing well by doing good

34 Pharmaceuticals in Africa: necessary medicine

36 Energy: powering progress

40 Environmental action on a global scale

44 Interview with the Director General

46 Interview with the Director General





50 Partnerships for increased effectiveness

52 UNIDO and the private sector

56 Green Industry Initiative and Platform—doing more with less

59 Delivering as one UN

61 Energy partnerships for a brighter future

63 UNIDO's networks connecting people

66 Analytical and policy advisory services

68 UNIDO—trusted advisor

72 Looking ahead: Priorities for the future

74 Looking to the future

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INTRODUCTION

The past decade at UNIDO has been one of immense change and renewal. Following the crisis years of the late 1990s when its very survival seemed to be in question, in the early 2000s UNIDO set about putting its own house in order with a cut in budgets and staff, and a sharpening of priorities. A new, slimmer, more effective UNIDO emerged.

On taking up office in 2005, Director General Kandeh K. Yumkella took charge of an organization still adjusting to these structural changes. At the same time, he inherited a new long-term strategic vision which focused UNIDO on three new thematic areas: poverty reduction through productive activities; trade capacity building; and energy and the environment. This vision also gave importance to a number of cross-cutting areas including private-sector involvement and the sharing and dissemination of knowledge.

Yumkella promised to remain faithful to these priorities, and build on them to create a culture and a structure that would allow UNIDO to respond more flexibly and efficiently to changing needs from its Member States, carving out a role for the Organization as a trusted and effective partner for development.

The Director General set out to do this by putting sustainable industrial development at the heart of efforts to reduce poverty. He called for a holistic approach that recognised the links between energy and production, production and trade and the energy-production-environment nexus.

Yumkella also called for a broader development agenda to help reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). At the start of his tenure, progress was being made but often not where it was most needed. Some economies were forging ahead while the poorest were still struggling to keep up. Income inequalities were on the rise, along with global unemployment.

The Director General argued that while increased investment in health, education and infrastructure was important, more needed to be done to include productive capacities on the agenda in order to achieve a lasting reduction in poverty through wealth creation, and so enable people in developing countries to fund their own investment in future.

To make this happen, encouragement for local entrepreneurship would be crucial, along with private-sector involvement and the right kind of policy environment to

Photo: UNIDO



support it. UNIDO would build ever stronger links between investment programmes and entrepreneurship. It would also support institution-building, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), especially in agro-processing, and trade capacity building, all areas where the Organization was already active.

It was only through such measures, which focused on encouraging industrial development, that poor countries would be able to combat the many economic, social and environmental challenges that threatened them. To achieve growth,

UNIDO headquarters
at the United Nations
Office in Vienna.



employment and poverty reduction, countries needed to invest in capacity building to improve their productivity, boost competitiveness and gain access to international markets. Putting money into industry would also be crucial for tackling environmental degradation through the development of clean technology solutions.

Therefore, UNIDO, under Yumkella, sought to make pro-poor industrialization and private-sector development strategies central to efforts to reduce poverty and put developing countries on a path to prosperity.

New industrial realities

In planning how to turn these ideas into practical programmes, UNIDO needed to take account of new trends in industry and business itself.

It was clear that globalization of production, trade, technology and finance had made manufacturing more international, making it harder for developing countries to compete. The unprecedented rate of technological progress in information and communications was also having an ever greater impact on market access and competitiveness. This made building industrial capacities and institutions all the more important for countries struggling to catch up. At the same time, trade liberalization, deregulation and private-sector dynamism were becoming increasingly important for industrialization. The distinction between industry and services had become more blurred, with the growing tradeability of highly skilled professional services redefining the international division of labour. Finally, a move toward greater accountability and transparency in both public and corporate governance, and stricter norms on quality standards and environmental compliance, put new pressures on industry.

Not all of these trends were new, but the speed at which they emerged posed a threat and a challenge to developing countries, especially those marginalized by globalization. They required clear action from international organizations such as UNIDO to build the capabilities that would allow all countries to benefit from these rapid changes.

Turning ideas into action

Yumkella took steps to turn his vision into reality by maximizing the provision of technical cooperation and advisory services at the country level. He intended to strengthen UNIDO's core programme areas by making sure that they were better integrated. As such, agribusiness development would go beyond promoting agro-industries to highlight the link between SME development, rural development and the need to connect rural economies to global trade. UNIDO would also pursue a broader role in energy by promoting access to reliable energy supplies and access to knowledge to develop environmentally friendly technologies.

Yumkella envisioned that UNIDO would be able to punch above its weight by going beyond practical programme implementation to expand its role as a knowledge provider. This would mean taking a more active position in three areas: as an adviser on industrial policy and strategy with a stronger analytical focus; as a convenor, providing a platform for the accumulation and dissemination of industry-related knowledge; and through a stronger 'normative' role in setting common global standards, whether on sustainability, green energy or energy efficiency.

In support of these goals, UNIDO aimed to pursue stronger and deeper partnerships with Member States, seeking dialogue and guidance. Enhancing partnerships between Member States, in particular by reinforcing South-South cooperation, would also be a priority. At the same time, the Organization intended to strengthen its relations with fellow UN agencies, the private sector, NGOs and financial institutions.

Last but not least, Yumkella promised to strengthen the commitment and response of UNIDO's staff. Poorly staffed field operations would be improved, openness and transparency would be championed and excellence rewarded.

Taking stock

Over the past eight years an enormous amount of work has been done to realize these ambitions. Looking back, many of the themes and priorities chosen appear prescient. Today, partnerships are increasingly important to solving the enormous global challenges facing us. UNIDO's decision to grow through partnership has raised its profile and its relevance. Energy has become ever more important to efforts to combat climate change and reduce poverty, while productive capacity, having been left out of the MDGs, is back on the agenda in discussions to form the post-2015 development goals.

UNIDO's greatest successes, such as the Green Industry Platform, work on trade capacity building, development of agro-industry in LDCs, organizational restructuring, and efforts to put energy at the centre of the global development agenda, have come largely as a result of a careful balancing of its functions: technical cooperation, research and analysis, standard setting and compliance, and partnerships.

The following pages provide a closer look at these achievements.



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