

UNCTAD Public Symposium
Geneva, 24–25 June 2013

Closing remarks by the Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD

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Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank all of you for contributing to this Symposium. I am sure you will agree that these past two days have been rich in thought-provoking and energetic debate.

We have heard many different views at this forum. But all the contributions have emphasized that the prevailing form of globalization has not yielded benefits for everyone, and that significant changes are needed in order to build an inclusive and sustainable globalization. The panellists and participants have made many suggestions, both on goals to be included in the post-2015 development agenda, and on the policies that will be needed to implement it. Allow me to recall just a few of the issues raised by the participants:

Significant attention has been devoted to the need to reform global macroeconomic and financial governance, so as to prevent renewed crises and to make financial flows support the real economy, rather than feed speculative bubbles. Many participants have stressed the need to strengthen the regulation of finance, including through a Financial Transactions Tax. The case was made for a reform of

the global financial architecture, particularly with a view to strengthening the representation of developing countries.

Speakers at the Symposium have noted that while enhanced participation in the global economy has helped many countries to make important strides in addressing development problems, countries have continued to confront a range of challenges in international trade and investment. Several participants argued that rather than supporting developing-country efforts to promote inclusive and sustainable development, international agreements – including those of the World Trade Organization, and regional and bilateral trade and investment agreements, among others – often hindered progress. They called for a restructuring and a reform of international trade and investment agreements, to ensure an equitable sharing of benefits among developed and developing countries, to restore the national policy space of developing countries that some agreements had increasingly been closing, and to place limits on the market power of multinational corporations operating within their territories.

Another important issue raised was that of climate change. Participants noted that the negative effects of climate change were likely to fall disproportionately on the most vulnerable populations. One discussant, in particular, noted the need for the post-2015 poverty reduction plan also to be a post-2015 climate change mitigation plan, stating that if one goal was not achieved, the other was bound to fail as well.

Many panellists emphasized the need to include food security in the post-2015 development agenda – highlighting the influence of free trade policies, pressure from large agricultural producers in the developed world, and the influence of finance on

food commodity contracts, as major impediments to the achievement of food security for all.

These are just some of the issues raised in the lively discussions over the past two days. We must now think about how we can move this process forward and make sure that these views are heard. As a first step, we hope to compile summaries of all the sessions and to send them as an input to the debates on the post-2015 UN development agenda at the General Assembly in New York. In this way, the views expressed here can be fed into the process of formulating the new development goals.

But moving this process forward and ensuring that these goals are supported by appropriate policies and institutions will require continued engagement and advocacy. Civil society has a crucial role to play in this context. With targeted campaigns, many civil society institutions have been able to galvanize public opinion, generate debate, and trigger policy responses. It is therefore my hope that civil society institutions will remain fully engaged in the design and implementation of the post-2015 agenda. Some speakers have remarked that in the aftermath of the financial crisis, and given the prevailing budgetary pressures, as well as tectonic shifts in the political landscape, the environment today may in some ways be less conducive to the creation of a new partnership for development than it was back in 2000. To me, this simply means that our arguments and our advocacy have to be even more solid and better targeted.

In this context, allow me to also say a few words about the possible role of UNCTAD. Several of the concepts and policy recommendations developed in our analytical and research work – such as the need for greater policy space in trade and investment, or for a multilateral approach to exchange rate management – speak

directly to many of the concerns raised here today. Given UNCTAD's innovative and "ahead of the curve" thinking on trade and development issues, I believe we have important contributions to make to the post-2015 development agenda, and to the new economic approaches needed to implement it. I also think that our universal membership, along with our partnership with civil society, puts UNCTAD in a key position as a forum for inclusive debate. And we have heard the calls from participants and organizations at this Symposium for UNCTAD to strengthen its research and advocacy work in pursuit of development and prosperity for all.

UNCTAD is one of the United Nations agencies that have led the way in promoting the engagement of civil society with its work. This Public Symposium is an example of our commitment. It is just a part of the ongoing dialogue on substantive issues between Civil Society Organizations and UNCTAD. Given the benefits of these synergies, UNCTAD is committed to continuing the practice of the Public Symposium and dialogue with civil society.

In closing, I would like to express my gratitude to all panellists, discussants and moderators for sharing their expertise, and to all of the participants for their engaging contributions. I would also like to express special appreciation to the governments of Austria, China, India and Indonesia, and to the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, for providing financial support. As there is no provision in the regular budget for the organization of this event, we must rely exclusively on the generosity of governments to make these exchanges possible, and I would like to thank those who have contributed. My special gratitude also goes to the President of UNCTAD's Trade and Development Board, His Excellency Mr. Mukhtar Tileuberdi, and the Permanent Mission of Kazakhstan, for hosting the reception for all participants

yesterday evening. I also wish to thank the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service for its support of this forum, and the students from Webster University for their tireless work to ensure social media coverage of the event.

I hope to welcome all of you again at the next UNCTAD Public Symposium, which will be held in 2014, the year of our 50th anniversary.

Thank you very much.