

UNCTAD Special Event

**Release of the Second Report of the
UNCTAD Secretary-General's Panel of Eminent Persons
*Addressing Key Economic Issues to Advance Sustainable Development: Ideas for Actions***

**Room XVIII, Palais des Nations, Geneva
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Statement by H.E. Ms. Tarja Halonen

Dr. Supachai,
Eminent Panel Members,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my great pleasure to introduce to you the report of the UNCTAD Secretary-General's Panel of Eminent Persons entitled *Addressing Key Economic Issues to Advance Sustainable Development: Ideas for Actions*.

Our report offers a number of ideas for actions to address key development issues. I will briefly introduce the main thrust of the report and its context, and then my co-chair, Professor Bhagwati, will introduce each of the ten ideas for actions in more detail.

Our recommendations are meant to support the role of UNCTAD. Aim of our report is to provide fresh thinking to increase the impact of UNCTAD's work.

We did not intend to be exhaustive: instead, we chose a limited number of issues, which we felt are of key importance to sustainable development and developing countries and where UNCTAD could make a difference. Our report is forward-looking and it focuses on a few key ideas for international initiatives which fall within the scope and mandate of UNCTAD.

Here I wish to emphasize that our recommendations are in no way meant to interfere with the role of the member States to set the mandate of UNCTAD and guide its work.

Let me give you a bit of background to the Panel of Eminent Persons

This was not the first time that our Panel was set to work. In 2006, we issued a first report focusing on enhancing the development role and impact of UNCTAD. In that first report, we paid attention to administrative and management reform of UNCTAD and on how to revitalize UNCTAD as an institution. We were happy to note that most of those recommendations were eventually endorsed in UNCTAD 12 in Accra and then put into action by member States and the secretariat.

In this second report we take a different approach. The Panel was asked by Dr. Supachai to address key and emerging economic development challenges of today, and provide concrete ideas for international initiatives on how to deal with them.

We sincerely hope that you, Dr. Supachai, will find our ideas valuable and share them with the member States of UNCTAD, who can then pursue our ideas together with the Secretariat and broader development community and put them to life.

Let me now turn to the report itself

Our report has two main parts. First, it provides a brief overview of the paradigm shift towards development-centred globalization. Then, we focus on ten crucial issue areas. For each of these, we highlight key challenges and suggested one or two new international policy initiatives.

We based our thinking on three key issues that should also be the foundation for UNCTAD's work. First, development must be sustainable. We must ensure that we do not only content ourselves with short-term solutions but that we make provision for the needs of future generations. Second, we must ensure the inclusiveness of development. In other words, we must make sure that the gains from development reach the poor and inequality is reduced. And third, we must foster good governance at all levels. Nationally, responsible and democratic governance is central for long-term development. Internationally, the effective participation and meaningful representation of developing countries in institutions overseeing the world economy is crucial.

In our report, we first call upon UNCTAD to work on this idea of globalization, which puts these core values at its heart: a so-called “development-centred” globalization. We then define a series of issue areas where new global initiatives could be advocated to foster development-friendly outcomes.

It is also important that our ideas should be considered in the broader context of transition of our global development efforts from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and their follow-up.

Before I give the floor to Professor Bhagwati, who will elaborate on these ten ideas for actions, I would now like to offer some of my personal reflections

First, it has been a great honor and pleasure to be part of this panel. It has been a pleasure to engage in this type of highly stimulating discussion we had among the panel members, and with Dr. Supachai. Let me also express my sincere thanks to Dr. Supachai’s team from the Secretariat and all the others who have assisted the work of the Panel.

Allow me to say a few words about two - out of our ten - issue areas, that are particularly dear to my heart: first, gender issues, the role of women in development, and second, the plight of those working in the informal economy, most of whom are also women.

Let us start with gender equality

There is great potential in unlocking the power of women in fostering the economic development. Better empowerment of women and gender equality are needed for advancing sustainable development. We confront a number of problems. For example, compared to men, disproportionate numbers of women live in poverty and are marginalized; work in the informal sector where jobs are not recognised, regulated or protected by legislation; are confronted by barriers that limit their access to markets, resources or decision-making structures; and are deprived of education, training or other capacity-building opportunities.

All of this calls for a change!

In our report, we call upon UNCTAD to strengthen the emphasis on gender equality in its work. UNCTAD should identify and advocate meaningful and effective and practical actions that could be deployed in its core areas of work.

Let me now turn to the informal sector.

The informal economy is the backbone of the economy of many developing countries, particularly in Least Developed Countries. There is a great potential in unlocking the power and vitality of this vast sector. These people survive and earn a living to their families from one day to another in conditions that most of us couldn't take for a long.

They are the true heroes of globalization, but we have failed them. Millions of people --in the fields, streets and collapsing factories-- they are still working in harsh conditions exposed to pollution, harsh weather conditions and outright exploitation.

Among other things, we should create ways to: help reduce the risk, cost, and insecurity associated with working informally, prevent the exploitation and harassment of migrant workers, reduce corrupt practices, and tackle outright sexual and gender-based violence to which women are more vulnerable when working in informal activities.

It's all about spreading "decent work" as recommended by the ILO. We need better education, training and awareness-raising, insurance and social protection, affordable credit and infrastructure, such as shelters and drainage.

In our report, we call upon UNCTAD to deal with these issues.

Let me now close with a last few words on the way forward.

We do not offer ready-made solutions. Our suggestions are seeds. Seeds that could be further developed and then adopted by UNCTAD. This we will let to the consideration of its Members. Clearly, the task ahead for UNCTAD, is a challenging one. But it is not beyond the possible.

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