

60th Session of the Trade and Development Board
20th September 2013

Agenda item 10: UNCTAD's contribution to the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields

Statement by the Deputy Secretary-General UNCTAD

AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to open this discussion of item 10 on the agenda, covering UNCTAD's contribution to the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields.

As the President has pointed out in his introduction, UNCTAD's mandate and workplan are decided by member States at the quadrennial Ministerial Conferences. However, its work can also make important contributions to the implementation of the outcomes of major summits.

In this context, the General Assembly invited the Trade and Development Board to contribute, within its mandate, to the implementation and to the review of progress made in the implementation of the outcomes of these Conferences. Similarly, in paragraph 18 (n) of the Doha Mandate, member States have asked UNCTAD to implement and follow-up, as appropriate, relevant outcomes from global conferences and summits on development. The report before you, in document TD/B/60/9 (plus the corrigendum in TD/B/60/9/corr.1) contains a brief review by the UNCTAD secretariat of progress made in the

implementation of the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits in different thematic areas, and the contributions of UNCTAD over the past year. In doing so, the report highlights activities under all three pillars of UNCTAD's work - intergovernmental consensus-building, research and analysis and technical cooperation.

As the report covers a wide range of activities as examples, I would only like to highlight two areas, so as not to take too much of your time.

The area of commodities, for example, has been addressed from different angles by a number of United Nations Conferences and Summits. The 2005 World Summit had noted the need to address the impact of weak and volatile commodity prices and support the efforts of commodity-dependent countries to diversify their economies and strengthen the competitiveness of their commodities sectors. Similarly, General Assembly resolution 61/190 stressed the need to maximize the contribution of the commodity sector to sustained economic growth and sustainable development. And the World Summit on Food Security in 2009 called for new investment to increase sustainable agricultural production and productivity, reduce poverty, and increase food security. Finally, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development noted the importance of renewable energies and cleaner and more energy-efficient technologies for sustainable development.

In this respect, the report outlines some of the recent activities of UNCTAD to contribute to the implementation of these outcomes. In the area of consensus-building, UNCTAD organized the fourth Global Commodities Forum, which discussed policy-issues related to agricultural and energy sector development, stressing the need for extension services

and access to information and science and technology to achieve agricultural transformation, and suggested a number of measures to address commodity price volatility. Similarly, the 15th UNCTAD Africa Oil, Gas, Mines, Trade and Finance Conference in Brazzaville addressed energy access and how to ensure better value creation and retention in national economies. It was attended by more than 500 national policy-makers and other stakeholders. Finally, UNCTAD's fifth Expert Meeting on Commodities deliberated on measures to enhance food security, and on the policy framework necessary to promote renewable energy development.

UNCTAD also provided research and analysis on the commodity problematique: For example, *The Commodities and Development Report 2012* outlined ways in which commodity-dependent countries could harness the potential of regional trade and use current windfall gains from high commodity prices to promote wider economic transformations.

Finally, we also provided technical assistance to individual countries. For example, at the request of the Government of Mexico, UNCTAD carried out a review of the country's agricultural policy. In addition, we upgraded our INFOCOMM programme, which provides up-to-date market information on commodities of use to market participants in developing countries, with a new focus on agricultural commodities.

A second example I would like to highlight is external debt. Several United Nations Conferences and Summits have drawn attention to the need to find more durable solutions to the debt problems of developing countries. These include the Millennium Declaration (2000), the Monterrey Consensus (2002), the Johannesburg Plan of

Implementation (2002), the World Summit Outcome (2005), the United Nations Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis (2009) and the fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (2011).

Once again, UNCTAD aimed to contribute to finding such solutions through work in all its three pillars: We took the lead in organizing a special event at the Second Committee of the General Assembly on “Sovereign debt crises and restructurings: lessons learnt and proposals for debt resolution mechanisms”, which was well received by 300 participants from over 150 countries.

With regard to research and analysis, last year, as every year, UNCTAD prepared the United Nations Secretary-General’s report to the General Assembly on external debt sustainability and development, which includes a comprehensive analysis of the external debt situation and debt servicing problems faced by developing and transition economies, with a special emphasis on LDCs. In addition, we are assembling a group of experts in the fields of law, finance and economics, to study options for a sovereign debt restructuring mechanism.

Finally, we continue to provide technical assistance to developing countries negotiating debt restructurings within the Paris Club framework. Since July last year, Comoros, Guinea and Myanmar have successfully restructured their debt in this framework. Also, our Debt Management and Financial Analysis System Programme has provided technical assistance to the debt management offices of 69 mostly low- and lower-middle income countries and 106 institutions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

These are only some of the activities in the two areas of commodities and external debt. The report before you provides information on a wide range of other areas, in which UNCTAD has also contributed to the implementation of the outcomes of major summits, including trade, investment, competition, science and technology, and assistance to countries in special situations. We hope that you will find this report a useful overview of the kind of contributions that UNCTAD is making to the wider United Nations efforts to achieve development for all.

Over the years the secretariat has tried its best to make this agenda item as meaningful and as effective as possible. We also appreciate that member States have continued to be interested in the issue and have called for the strengthening of the deliberations under this agenda item. We recognize that as the global development agenda has moved forward, and as the processes have begun to converge towards 2015 and the articulation of the post 2015-development agenda, we must redouble our efforts to ensure that the work under this agenda item lives up to the expectations and demands of our clients, the member States. In this context, we are planning to explore how we can allocate a longer time-slot for the deliberations on this item within the agenda of the two week TDB. In addition, we will look into appointing a dedicated focal point within the secretariat for the follow-up to major UN conferences and summits on development. We consider this an issue of high priority and one requiring tact and sensitivity to the needs and priorities of all member states. Keeping this in mind and taking into account resource availability

and capacity, we will identify the best service to support such an important endeavor and will keep you informed.

I look forward to your deliberations and your comments on how UNCTAD can improve its contribution to the implementation and follow-up on the outcomes of major UN conferences and summits.

Thank you very much.