

U.S. Intervention
UNCTAD
LDC Report
January 25, 2016
Geneva

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Colleagues and Friends,

1. On the behalf of the United States, I would like to begin by recognizing that UNCTAD's efforts to improve the economies of least developed countries, and thereby the lives of the citizens of those countries, is among UNCTAD's most important work. I congratulate the entire team, especially those from the Division for Africa and LDCs, that worked on this year's report.
2. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development presents clear goals to work toward. While all countries have committed to implement the 2030 Agenda in its entirety, countries will need to prioritize and sequence the actions that help make progress on multiple goals and targets simultaneously. One area that can have a "multiplier effect" on SDG progress is to focus on gender equality. Progress on Goal 5, which aims to "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls," will lead to progress on numerous other Sustainable Development Goals related to poverty, health, education, and hunger. Empowering women, and ensuring opportunities and legal protections equal to those of men, is proven to have profoundly positive impacts on health, education, and development. We were pleased to see that Chapter 4 of this year's LDC report recognizes the valuable contributions women make in development and we look forward to more robust consideration of gender policies in future UNCTAD reports.
3. Research and real world experience confirms the undeniable benefits of educating and empowering women. A woman who is educated is twice as likely to send her own children to school. An educated woman is likely to have fewer children, be better integrated in the workforce and have access to higher paying occupations, and to reinvest those earnings into additional education. Women are much more likely than men to reinvest in their own households in the form of food, education, and health care – all of which are behaviors that lead us toward the Sustainable Development Goals.
4. Despite the overwhelming proof that empowering and engaging women brings significant social, health, and economic benefits to all countries, much work is left to be done. Proactive policies designed to empower and engage women will be necessary if we want to achieve the

Sustainable Development Goals. Our recent discussion about the UNCTAD XIV theme and subthemes, and the reluctance of some member states to recognize the need to specifically consider gender responsive policies, shows that we still have ground to cover, even in Geneva. UNCTAD can play a leading role in helping to educate policy makers and provide a guiding hand in updating economic policies.

5. Our friends from across the lake at The World Economic Forum recently released the 2015 Global Gender Gap Report and it includes an index evaluating women's economic participation and opportunities in 109 countries. You will not be surprised to hear that Iceland, Norway, and Sweden are among the countries with the best economic opportunities for women. But the good news is not limited to developed countries. Malawi, Laos, and Rwanda, for example, are in the top twenty countries for economic participation and opportunity for women. So the question is: why have Malawi, Laos, and Rwanda been able to economically empower their women while others have not? UNCTAD can help answer that question and the United States suggests that UNCTAD's Division for Africa and LDCs should use future LDC reports to share best practices from peer countries that have demonstrated success in closing the economic opportunities gender gap. The case studies in this year's report provide an excellent starting point for what could be a detailed country analysis.

6. This year's report also highlights that rural women in LDCs continue to face multiple constraints on their access to land, credit, agricultural inputs, extension services, labor, markets, and education. Women have faced those constraints for decades and the slow pace of change demonstrates that policy makers and everyday citizens need to be educated about the benefits of engaging women and girls. Among UNCTAD's list of constraints faced by women, several clearly fall within UNCTAD's mandate and UNCTAD could work with developing countries to address those constraints.

7. President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama launched the government-wide Let Girls Learn initiative in 2015, building on USAID's initial Let Girls Learn funding and education programs. It will leverage the investments we have made and success we have achieved in global primary school, and expand them to help adolescent girls get the future they deserve. Getting girls into school is not enough, sexism in the classroom and at home must also be addressed, which is why it's so important to educate boys early on about positive gender norms. The scope of Let Girls Learn is much broader than overcoming gender biases, it also partners with the private sector, other governments, and civil society to improve access to education, reduce barriers, promote girls in STEM, improve health and nutrition, foster leadership, address gender based violence, and empower adolescent girls.

8. In this room we have heard many times how UNCTAD does not have enough money to meet all of the technical assistance requests that it has received. Some of us have called on UNCTAD

to be more creative in partnerships and the recent MOUs with the ILO and OECD are positive steps. But the United States also encourages UNCTAD to think more broadly and ask if there are opportunities to be had with diverse partners including development agencies, foundations, and the private sector. For example, I just learned that Mastercard is financially supporting the work of UNCTAD's ICT Section in Egypt. Under this partnership, UNCTAD is conducting an ICT policy review to help Egypt develop its national e-commerce strategy. Another example is the work that the U.S. government is doing with UNCTAD's business facilitation team who have developed a robust web platform to facilitate business registrations around the world. That work is partially funded by the Kaufmann Foundation, a non-profit foundation in the United States. When providing technical assistance, or even when doing the research for reports, I encourage UNCTAD to reach out to organizations on the ground to discover work synergies.

9. The United States government encourages UNCTAD to continue its analytical work on LDCs, and we also encourage UNCTAD to focus more on empowering women. We further ask UNCTAD, and the delegates in this room, to recognize the synergistic benefits that research and technical assistance on gender equality and female empowerment bring. With a focused effort on Sustainable Development Goal 5, Gender Equality, we will help every woman and girl achieve the future she deserves. We will also simultaneously work towards a more healthy, educated, and prosperous world for all.

10. Thank you.