



United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

Distr.: General
9 June 2016

Original: English

Trade and Development Board
Trade and Development Commission
Expert Meeting on Trade as a Tool
for the Economic Empowerment of Women
Geneva, 23–24 May 2016

Report of the Expert Meeting on Trade as a Tool for the Economic Empowerment of Women

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on 23 and 24 May 2016

Contents

| | <i>Page</i> |
|--|-------------|
| Introduction | 2 |
| I. Chair's summary | 2 |
| A. Opening statements | 2 |
| B. Trade as a tool for the economic empowerment of women | 4 |
| II. Organizational matters | 11 |
| A. Election of officers | 11 |
| B. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work | 11 |
| C. Outcome of the meeting | 11 |
| D. Adoption of the report of the meeting | 11 |
| Annex | |
| Attendance | 12 |

GE.16-09453(E)



* 1 6 0 9 4 5 3 *

Please recycle



Introduction

The Expert Meeting on Trade as a Tool for the Economic Empowerment of Women was held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, on 23 and 24 May 2016. The objective of the meeting was to discuss policies and measures needed for trade and trade policy to fully contribute to women's economic empowerment. Specifically, the meeting was expected to promote among participants a better understanding of the links between trade and gender; discuss how to ensure coherence between trade and women's economic empowerment; and cast light on ways to design and implement the transformative actions for gender equality and women's economic empowerment expected under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

The meeting benefited from presentations by 13 experts representing Governments, intergovernmental organizations, the private sector, civil society and academia. The meeting brought together around 80 participants from over 20 countries, with diverse backgrounds and experiences. To facilitate the discussion, the UNCTAD secretariat had prepared a background document entitled "Trade as a tool for the economic empowerment of women" (TD/B/C.I/EM.8/2).

I. Chair's summary

A. Opening statements

1. In his opening statement, the Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD recalled the firm commitment made by the international community to address inequality. He clarified the meaning of women's empowerment, which could be understood as the ability of women to exercise agency to change their own lives and, more broadly, to change the structure that placed them in subordinate positions relative to men. Women's economic empowerment, in turn, could be understood as the ability of women to enjoy full economic rights and independence. He stressed that empowering women was good not only for women but for all, and provided the following example: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations had noted that if women had the same access to resources as men, total agricultural production in developing countries could rise by between 2.5 and 4 per cent.

2. With regard to the specific links between women's empowerment and trade, the Deputy Secretary-General noted that trade by its very nature had distributional implications, and that distributional shifts could affect women in their roles as employees, producers, consumers and taxpayers. Gender-differentiated impacts could be assessed at three levels. First, at a national level, trade openness could decrease tariff revenues, especially in developing countries, which in turn might have gender-specific effects on the size and composition of government spending. Second, at a sectoral level, export-competing sectors could expand and generate new jobs, while import-competing sectors might contract. Sectoral reallocations of this kind might have gender-specific effects, particularly if men or women were predominant in the affected sectors. Third, at a household level, trade caused changes in the relative prices of goods and services, with gender-specific implications for real incomes.

3. The Deputy Secretary-General emphasized that assessments of gender-differentiated impacts of trade should inform trade policy design and implementation. To assist in these efforts, UNCTAD had set up a work programme on trade, gender, and development, which could assist policymakers in giving substance to women's empowerment. The programme had produced a series of reports on trade and gender impacts in a range of developing countries and least developed countries, as well as a teaching package that had been the basis for two successful online courses on trade and gender. The Deputy Secretary-General

concluded by emphasizing that the fourteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development would provide an opportunity to further advance gender equality.

4. The Chief of the UNCTAD Trade, Gender and Development Unit stated that the nexus between trade, agriculture and gender was complex and multidimensional, with a high degree of context specificity. However, it was possible to make some generalizations with regard to gender-based patterns and constraints in agricultural trade and rural development. For example, while in some contexts women were as active as men in growing export crops, it was generally men who sold the produce and controlled the proceeds of sale. Such gender-based patterns reflected deeply entrenched social norms, as well as gender-specific difficulties in accessing productive assets and services. The Chief noted that, with regard to gender-differentiated impacts of trade, trade liberalization did not have clear-cut positive or negative effects on women in agriculture, as the effects varied across subgroups of women depending on sectoral segregation, crop and farming patterns, the type of land tenure arrangements in place and intrahousehold dynamics.

5. In most instances, the Chief observed, the impact of trade liberalization on women was double-edged. For example, more affordable food imports as a result of trade liberalization could benefit women as consumers while eroding the already meagre earnings of rural women as producers in the sector. Similarly, agricultural diversification and commercialization could present new opportunities for rural women, yet also pose significant challenges. In on-site farming activities, the process tended to favour commercially oriented farmers with better access to inputs and marketing networks, and there was a tendency for poor small-scale producers, including women farmers on marginal land, to be crowded out. In off-farm agricultural labour, export-oriented agro-industries might provide new and better employment opportunities for women, yet such industries and associated forms of organized supply chains, such as contract farming, also posed gender-specific challenges. Women workers in agroprocessing were typically segregated in unskilled labour-intensive activities, with limited opportunities for skill development and, in some sectors, women were exposed to pesticides and other hazardous conditions, their wages tended to be low and the work was casual and precarious, with accrued exposure to external shocks. Proactive measures were needed to ensure that rural women could harness the benefits and opportunities of trade integration.

6. With regard to manufacturing, the Chief drew attention to subsequent processes of feminization and defeminization of labour. With regard to the former, evidence pointed to a positive relationship between the share of basic manufactures in exports and women's share of employment. Labour-intensive export-oriented industries, such as in garments, textiles, light electronics and toys, showed a preference for women workers due to strong international competition that required the use of cheap labour to cut costs, alongside distinct notions of men's and women's work that tended to segregate women in labour-intensive industries. As a result, women faced horizontal and vertical segregation, the first referring to the unequal distribution of men and women in different occupations and functions and the second to the fact that men were typically concentrated at the top of an occupational hierarchy and women at the bottom. With regard to the defeminization of labour, there was evidence that industrial upgrading was accompanied by a defeminization of employment, as men were perceived to better match skills profiles. Overall, although trade-led growth in manufacturing created job opportunities for women, it also created new patterns of inequality and vulnerability.

7. The Chief noted that the services sector was acknowledged as a critical source of jobs in the developing world, in particular for women. However, trade liberalization in services did not automatically lead to improved outcomes for women. Gender wage gaps persisted in the sector, and there was evidence of gender-based segregation that often relegated women to lower paid and lower value added roles or crowded women into informal and small-scale services. A central dimension was the kinds of services that women provided. Engagement in low-productivity services with reduced capital and skill

accumulation potential, such as petty trade and personal and community services, provided women with fewer opportunities for social and economic advancement, while employment in medium or high-skill services might empower women economically and socially.

8. The Chief concluded by emphasizing the link between trade and gender in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. The former provided an opportunity to address gender issues in a multidisciplinary and multifaceted manner. Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 5 and 16 included targets and indicators highly relevant to women's economic empowerment. The Chief pointed out two key challenges, namely the need to go beyond a business case for women's economic empowerment by acknowledging women's rights as human rights, and the need for full implementation of both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, despite the challenges of the related transformative actions.

9. One delegate emphasized that empowering women and girls had been a consistent policy goal in Finland, a critical factor in the country's economic success and an important component of its development cooperation. The delegate emphasized the positive impacts that international trade had had on women; trade had increased employment opportunities for women in industries such as garments, textiles and light electronics, and had contributed to improving the conditions and quality of work, as working in companies connected to value chains offered better conditions than domestic employment. Furthermore, there was a positive correlation between trade and better rights for women. However, the potential of trade was far from being fully utilized and ultimately depended much on local policymaking and social norms.

B. Trade as a tool for the economic empowerment of women

(Agenda item 3)

Links between trade and gender in the agricultural sector

10. The first session focused on the links between trade and gender in the agricultural sector. The session explored the opportunities that trade could create for women's empowerment and well-being in agriculture and related challenges. Discussions were largely focused on the gender implications of agricultural commercialization and diversification. Experts drew attention to the context-specificity and complexity of the trade and gender nexus in agriculture.

11. One expert provided details on this nexus, and prompted reflections on trade as a tool for the economic empowerment of women. There was a tendency to oversimplify; gender had become a proxy for women, yet the notion had deeper nuances. In a related move, the policy discourse had shifted from an assessment of intersecting patterns of inequality, whereby gender issues were assessed as an interplay between ethnicity, class and location, and been replaced by a simplified discourse based on a binary (men and women) distinction. The expert highlighted that, from the perspective of the right to food, the shift towards commercial agriculture did not have clear-cut positive or negative effects on rural households, as the effects varied across subgroups. In analyses according to livelihood, rural populations included different categories affected by trade in various ways, including households dependent on land for living, workers employed under contract farming and other outgrower schemes and labourers in export-oriented agro-industries. In some settings, the process of commercialization had resulted in significant disruptions at the domestic level, from the perspective of the right to food. In Cambodia, for example, land had been diverted to rubber production, and when rubber prices had fallen, labourers had ceased production without reverting to farming vegetables. Rural households had instead sent young women to garment industries based in the capital, which provided income but also favoured new consumption patterns that could be unsustainable in rural areas. The question was whether an emphasis on agricultural productivity and the need to close the gender gap in agriculture did not conceal a bias towards an agro-industry model

heavily reliant on external inputs, and whether trade was a tool for the economic empowerment of women or the reverse held true, that is, women were a tool for trade as they provided a pool of cheap labour. The expert emphasized in particular the need for a rights-based approach. Little rights-based language had been included in the Sustainable Development Goals; there was an emphasis on combating hunger but, notably, Goal 2 did not contain language on the right to food.

12. Another expert highlighted the complexity of the trade and gender nexus and the need to avoid oversimplification, presenting preliminary findings from research on the gender-differentiated impacts of growth in non-traditional agricultural exports, including of quinoa in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, organic coffee in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, cardamom in Nepal and beans and Irish potatoes in Rwanda. The quality of research was hampered by a lack of data, partially due to the fact that the area under investigation straddled labour and agriculture. Surveys designed for urban labour might not fully capture the dimension of seasonality, a central feature of agricultural wage employment, while the notion of a main job might be misleading in agriculture. The expert noted that gender was an important analytical lens through which to assess the social inclusiveness of rural transitions. The scope of the analysis encompassed economic empowerment and other dimensions of empowerment, including the sharing of core responsibilities in the reproductive sphere. Preliminary findings pointed to varying outcomes by gender. For example, in Nepal, the decision-making power (with regard to whether or not to produce cardamom) was reportedly shared equally between women and men, while property was mainly held by men, as was control over chemical inputs. In small-scale cross border trade in Rwanda and Uganda, women traders prevailed in two districts and men in another two. One reason for this division might be that some women were organized in cooperatives, implying that they had financial resources to invest. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the men brought the coffee to washing stations and were the main beneficiaries of training. Women's economic empowerment thus did not necessarily lead to social empowerment, and vice versa.

13. Yet another expert focused on voluntary sustainability standards and responsible investment frameworks, by examining the extent to which such voluntary instruments had incorporated gender dimensions and their gender impact. The review considered five major standards and frameworks under five gender-related criteria (access to land, access to productive resources, reproductive workload, employment and decision-making). The analysis revealed that the standards did not include many references to gender issues, except for employment and a reference to reproductive level burdens, while the frameworks were slightly more gender sensitive. Overall, the gender impacts of the reviewed standards and frameworks were limited. Nevertheless, certification procedures had improved women's land rights in, for example, Mexico and Central America. The expert noted that additional data needed to be gauged to monitor the gender impacts of voluntary sustainability standards and responsible investment frameworks.

14. The ensuing discussion revealed contrasting views of commercialization. Some participants felt that the shift towards agricultural commercialization and diversification was wealth enhancing, through job creation and improved working conditions. While recognizing that commercialization could create employment opportunities, one expert highlighted the complexity of the assessment in terms of the right to food. For example, the flower sector in Ethiopia and Kenya had created new job opportunities for women, yet there were concerns regarding the quality and stability of the jobs created and the risk of a rush to the bottom to attract foreign direct investment. Furthermore, the large-scale production of roses was water and land-intensive, raising critical sustainability concerns, and could encroach on the right to food. With regard to rural transformation in Cambodia, rural infrastructures had improved mainly through foreign direct investment, yet this had stimulated rural exodus and distortions in consumption patterns. The social and economic effects of the trend towards agricultural commercialization and diversification thus needed to be assessed in the long term.

15. There was some discussion as to what might be done to change ingrained social norms that included socially enshrined roles for men and women. The experts highlighted the fact that implicit assumptions that gender norms were socially embedded and could only change with education were only part of the problem. Gender norms were also reproduced by institutions and markets, and this was an area in which policies could be changed. Women were affected differently by trade across their lifecycles (for example, women might hold assembly-type work for 10–15 years before leaving) and this issue could add further complexity to the trade and gender nexus. In Cambodia, for example, with trade concessions offered by the United States of America in the garment sector, more than 350,000 rural girls were employed in the garment sector, and some returned to their villages to marry and then remained in the village; the changes in consumer styles of those who returned raised complex social issues.

16. One expert emphasized that the key challenge in empowering women was policy implementation. The economic empowerment of women involved a transformative agenda that required social and women's movements to support changes. One participant drew attention to the need to provide greater focus on francophone African countries, often neglected in analyses. Another participant highlighted the great potential of women in diaspora and the need to invest in and leverage diaspora networks to transfer resources and know-how to women at home.

Links between trade and gender in the export-oriented manufacturing sector

17. The second session focused on the links between trade and gender in the export-oriented manufacturing sector. The session discussed structural measures needed to ensure that women benefited from expanded trade and successfully faced challenges in the sector.

18. Based on the results of a study on gender equality in global value chains, one expert discussed the critical role of the labour-intensive export-oriented manufacturing sector in the creation of employment opportunities for women. Through the provision of alternatives to informal employment, the growth of this sector facilitated the entry of women into formal labour markets. The expert highlighted that an important implication for women was improved access to credit, which in turn contributed to improving their living conditions.

19. Another expert emphasized that women constituted about 60 to 80 per cent of the workforce in export processing (manufacturing) zones in developing countries. The number of such zones had increased exponentially, from 79 zones in 25 countries in 1975, employing about 800,000 people, to some 3,500 zones in 130 countries at present, employing 66 million people in developing countries. The expert also highlighted the negative aspects of employment in export-oriented factories, in which the rights of workers were often limited as access to trade unions and freedom of association in general was not guaranteed, often resulting in harsh working conditions. Freedom of association lay at the heart of women's empowerment, as it provided room for women to claim their rights. Another expert recommended government-level action to support women in collective bargaining rights and enforcement of the freedom of association.

20. Another area of concern was the prospect of women leaving the manufacturing sector due to the defeminization of the labour market. According to existing evidence, industrial upgrading was correlated with a significant decrease in women's share of employment that could be linked to gender stereotypes and a lack of access to on-the-job training. One expert noted that women leaving an export-oriented industry tended to move to the informal economy, particularly informal services. This highlighted the role of the services sector as a large reserve sector, and more research was needed to thoroughly investigate this underexplored issue.

21. Another expert emphasized the potential deflationary consequences of export-oriented policies, suggesting that a greater focus on tradable goods in general (exported goods and domestically sold goods) was required for women's inclusion.

Promoting policies that translated into deflationary pressures could unfavourably affect economic activities and consequently limit the scope for significant progress on gender issues.

22. Women's ability to successfully engage in the manufacturing sector was constrained by a lack of or limited access to land as an asset and collateral in general, by continued differences in educational choices and attainments and by a lack of confidence. To address a lack of collateral, initiatives aimed at providing women with financial services could be implemented. One expert stressed, however, the limitations of inclusive finance projects, such as microfinance initiatives, which resulted in unsustainable indebtedness among recipients. Moreover, inclusive finance was often directed towards consumption and the fulfilment of emergency needs rather than the creation of new economic activities.

23. The experts noted that persistent gender segregation in education was a crucial issue for gender-related outcomes as it translated into gender-segregated employment. Women tended to be risk-averse, and such constraining mindsets resulted in difficulties in scaling up. Empowerment, defined as making stronger and more confident, was a powerful transformative notion capable of spurring changes in terms of attitudes and entrepreneurial dynamism. The experts emphasized the opportunities arising from the development of global outsourcing activities. However, as such activities required investment in capital, women might be disadvantaged. As a cost-saving strategy, firms no longer absorbed the cost of capital investment when outsourcing some activities; such costs were transferred to workers performing outsourced tasks. As a consequence, individuals with little investment capacity were unable to benefit from new opportunities. One solution might be the creation of business clusters with equipment made available, targeting women workers. Such a strategy could be integrated in existing initiatives such as aid for trade programmes.

24. However, the experts questioned the practicability of business cluster creation in developing countries, as it could entail a violation of existing obligations under intellectual property rights legislation, free trade agreements and trade-related investment measures. A policy position promoting gender equality should question how such obligations might unduly restrict the share of value added and hinder upgrading and industrial development. The design of smart performance requirements that did not violate World Trade Organization principles was a possible alternative.

25. One expert suggested that in certain cases liberalization occurred too early in industrialization processes. If domestic manufacturing firms were exposed prematurely to foreign competition, this benefited larger firms at the expense of small-scale producers. As women tended to be located in smaller firms, an abrupt opening to trade could therefore be detrimental to them.

26. The experts disagreed on the question of policy space and its relation to gender equality. Some experts emphasized that the search for policy space was intimately related to gender equality. In particular, enough policy space to control the inflow and outflow of capital was a key requirement in the design and implementation of local macrolevel policies to address gender equality. However, broad macrolevel issues of policy space and global economic structures did not necessarily impede Governments from taking action to empower women; the issue was not policy space but rather effective local-level actions to empower women through legislation and policy implementation. The experts agreed that much had to be done through social forces at the domestic level. One expert highlighted the importance of an enabling business environment at the international level that would make companies liable for breaches of labour law or tax systems; there needed to be a social contract for foreign investors rather than merely protection of their rights.

Links between trade and gender in the services sector

27. The third session focused on the links between trade and gender in the services sector. The session discussed opportunities for ensuring that increased participation by

women in the sector was beneficial to them, including the adoption of gender-sensitive policies in the sector.

28. One expert described the efforts of Colombia to incorporate more women in the services sector in general and in tourism specifically. In Colombia, the gender wage gap was around 21 per cent and women's access to the Internet was at 37 per cent. Some instruments had been created to respond to the needs of small and medium-sized enterprises with the aim of increasing their survival rate. The expert recommended three measures as crucial to enhancing women's participation in the economy, namely increased compliance with international norms, increased training opportunities and the faithful implementation of laws. Compliance with international standards, such as those of the International Organization for Standardization, and conformity assessments remained a problem for services providers in Colombia.

29. Another expert emphasized that a large number of women in Ethiopia were employed in services-oriented small and medium-sized enterprises. Due to the high number of women in the work force, such enterprises were expected to benefit in particular from the Government's strategy to mainstream gender in all policies and legal frameworks. One recommendation for empowering women and tapping their potential as economic actors was to develop and make available time and labour-saving technologies tailored to women's needs.

30. Yet another expert focused on the implementation of targeted policy interventions that allowed women to access resources and improve their status in the overall trade environment. Such policy recommendations emphasized that women needed to be connected (through financial institutions) and equipped (through training). This could occur through the development of special financing instruments for small and medium-sized enterprises, savings schemes and others, and through the setting up of centres of excellence for training to which women could have easier access. Examples of measures from which women traders could greatly benefit were the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa Simplified Trade Regime and the implementation of lower taxes or tax incentives that could encourage women to enter formal sectors.

31. Finally, another expert focused on African women's empowerment. An increasing number of women in Africa had moved from the agricultural to the services sector and the latter had become a source of economic growth and employment and, as a result, a driver of economic empowerment for women. Gender-sensitive policies were needed to tap the potential of women in services, such as policies providing fiscal incentives to encourage exports from women-owned services businesses; tariff reductions for goods that were necessary inputs for services enterprises; and policies that encouraged banks and financial institutions to create more innovative gender-focused products and services to allow women to start and upgrade businesses.

32. The experts agreed that tourism remained a major source of employment in general and in particular for women, both in rural and urban areas. Women were present all along value chains, as providers of accommodation, food and souvenirs, and as guides and tour operators. Despite new opportunities offered by the expansion of tourism, women still faced limited access to higher-paid positions and the most lucrative subsector activities. Across countries, women were more likely to have lower skilled jobs, for instance as receptionists, housecleaners in hotels and servers in restaurants. Moreover, women were more likely to be casual or informal workers, and thereby exposed to greater income vulnerability. Levels of incidences of sexual harassment and similar abuses against women were significant in the hospitality sector.

33. The experts noted that another problem was that much of the value generated by tourism accrued not to the local communities in which women played a more predominant role, but rather to large tour operators and brokers in offices still dominated by men. The general consensus was that the tourism sector should expand in a strategic and gender-

sensitive manner. For example, the national hotel and tourism training centre in Ethiopia provided skills development with a focus on women and youth. Moreover, diversifying the offer of tourism services could contribute to exploiting as yet untapped opportunities for women, for example in community tourism, in which women were particularly active. Revenue-sharing schemes to redirect gains from tourism back into local communities and linkages between the tourism sector and manufacturing were promising avenues for allowing women to benefit more from their participation in the tourism sector. Women working in tourism often faced the additional difficulty of little exposure to foreign languages, despite the fact that in many countries girls outperformed boys in school.

34. The ensuing discussions highlighted the fact that informal cross-border women traders made an important contribution to economic growth and government revenues in sub-Saharan Africa. Cross-border trade provided appreciable employment opportunities and revenue earning for women. However, there were several gaps, namely invisibility, stigmatization, violence, harassment and corruption by customs officials, poor working conditions, data paucity, illiteracy and a lack of recognition of the contribution of cross-border trade to the economy. As many women operated in informal sectors, education was a key mobility factor. Providing women with relevant skills through vocational and on-the-job training thus remained a critical feature in making it possible for women to move to formal services sectors and gain employment in medium and high-skill services. Formal businesses had easier access to finance and technologies, yet obstacles also remained in this area, namely women's time poverty and limited access to technical training and education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Gender equality and women's economic empowerment in the new global frameworks

35. The fourth session addressed gender equality and women's economic empowerment within the new global frameworks defined by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. The session highlighted the opportunities that these frameworks presented for women and the possible shortcomings. There was agreement that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals provided a framework for empowering women and mainstreaming gender in development. However, isolated actions were regarded as insufficient to address cross-cutting challenges. The Goals underlined the positive aspects of interconnectedness by acknowledging that realizing gender equality and women's empowerment could make a crucial contribution to progress across all of the Goals and targets.

36. One expert stressed that gender equality and women's empowerment were central to the full realization of human rights and, moreover, that this theory was smart economics. Trade, by creating a large number of new jobs mainly in the formal sector, contributed to the economic empowerment of women. The human rights approach and the business case were thus intertwined.

37. Another expert recalled the discrete social impacts of trade agreements, focusing on the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and the need for ex ante impact assessments of agreements to gauge the distributional outcomes of trade policy reform. Such assessments would allow relevant ministries to plan ahead and devise adjustment strategies. Gender-disaggregated data were essential for evidence-based policymaking. Social policy, including for pensions, disability benefits and maternity and child allowances, among others, was central to the economic empowerment and emancipation of women. Investing in this dimension of the social compact would be critical to freeing women from unpaid care and domestic work. The key question was how to finance social investment and mobilize resources.

38. The expert emphasized that there was national capacity in virtually all countries, including the poorest, to finance social investment. Several avenues were possible, including the reallocation of public expenditure (for example by abolishing or reducing military expenditure and increasing tax revenues by, for example, taxing mineral extraction), elimination of illegal financial flows (such as tax evasion), use of fiscal and

foreign exchange reserves, borrowing or restructuring of debt, adoption of a more accommodative macroeconomic framework (such as a tolerance for some inflation or a fiscal deficit) and development aid, especially for the least developed countries. Resources for empowering women were available, yet such empowerment was not regarded as a priority. The discussion then turned to the related issue of how countries might be able to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals if, at the same time, they were reducing public spending following orthodox economic policies and pursuing adjustment policies to make fiscal space thinner. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda was the basis of a new social compact to deliver social protection and essential public services for all and was therefore fundamental for the implementation of target 5.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals on the recognition of unpaid care and domestic work.

39. Another expert highlighted that it was important to focus on the mechanisms that would allow the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda to be pushed forward. The expert indicated three sets of institutional mechanisms that could be leveraged in connection with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda that went beyond mechanisms where women's issues were traditionally discussed (such as the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women and the United Nations Commission on Population and Development), namely those at the global, national and subnational levels, along with human rights institutions. Mechanisms at the global level included the Global Infrastructure Forum, the Technology Facilitation Mechanism and the United Nations Economic and Social Council Forum on Financing for Development. The expert stated that it was important to proactively participate in such frameworks, mainstream gender considerations in their work and leverage available funds for women's empowerment. At the national and subnational levels, institutional design mattered. A key question was how national and local institutions could be improved to better link to the new sustainable frameworks. More sophisticated analytical methods were needed to trace the linkage between trade and women's economic empowerment, by determining the chains of causality. In addition, more participatory methods were necessary for fair policymaking for trade. The participatory method needed to be designed properly as, in the worst case scenario, the process could be manipulated and trade policymaking might ultimately reflect the interest of specific interest groups, rather than the general interest. New statistical systems, to collect, process and analyse new data, were essential. Finally, human rights institutions and mechanisms could play a role in helping to promote women's economic empowerment in the international trading system.

40. The participants agreed that the private sector could be an engine for poverty eradication and social inclusiveness. However, for this to occur, enabling institutional and regulatory frameworks conducive to private sector development needed to be put in place. Pro-women measures implemented in some countries, for instance a quota reserved for women in public procurement in Kenya, might fail to achieve the expected results due to limited supply-side capacities. While an entrepreneurial spirit was important, such spirit was often used for survival (survival-oriented enterprises) rather than for upgrading and scaling up enterprises. Investment and technology were necessary to generate value added and industrialization and the private sector needed to address two important issues, namely ensuring gender equality at work (for example by formalizing women workers, removing discriminatory policies and providing social protection) and providing a cushion in the event of a recession.

41. Additional issues raised during the discussion included the kinds of stakeholders needed to make institutions and their deliberations meaningful; the interplay between women's economic empowerment and agency; the need to move beyond formal gender equality to attain substantive equality; how women's increased involvement in productive activities might impact reproductive tasks and pose the risk of a double burden, especially in the absence of adequate public services and social protection; and how to ensure that more resources were provided directly to women's rights organizations and to enhancing their role in trade policy formulation.

II. Organizational matters

A. Election of officers

(Agenda item 1)

42. At its opening plenary, on 23 May 2016, the meeting elected Mr. Juha Niemi (Finland) as its Chair and Ms. Luciana Nader (Uruguay) as its Vice-Chair-cum-Rapporteur.

B. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

(Agenda item 2)

43. Also at its opening plenary, the meeting adopted its provisional agenda, as contained in document TD/B/C.I/EM.8/1. The agenda was thus as follows:

1. Election of officers
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work
3. Trade as a tool for the economic empowerment of women
4. Adoption of the report of the meeting

C. Outcome of the meeting

44. At its closing plenary, on 24 May 2016, the meeting agreed that the Chair should summarize the discussions.

D. Adoption of the report of the meeting

(Agenda item 4)

45. Also at its closing plenary, the meeting authorized the Vice-Chair-cum-Rapporteur, under the authority of the Chair, to finalize the report after the conclusion of the meeting.

Annex

Attendance¹

1. Representatives of the following States members of UNCTAD attended the meeting:

| | |
|----------------------------------|---------------|
| Algeria | Mexico |
| Australia | Mongolia |
| Azerbaijan | Namibia |
| Brazil | Paraguay |
| Chile | Poland |
| Colombia | Saudi Arabia |
| Democratic Republic of the Congo | Spain |
| Dominican Republic | Sweden |
| Ethiopia | Tunisia |
| Finland | Turkey |
| Ghana | Turkmenistan |
| Islamic Republic of Iran | United States |
| Mauritania | Yemen |

2. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented at the meeting:

Commonwealth Secretariat
 European Union
 Organisation internationale de la francophonie
 Organization of Eastern Caribbean States
 South Centre

3. The following United Nations organs, bodies and programmes were represented at the meeting:

International Trade Centre
 United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
 United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

4. The following specialized agencies and related organizations were represented at the meeting:

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
 International Labour Organization

5. The following non-governmental organizations were represented at the meeting:

General category

ActionAid
 Consumer Unity and Trust Society International
 International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development
 International Network for Standardization of Higher Education Degrees
 Organisation Camerounaise de promotion de la coopération économique internationale
 Village Suisse ONG

¹ This attendance list contains registered participants. For the list of participants, see TD/B/C.I/EM.8/INF.1.