

WTO Public Forum 2023

Empowering waves: An ocean of opportunities for women in the blue economy

Speaking notes for Ambassador Theodore

Good afternoon and welcome to everybody.

- Why are we here and what is the aim of this Public Forum's event on "Empowering waves: An ocean of opportunities for women in the blue economy" that UNCTAD, the FAO and the Global Seaweed Coalition have organized?
- It is to discuss the role of women in three key sectors of the blue economy – fisheries, aquaculture and seaweed, recognizing women's valuable contribution and examining existing gender gaps and barriers.
- We also aim to discuss best practices and innovative approaches to better support women's participation in these sectors and untap their potential for their good, the good of the communities they belong to, the overall economy and the environment.
- Women are key economic actors in the fisheries, aquaculture and seaweed value chains.
- According to data from FAO, in 2020, about 12 million women were engaged in the primary segment of fisheries and aquaculture on a full or part-time basis, corresponding to 21 percent of all workers.
- However, when considering available data for the processing sector - where most of the value for the seafood sector is added, women are found to make up over 50 percent of full-time employment and 71 percent of part-time engagement.
- Yet their contribution may be overlooked. Moreover, gender-based labour market segregation, gender wage gaps and low female representation in decision-making bodies persist.
- Seaweed cultivation is an emerging ocean economic sector. According to UNCTAD data, the global market for seaweed has more than tripled in two decades, growing from \$5 billion in 2000 to \$17 billion in 2020, with global exports representing about \$1 billion in 2021.
- Women play a significant role in the seaweed sector, contributing to various aspects of seaweed cultivation, processing, and trade. However, they may be overrepresented in lower-skilled, lower-paid roles as well as within the informal nodes of the supply chain.
- The seaweed cultivation sector is expected to double in value and volume over the next decade. It is therefore necessary to ensure that it grows in a sustainable and inclusive manner and that emerging opportunities are shared in a fair manner.

- One additional challenge is that there is limited data on women's labor force participation in the various nodes of the value chains and on social indicators such as health status and education levels for women in the sectors.
- However, we know that women's participation in the fisheries, aquaculture and seaweed sectors can contribute significantly to household income, to adequate family's nutrition, and to ensure more sustainable fishery and cultivation practices.
- The economic empowerment of women is therefore not only an issue of social justice, but is also important for sustainable economic growth, poverty alleviation and food security, particularly in developing countries.
- I will also say that, from a Canadian perspective, I am very excited to be here today. Canada in particular recognizes the potential for the blue economy to generate new opportunities for sustainable growth and prosperity.
- We also recognize the importance of including more Canadians in these opportunities, including underrepresented groups such as women.
- Canadians from coast-to-coast-to-coast have been engaged on how to best shape Canada's Blue Economy Strategy, which is under development.
- We received a lot of consistent input on ways that Canada could take action to advance gender inclusion and equity in the blue economy-including raising awareness of ocean sector opportunities and connecting women and other under-represented people with these opportunities.
- We also heard about the importance of policies and programs with incentives to increase women's participation in the sector and about the need to align education and skills development with gender inclusion best practices.
- Our Department of Fisheries and Oceans is working across government to integrate these elements into our policymaking and we are hopeful that we will continue to see the growth of opportunities for women in the blue economy sector.
- Today's session will provide us with an opportunity to engage in greater depth on the potential for women and also to consider the interlinkages between the fisheries, aquaculture and seaweed sectors and the Paris Agreement.

It is now time for me to introduce our distinguished panelists.

Simonetta Zarrilli is the chief of UNCTAD's Trade, Gender and Development Programme, a programme she launched in 2010 and has been leading since. Under her leadership, the Programme provides analytical, policy and capacity-building support to member countries on the gender implications of trade and other economic policies. Prior to leading this work area, Ms. Zarrilli worked within the UN system on several

trade and development related topics and carried out analytical, intergovernmental and technical cooperation activities in those areas.

Tatiana Der Avedissian is head of Business Development for Economist Impact's World Ocean Initiative and sits on The Economist Group's sustainability steering committee. A communications specialist, outside of work, Tatiana uses her expertise to advise and support other organizations with their strategic communication and business needs. She helps lead the strategy and fundraising efforts for two charities in the UK, serving as trustee and co-president of Alkionides UK, and chair of the board of trustees of the Armenian Institute. She is co-president of the Harvard Kennedy School Women's Network and sits on the board of the UK-Cyprus Enterprise Council and The Armenia Project.

Pinar Karakaya is an economist at the FAO Liaison Office in Geneva where she leads the trade and food security workstream. Pinar has 17 years of professional experience in agrifood trade, commodity markets and trade negotiations. Prior to joining the FAO, she worked as a government official for the Türkiye's Ministry of Trade which is the sole authority in the country responsible for trade policy. From March 2019 to July 2022, Ms. Karakaya served as a Commercial Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of Türkiye to the WTO where she focused on the fisheries subsidies and agriculture negotiations.

The last speaker on my list, **Nichola Dyer**, will join us through a video message. Nichola is a seasoned international economic development professional with experience spanning the non-profit, public, and private sectors, currently serving as Senior Advisor and Secretariat Manager to the Global Seaweed Coalition. During 26 years of World Bank Group service, Ms. Dyer managed the \$1.5b Global Agriculture and Food Security Program, developed greenfield operational engagements on excluded minorities and disability, led the ethics office, and established the Gabon office.

- With such distinguished speakers on board, having so diversified yet so relevant backgrounds, I have no doubt that we will have a very interesting conversation. I will ask Simonetta to “set the scene” by providing some stylized facts about the fisheries, aquaculture and seaweeds sectors and zoom in on the opportunities they provide to women, and the obstacles women need to overcome to make their participation fully beneficial.
- I will then proceed with two rounds of questions addressed to the panelists. This will allow us not only to deepen our understanding of the issues at stake, but to familiarize ourselves with examples and initiatives that have proved successful.
- We will then listen to a short video message by Nichola Dyer. This will leave over 30 minutes for a very important component of the event, namely the conversation with you. Feel free to ask questions, share experiences, present concerns and, above all, possible solutions. We are eager to learn from you.
- I will now give the floor to Simonetta Zarrilli to make a short presentation and “setting the scene” for our discussion.
- It is now time to give the floor to the other distinguished speakers who are with us today and learn from them. I will ask each of them a couple of questions and I expect them to provide quick answers of around 4 minutes.

First round of questions

Pinar Karakaya

The FAO has developed Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication. What strategies do the FAO Guidelines provide to support small scale fishing communities, including through a gender lens? How do you see the FAO Guidelines being implemented and integrated into national policies and practices globally?

Tatiana Der Avedissian

In June 2022, the United Nations Ocean Conference made a call to “empower women and girls, as their full, equal and meaningful participation is key in progressing towards a sustainable ocean-based economy and to achieving Goal 14, and to mainstream a gender perspective in our work to conserve and sustainably use the ocean and its resources”. In your experience, how can the private sector support the achievement of this call?

Second Round of questions

Simonetta Zarrilli

How can we encourage gender mainstreaming in policy, programmes and practice and what are the main areas that require policy attention? What role can the collection of sex-disaggregated statistics play in gender mainstreaming at the policy level?

Tatiana Der Avedissian

We know that because of climate change, we are experiencing increased sea surface temperature in all regions and rising sea level in most regions. Temperature change can significantly alter marine food availability and diversity. Pollution and overfishing are also contributing to it. How are these changes affecting women’s productive activities and what are the impacts on women’s role as the mainly responsible person of household food security? What can the private sector do to help address these challenges?

Pinar Karakaya

The FAO has a long and strong tradition of looking at the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors through a gender lens. What are the best practices that FAO has identified to enable a higher level of women’s empowerment, participation and benefits in the fisheries and aquaculture value chains? In your view, which are the fields where interventions may be particularly fruitful to support the creation of more equal and inclusive value chains?

We have a fourth panelist – **Nichola Dyer** – who, unfortunately, could not be with us today. But we are eager to listen to her views and insights especially because of her role as Senior Advisor and Secretariat Manager to the Global Seaweed Coalition. Nichola is joining us through a video message.

As I said, a key component of any event, including this one, is the exchange of views with the audience. It is now time for you to take the floor and share ideas, experiences, concerns and solutions, as well as to

ask questions to our experts on the panel. Please be brief so many of you can have a chance to intervene. If you have a question for a speaker, please indicate her or his name.

Conclusions

The discussion was so rich and thought provoking that I will not try to summarize it, however, let me highlight that this event showed the relevance of mainstreaming gender considerations in the three sectors we have been analyzing as well as in all other productive sectors.