

Expert Meeting on

TRADE AS A TOOL FOR THE ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF
WOMEN

23-24 May 2016

Opening remarks by Mr. Michael Møller
United Nations Under-Secretary-General
Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva

By

Mr. Michael Moeller
Director General, United Nations Office at Geneva

The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect
the views of UNCTAD

**UNCTAD Expert Meeting on Trade as a Tool for the Economic Empowerment of Women,
Session IV: Gender equality and women's economic empowerment in the new global
frameworks**

24 May 2016

UNCTAD Expert Meeting on Trade as a Tool for the Economic Empowerment of Women,
Session IV: Gender equality and women's economic empowerment in the new global
frameworks

Opening remarks by Mr. Michael Møller
United Nations Under-Secretary-General
Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva

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

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

Tuesday, 24 May 2016, 10 a.m. - 12.30 p.m.
Room XXVI, Palais des Nations, Geneva

Thank you very much, Mr. President,
Mr. Deputy Secretary-General,
Distinguished panellists,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen:

I am very pleased to speak at this meeting on ‘Trade as a Tool for the Economic Empowerment of Women.’ The full inclusion of women in all parts of society, including the economy, is of the utmost importance. I don’t think I need to tell you that, but I am anyway. Without the active participation of half of the population of our planet, we will not reach the ambitious new global frameworks that the international community agreed upon last year. Today’s panel discussion is a very timely occasion to look at what kind of opportunities the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and other frameworks provide for gender equality, and how they need to be re-enforced.

In the 2030 Agenda, countries pledged to “leave no one behind” in the shared efforts of making the world a better place. By empowering women, we can make a huge leap in this endeavour. According to some studies¹ spending one dollar on improving women’s access to economic opportunities yields about seven dollar in health, education, and poverty-alleviation benefits.

The 2030 Agenda is broad enough to provide the space for everyone to unfold their full potential, regardless of their gender. It links goals that do not appear to have a gender dimension at first sight

with indicators which ensure that progress is made across genders. More specifically, the Goals on ending poverty, achieving gender equality and empowering women, as well as promoting peaceful and inclusive societies are directly linked to indicators and targets on women's access to productive resources, on the implementation of non-discriminatory legislation and on the creation of gender-sensitive development strategies. These links must be mainstreamed into our efforts to implement the Agenda in its totality.

The interaction and connectedness of the different goals captures the essence of the new way of working that is required for us to make progress for a sustainable, more prosperous and more equal future. The Millennium Development Goals focused on specific and measurable targets. And we made important progress on some of them. To give an example related to the topics discussed in previous sessions at this meeting, in 2015, women made up 41 per cent of paid workers outside the agricultural sector, an increase from 35 per cent in 1990.

Yet, we have seen that isolated indicators are not sufficient to address cross-cutting challenges. The SDGs underline the positive aspects of interconnectedness by acknowledging that realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will make a crucial contribution to progress across all the Goals and targets.

An important step by Governments to enable the implementation of this new, interconnected approach was made in Addis Ababa with the recognition that gender-aware public budgets are essential. The same focus on gender-awareness will be required for private sector investments and other forms of financing as part of the multi-stakeholder process of implementing the Agendas.

Gender equality starts in people's minds. Awareness about gender-specific differences of the impact of measures aimed at enhancing development is therefore a pre-condition to progress. Trade is a powerful example, as it has the potential of yielding both positive and negative results for gender equality. For example, women may gain as consumers when agricultural tariffs are reduced, but may also lose as producers if the prices of those commodities fall. When thinking about inclusive growth through trade, it is therefore important to consider the impact on all different groups including women and girls in all sectors of society.

A comprehensive and inclusive development strategy can address and balance differing impacts across society. At the same time, we must not lose focus due to the complexity of a collaborative approach. Concrete, measurable results are still needed for the actors of the international community to hold each other accountable.

It is very much in this spirit, that the Geneva Gender Champions network has taken shape. At the end of last year, the United States-Permanent Representative, Ambassador Hamamoto, the NGO Women@TheTable and I launched this leadership initiative. It focuses on specific commitments by heads of Permanent Missions, International Organizations and civil society organizations including private enterprises. The aim is to create a unique platform of collaborative exchanges.

Each of the Champions signs up to the panel parity pledge, by which we strive to achieve gender equality on panel discussions, as we have today – a major step towards changing mind-sets and unconscious bias. And in addition, the now 106 Champions had to make two further commitments.

As a result, we already have more than 250 concrete measures that organizations across International Geneva are taking this year to promote gender equality.

Many of these commitments focus on ways towards establishing a new, gender-sensitive working culture within our own organizations. This is fundamental to enhancing our effectiveness, to leading by example and to generating a trickle-down effect of gender equality from headquarters and major offices in Geneva to other duty stations. But there are also examples of measures taken by organizations to include gender issues in their programmatic work. Let me give you some remarkable examples of commitments by the Geneva Gender Champions on the issue of trade:

- Mr. Azevêdo of the World Trade Organization pledged that WTO will work to further incorporate gender dimensions into trade related issues and Ms. Gonzalez, the head of the International Trade Centre made the commitment to systemically raise the importance of women's empowerment and gender dimension of matters related to trade and the economy.
- Ms. Gonzalez further reaffirmed that the economic empowerment of women is a key strategic priority for the ITC and to that end, the ITC has launched a global Call to Action to take one million women entrepreneurs to markets by 2020, including through an App called "SheTrades" which I encourage you all to take a look at.
- And finally, of course, Mr. Kituyi has himself made the important announcement that UNCTAD will review, with the help of the network of gender focal points of UNCTAD, all of UNCTAD's technical assistance programmes and mainstream gender in them.

These are great illustrations of how the Geneva Gender Champions initiative helps us all to move from agreeing on a common objective to realizing this objective within and across our respective areas of expertise.

Through the establishment of five impact groups, all led by different organizations and Permanent Missions according to their interests and strengths, real and substantive progress is being made to exchange best practices and help each other achieve the different commitments. The success that we have had in the first few months of the initiative makes me very optimistic that we will have a strong set of achievements for gender equality at the end of the year. This period coincides with the first year of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and this will be a powerful sign that here in International Geneva – the operational hub of the international system – we no longer accept business as usual.

The rapid growth of the network demonstrates that across International Geneva, there was already broad awareness of the need to act. And the Geneva Gender Champions initiative provided a catalyst for such action. We are now hoping to see this effect being replicated in other hubs of the multilateral system in support of the broader 2030 Agenda.

Because of the number of operational organizations, within and outside of the UN system, which are based here and because these organizations have learned to work together across traditional institutional and thematic lines, Geneva will have a crucial role to play in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The SDGs will only be reached through more equitable and inclusive development. It is an ambitious agenda, but we must not be overwhelmed by its complexity. Indeed, and instead, we need to embrace a new way of working together. I wish you fruitful

discussions on this and other initiatives for gender equality and women's economic empowerment
in the new global frameworks.

Thank you very much for your attention.

¹ *Bjørn Lomborg, Director of the Copenhagen Consensus Center in his article: "Gender Equality as a Development Goal" published in New Europe on 17 February 2015*
<https://www.neweurope.eu/article/gender-equality-development-goal/>