



MULTI-YEAR EXPERT MEETING ON

Trade, Services and Development

Leveraging services, including infrastructure services, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals

23–24 September 2020, ONLINE, 2–4 p.m. CET

Segment 3. The role of UNCTAD on leveraging services to achieve the sustainable development goals

by*

Débora Ponce
Counsellor

Permanent Mission of Guatemala to the World Trade Organization



UNITED NATIONS
UNCTAD

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

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Intervention Mrs. Débora Ponce de Günther, Counselor, Permanent Mission of Guatemala to WTO, UNCTAD, ITC.

Good afternoon, your Excellency Ambassador Alfredo Suescum, Chairman of this Meeting,

Director Pamela Cooke-Hamilton, Director of the Division of International Trade,

Colleagues, Ladies and Gentleman.

It is a pleasure to participate as a speaker on the Expert Meeting on Trade, Services and Development, and I hope to present some helpful ideas on what could be the role of UNCTAD on leveraging services to achieve the sustainable development goals.

As everyone knows, Members have started the preparatory work for UNCTAD XV, therefore the discussion of the role of UNCTAD in the implementation of the SDGs is timely and necessary so that it is properly reflected in the outcomes of the conference.

The background note prepared by the Secretariat, as well as the different exchanges during the 2 last segments of this event have demonstrated the importance on services in attaining many SDGs, in particular SDGs 8 on economic growth and employment. It was very impressive to see that as of 2017, services sector accounted for 51.1% of global employment, and that the sector has also contributed to increasing participation by women in the job market. Services also play an important role in increasing productivity and resilience of economies through diversification. In this sense, UNCTAD could take a leading role in the analysis and advocacy for good quality infrastructure services such as telecommunications and information and communications technology, transport and financial services, and their regulatory and institutional frameworks.

Under the pillar of research and analysis, UNCTAD should continue its work on the publication and analysis of quarterly trade in services statistics, this work is important for developing countries to follow recent trends and respond in an appropriate manner with incentives, regulations or programs that may benefit from this trends in the area of services. In this sense, after reading the background document prepared for this meeting, I was able to appreciate the expertise of the Secretariat in extracting useful conclusions and recommendations from the statics in information that they work on. Unfortunately, I note that although the ideas of the division are spread through some of the flagship reports of the Organization, no specific regular publication is dedicated to services. It would be interesting to have a venue where the recommendations and recent trends resulting from the research could be found and be easily accessible for Members.

Under the pillar of consensus building, expert meetings are an important fora for interactive discussion among the Membership, and the exchanges could enrich the research analysis pillar by providing best practices and different perspectives from developed and developing countries.

An example of this work is precisely this expert meeting. I believe that the pandemic has opened opportunities for an increased participation to these meetings by virtual means, and lessons from these could be implemented in the future so that all delegations are able to participate and contribute even if they are not able to travel to Geneva. Innovative and current topics in the area of services should be further discussed in these meetings, in particular the impact of services in the era of digital transformation, internet of things and artificial intelligence.

In the technical cooperation area, UNCTAD could have a leading role in supporting developing countries response to the changing trends and forms of trade in services, in particular through the conduct of Services Policy Reviews. In the area of technology, digitalization and e-commerce, new forms of services have emerged and developing countries need to update their regulatory and policy frameworks to better support this new areas of work creation and economic diversification.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to participate in this panel, and I look forward on the outcomes of this event.