



Agenda item: 7

General Debate

Statement by:

Ireland



**United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
Sixteenth Session**

Geneva, Switzerland 20-23 October 2025

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF IRELAND

H.E. Ambassador Noel White

**Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations and other
International Organisations in Geneva.**

President, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Ireland aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

We are gathered in Geneva this week in the face of unprecedented global economic uncertainty, a challenging geopolitical backdrop, and a rapidly evolving landscape for rules-based trade, multilateralism, and progress towards sustainable development.

As the Secretary-General set out in her report for this Conference, we are witnessing the compound impact of accelerated technological advances such as AI, big data, robotics, and the Internet of things, as well as the triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss.

We can debate the relative impact of the various vectors, but, put simply, we are off track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals outlined in Agenda 2030.

As geopolitical disruptions persist and the trade environment remains unclear, global decision-makers are confronted with increased risk in their planning processes. To mitigate current risks and bolster resilience, it is imperative that we work collectively in response to these challenges.

The theme of UNCTAD 16 “*Shaping the future: Driving economic transformation for equitable, inclusive and sustainable development*”, has set us the important task of finding solutions so that globalisation and global trade benefit all people on this planet, especially the marginalised and poor. This is a vital and timely task.

We have the opportunity here at UNCTAD 16 to set the framework for the organisation to assist developing countries and those most adversely affected, in meeting these unprecedented challenges.

This Conference must define the shape of the work programme for UNCTAD for the next four years - so that it is focused on its core mandate, and on those areas where it can make its most valuable contribution to global development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. We must ensure that UNCTAD remains responsive, rapid, results-based, and relevant, so that it can address the four transformations, namely:

1. More diversified economies
2. More sustainable, inclusive, and resilient economies
3. More abundant and stable finance for development
4. More multilateralism in a multipolar world

President,

Ireland fully supports a strong multilateral system in a rules-based international order. At this Conference, and in these unprecedented times, we must reaffirm the central role of the multilateral system, the role of UNCTAD within it, and the key contribution that it can make to the global development agenda.

In light of the UN80 initiative and broad reform efforts to address 21st-century challenges with efficiency and agility, we stress the importance of cooperation and synergies between UNCTAD and other UN entities.

If we are to ensure coherence and effectiveness, it is essential that, UNCTAD's activities avoid duplication and are consistent and coherent with the work of other international organisations, including UN regional commissions, the International Trade Centre, the WTO, the World Bank, the IMF and the OECD.

We are also committed to supporting and strengthening the multilateral, rules-based global trading system, and we fully endorse efforts to modernise and strengthen the World Trade Organisation, to make it fit to face the challenges of today, in particular safeguarding a global level playing field.

President,

Ireland's economic model is built on open access to global markets, underpinned by free-flowing trade and investment. That openness has been a key pillar of our continued economic success. In today's increasingly complex and uncertain global environment, this openness must be matched by resilience, agility and strategic foresight.

Drawing on our own experience, we know that that increased trade, both regionally and globally, is central to sustainable economic growth, in particular for Least Developed Countries.

Enhancing market access is an important factor, but increased trade is about more than access: developing countries need assistance to enhance their capacity to link into global value chains. This is essential for growth.

In this regard, there is clear evidence that more efficient ports, smoother customs administration processes, and better communication networks can make a real difference, as can technical assistance towards meeting international legal and market standards.

Ireland has seen first-hand UNCTAD's strength in the delivery of technical training and building capacities for trade. Since 2007, we have supported UNCTAD's successful 'Train For Trade' Port Management Programme.

While benefiting from the knowledge and expertise of six ports across the island of Ireland, this Programme is ensuring sustainability and local ownership by training senior managers to serve as local instructors. Some of these instructors now also deliver training to other members of the network in an example of South-South cooperation.

We encourage UNCTAD to build on this positive example of incorporating sustainability into programme delivery in the years ahead.

Gender inequality remains a central development challenge. Addressing gender inequality, which is a priority focus for Ireland, is not only a matter of respecting fundamental human rights; it is essential to effective poverty reduction and it makes business sense.

For women in developing countries, the ability to engage in trade increases their potential for income generation, enables them to make productive investments, and helps to reduce poverty. UNCTAD should further enhance and deepen its work in this area.

Good governance, economic and legal transparency and stability are a prerequisite for effective public financial management. Through its work in research and technical assistance, UNCTAD has a key role in supporting the efforts of developing countries to ensure that such conditions can be put in place, and once in place, can be maintained.

With this in mind, Ireland has also supported UNCTAD's Debt Management and Financial Analysis System programme, which assists developing countries in the effective management of public finances.

President,

In conclusion, it is of vital importance that UNCTAD 16 reaffirms our shared, collective commitment to work together, through innovative approaches, ensuring a strong contribution to the timely and full realization of the Sustainable Development Goals.

We look forward to seeing this commitment reflected in the adoption of a balanced outcome document at the conclusion of this Conference.

I can assure you of Ireland's commitment to UNCTAD and its essential work as we continue our valuable partnership.

Thank you

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