



**Conference**  
**Bringing the Trade-and-Gender-Agenda Forward:**  
**Focusing Commodities, Investment and Labor**

Tuesday, 26 October 2004

World Meteorological Organization (WMO)  
7bis, Avenue de la Paix, Press Room, Ground floor

Geneva, Switzerland

At the UNCTAD XI conference in Sao Paulo, Brazil's President Lula shaped the wording of a "New Geography of Trade" and stressed the importance to build a new economic world order that is able to produce prosperity with social justice. However, following the Beijing Platform for Action, "[...] social justice requires the involvement of women in economic and social development and equal opportunities and the full and equal participation of women and men as agents and beneficiaries of people-centered sustainable development". Accordingly, a strong Trade-and-Gender-Agenda is needed to reach social justice in the world economy.

The conference aims to contribute in bringing the Trade-and-Gender-Agenda forwards by addressing the commodity problem, the management of foreign direct investment and related labor issues.

Poverty eradication in developing countries depends heavily on improvements in the international trade regime. Here, the commodity dependence and its link with extreme poverty in LDCs will deserve special attention. Given the fact that the majority of the poor are women it is only logical to argue that the commodity problem is not gender neutral. Women are strong agents in producing and trading commodities. Therefore, decreasing commodity prices and the declining share of primary producers in the value chain have especially negative impacts on women.

Foreign direct investment is – in addition to ICT - a driving force of the globalization process. As far as the quantity and quality of the female employment in export-oriented industries dominated by FDI are concerned, considerable disparities - by sector, industry, and country - need to be taken into account in discussing the issue (UNCTAD 2001). In some developing countries FDI has provided women with employment opportunities that have improved the economic and social position of women. However, the jobs in export industries are often of substandard quality and low-skill work. Particularly, the "conventional wisdom" that FDI favors countries with greater gender inequality needs to be critically investigated.

Against this background, the objective of the conference is to provide a space for in-depth discussions on the key results of the first report of the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Gender and Trade that was launched at the UNCTAD XI conference in Sao Paulo. Special attention will be given to the areas of commodities, investment and labor from a gender perspective. The question will be raised how policy coherence between trade and finance policies in the WTO and UN commitments towards gender equality and women's empowerment can be increased.

## Agenda

### October 26:

- 8.30 a.m. Registration  
8.45 a.m. Welcoming Remarks  
**Mr. Erfried Adam**, Director, Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Geneva Office
- 9.00 a.m. *1<sup>st</sup> Morning Panel*

### Gender and Trade at UNCTAD XI – Cross-cutting theme or niche for “like-minded” spirits?

In July 2003, the Inter-Agency Task Force on Gender and Trade was launched in Geneva. This was an important step towards a stronger inter-agency cooperation to strengthen thinking and action on gender and trade issues. Eleven months later, the first report was published and disseminated at the UNCTAD XI conference in Sao Paulo, Brazil. The panel will discuss key-findings of the report of the Inter-Agency Task Force that covers a wide variety of issues including the impact of trade on gender equality and development in the areas of agriculture, textiles and clothing, WTO agreements and information and communication technologies.

The question will be raised whether UNCTAD XI succeeded in promoting a broad understanding of the complex links between gender and trade. Given the considerable progress in the work of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Gender and Trade, the panel will then discuss the catalytic role of UNCTAD for the future gender and trade agenda due to its unique mandate on trade and development.

- Speakers:** **Ms. Anh-Nga Tran Nguyen**, Chief Debt and Development, Finance Branch, Globalization and Development Strategies Division, UNCTAD Gender Focal Point  
**Ms. Emily Sims**, Specialist on Management and Corporate Citizenship, Enterprise Department, International Labour Office (ILO)  
**Mr. Carlos Alberto Primo Braga**, Sr. Adviser, International Trade Department, Worldbank Geneva
- Chair:** **Ms. Maria Pia Hernandez**, Coordinator, Geneva Office International Gender and Trade Network (IGTN)

10.45 a.m. COFFEE BREAK

11.00 a.m. *2<sup>nd</sup> Morning Panel*

### Breaking the “Conspiracy of Silence”- Addressing the Commodity Problem from a Gender Perspective to Reduce Poverty in Developing Countries

LDCs are “stuck in a vicious cycle of a heavy dependence on primary commodities, unstable and declining world market prices for non-oil primary commodities, low levels of export revenues, low levels of import capacities and unsustainable external debt.” (UN 2004). A key precondition for reducing extreme poverty in LDCs is thus to address the commodity problem and to break the “conspiracy of silence” which the French President Jacques Chirac named as a serious problem that required urgent attention.

The goal of the panel is twofold: first, voice will be given to major aspects that impact the primary producer's welfare; second, gender-specific aspects of the commodity problem will be discussed. Of critical importance is the need to link the declining share of primary producers in the value chain to women's role in the different sub sectors of primary commodities and to the questions of food security and poverty eradication.

**Speakers:** **Mr. Mehmet Arda**, Head, Commodities Branch, Division on International Trade in Goods and Services and Commodities, UNCTAD, Geneva

**H.E. Ms. Valentine Rugwabiza**, Permanent Representative, Mission of the Republic of Rwanda to the UN, Geneva

**Ms. Marcela Villarreal**, Chief, Population and Development Service, Gender and Population Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), Rome

**Chair:** **Ms. Hella Hoppe**, Visiting Researcher, Friedrich Ebert Foundation, New York Office

12.45 p.m. **Luncheon (WMO)**

2.00 p.m. 1<sup>st</sup> *Afternoon Panel*

### **Managing International Capital Investment – How to Enhance Long-term Benefits for Women?**

International capital investment can be very beneficial for development contributing to the savings of developing countries and in turn, increasing their rate of investment. However, rapid or excessive capital inflow can have devastating effects as past financial crises have shown (Dodd 2004).

Focusing foreign direct investment (FDI), it is now broadly accepted that FDI has increased the share of female employees in the formal and informal segments of the labor market in many countries. However, foreign direct investments can be motivated by the outflanking of labor standards in the home country that has especially negative impacts on women. Also, the quality of women's jobs - especially in export processing zones – is often substandard. The panel will discuss strategies that manage international capital investment especially FDI in a way that it enhances long-term benefits for women.

**Speakers:** **Ms. Ann Zammit**, Consultant, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD)

**Ms. Brigitte Young**, Professor, Institute of Political Science, University of Münster, Germany

**Ms. Esther Busser**, Officer responsible for WTO and UNCTAD, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), Geneva Office

**Chair:** **Ms. Yvonne Apea**, Programme Coordinator, Africa and Legal Affairs, International Center for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD)

3.45 p.m. COFFEE BREAK

4:00 p.m. *2nd Afternoon Panel*

**Countdown To 2005: Achieving Policy Coherence in the International Trading and Financial System to Increase Gender Equality and to Empower Women**

The year 2005 will be an important milestone in UN history. In addition to the Beijing+10 and Copenhagen+10 review processes, the global report on progress towards the Millennium Development Goals will be published by the Secretary-General and the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development will take place. A shared goal of UN follow-up processes is to address the unequally distributed benefits of globalization.

The panel will discuss strategies that enhance the ability of United Nations System to ensure that the international trading and financial system fully endorses and gives priority to the agreed UN commitments towards gender equality and women's empowerment. Special attention will be given to the question how coherence between trade and finance policies in the WTO and IMF and their impacts on social and economic development, especially in development countries, on a national and international level can be increased adequately. The session aims to elaborate a concept of policy coherence that is people centered, inclusive and development oriented.

**Speakers:** **Ms. Diane Elson**, Professor, University of Essex and Marie-Jahoda Visiting Professor, University of Bochum, Germany

**Ms. Maria Floro**, Professor, Dept. of Economics, American University, Washington D.C.

**Ms. Nuria Castells**, Economic Affairs Officer, Trade, Environment and Development Branch, UNCTAD/DITC, Geneva

**Chair:** **Ms. Adair Heuchan**, Counselor Trade and Development, Permanent Mission of Canada to the UN, Geneva

6:00 p.m. Closing Remarks

**Mr. Erfried Adam**, Director, Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Geneva Office

7:00 p.m. **Dinner**

(Restaurant "Le Prométhée", Hotel Mon-Repos, Rue de Lausanne 131-133, 1201 Geneva)