

Opening remarks by Ms. Puri, DITC director, for the training workshop on gender mainstreaming

UNCTAD. DITC,
Room XXVII, May, 12 , 2004

Dear colleagues,

It is a pleasure for me to see that a significant number of SM have taken this opportunity to participate in this training workshop on gender mainstreaming, in spite of the heavy overload of work we all share towards the final preparation of our Conference. As you all know, Trade and Gender is one of the three themes that have been specifically addressed as part of our UNCTAD XI priority themes, and we, at DITC, have made a special effort in making progress towards the mainstreaming of the gender dimension into our everyday work.

I am grateful to the Members of this panel for the contribution of their own experience and knowledge. We share with them the difficult task of broadening our awareness of the gender dimension within the development and trade area .. I am happy to bring my own recent experience in the specific area of gender and trade, which is not my first experience in dealing with gender “tout court”. In my previous life, as it were, in another capacity, I was dealing with the condition of women as a delegate of my country, but from another perspective. The challenge today is different in the sense that we aim to address gender issues as part of an overall economic analysis of trade and development.

I would like to emphasize that this training workshop is a milestone in a learning process that we are launching internally at the Division on International Trade. We are not here to re-discuss whether or not there is a link between gender and trade, but to share our experiences in addressing this issue. We aim to identify practical and systematic approaches and tools to deal with this matter in our work on trade and development issues.

UNCTAD’s Mandate and Mission

Ever since the first World Conference on Women (WCW) in Mexico City in 1975, the UN has been in the forefront of mainstreaming gender all across the development continuum. Subsequent WCWs in Nairobi (1985), Copenhagen (1990) and Beijing (1995), and the UN General Assembly Special Session – Beijing +5 and New York (2002) are testimonies to the

UN's global commitment to gender. In 2002, UNCTAD was designated as the UN system focal point to lead the Inter-Agency Task Force on Gender and Trade, which was officially launched on July 17, 2003 at its inaugural meeting in Geneva to create stronger inter-agency cooperation to strengthen thinking and action on how to make trade work for gender equity and the well being of women in the context of promoting development.

UNCTAD's mandate to deal with trade and development issues in an integrated manner demands that gender equality, a core development issue and objective in its own right, should inform its work. It is also related to UNCTAD's role in helping the international community achieve Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and put into practice the principles and values set out in the Millennium Summit Declaration. In particular, the Declaration indicates a resolve "to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as an effective basis to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable." On the other hand, it indicates a commitment to "an open, equitable, rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory multilateral trading and financial system". UNCTAD's trade and gender work will seek to illuminate how these two commitments are related and may best be implemented.

Experience at DITC

Our Division covers all those issues of salient interest on international trade, and in particular those at stake in international trade negotiations. Although the concern for gender mainstreaming is a reality within the UN system, it takes some time to cascade down to the effective level of implementation. Particularly, in UNCTAD several activities had taken place in the past, such as Experts Meetings in 1999 and 2001, and the particular event on LDCs and gender associated to the 3rd Conference of LDCs, in Brussels, in 2001. Moreover, in February 2003 UNCTAD was requested to become the focal point on gender AND trade in the UN system, and as such several initiatives have taken place to strengthen implementation in this area.

This event on "**Mainstreaming Gender Issues in Trade and Development Activities**" is part of UNCTAD's and in particular DITC's ongoing effort to upgrade the substantive skills of its staff and to initiate a culture of continuous learning in the Secretariat.

Indeed, the development of new skills for Staff Members is addressed through a combination of centrally organized programmes aimed at building core and managerial competencies and decentralized activities to address specific substantive needs.

In this context, today's event has been programmed in the DITC Staff Development and Training plan and is designed to meet organizational needs and to enable individuals to mainstream a gender component, when relevant, in their daily activities.

We are glad to share with you some anecdotal data concerning our experience when deciding to effectively address the gender dimension in our contributions to UNCTAD's essays being collected for the interagency publication to be launched at the event on gender and trade, at Sao Paolo.

The contributions¹ prepared by our Staff Members cover the following trade and development issues:

- Agreement on Agriculture
- Agreement on Textiles
- Competition Policy
- Trade in Services
- Trade and Environment
- Trade-related technical assistance

and an overall overview covering the main elements of the debate on trade and development, with specific gender-sensitivity.

Challenges in implementation of “mainstreaming gender” approach

We face different sorts of challenges when attempting to properly address the gender dimension in trade and development. There are challenges arising from the subjective question of why we should address gender issues as part of the trade and development mandate in UNCTAD. Others derive from objective questions, such as:

- where to find disaggregated data that are collected in a way that enable us to use them for a gender-sensitive analysis
- what methods can we use within economic theory that duly reflect the gender dimension as an economic factor
- are these methods accurately defined, disseminated and scientifically recognised.

The first question, why to mainstream gender into our daily analytical and policy work on trade and development issues, was a source of controversy, as it was not at first addressed as an economic issue. Once the discussion is framed as a question to be included in our analysis

¹ Draft versions can be found at www.unctad.org/trade_env/genderDITC.htm

of relevant factors in the trade and development dynamics, the *why?* becomes *how*. If the gender gap, as a reflection of economic differences between men and women in the process of economic development, has an economic impact, then we should address it. Therefore, we need to learn how to include this into our analytical work. An adequate consideration of the role of women in development and a corresponding strategic design to move from potentialities to action would pave the way to building of a more equitable world in which trade could be one of the vehicles for its sustainability. To take into account the role of women in economic development and in particular in trade strategies opens new possibilities for a better use of human resources that too often are misused or ignored because of collective blindness and policy marginality. The recognition of the economic relevance of women's contribution to the society will enable policy-makers to anticipate the social and economic impact of trade agreements being negotiated while defining trade liberalisation strategies. In turn, anticipation can lead to minimising social costs and maximising economic benefits arising from the active participation of women in the process. This would help to realize the potential benefits of using the competitive advantage of the female labour force and its recognition and cost-effective insertion into the economic strategies of development. Once the economic grounds of the gender mainstreaming strategy are recognized, a further step is first to effectively include them in the analytical and research work, and, second, in the implementation of technical cooperation activities.

Today, here, as part of this training workshop, we intend to address the second question *how to mainstream*, which was indeed a second question we faced at DITC when preparing our contribution for the UNCTAD XI round table on gender and trade. The *when* refers as well to the identification of when is the most effective phase to include the gender dimension when designing, proposing and implementing a project related to trade and development. This will mainly be addressed in the brainstorming session in the afternoon, from which we expect to infer practical indications from the discussion that will be the basis for the elaboration of practical guidelines to assist our work on gender and trade at UNCTAD.

In order to analyse trade and development issues with the appropriate perspective on gender, data were required, to substantiate the sound scientific basis of the work being undertaken. A lot of data are available nowadays on a variety of issues. Nevertheless, the information related to gender analysis is often defined with an "end-of-pipe" approach as a marginal dimension. Gender analysis not being targeted as one of the end-uses of the information collected, the

final set of data hardly reflects the information we would need to effectively perform economic analysis while taking into account the gender dimension. Therefore, data on gender are very often estimated, extrapolated, extracted from hypothesis on the distribution of population by sex and age, and merged with the data from active population. We can say that very often data being used in gender analysis come from “meta-analytical” sources, by combining different statistics. Therefore, considerable progress still has to be made, in spite of huge efforts and progress made as well within the system, as for example by our colleagues from UN-ECE and their statistical division, and by close institutions such as the World Bank.

Our experience as a team in the Division looking for the gender perspective of our trade policy analysis has shown that it is not an easy task, but the results are positive, as they highlight new possible outcomes in terms of poverty reduction and economic development, since women are a crucial component of the most marginal sectors of society in the developing world. This workshop will be the first step towards the elaboration of guidelines on “mainstreaming gender into trade and development policy analysis and technical cooperation at UNCTAD”, as an expected outcome based on the report of this meeting and the brainstorming session in the afternoon. We will be glad to keep you updated on further progress in this area.

I am sure all of you here can share with us many valuable insights arising from your experience on how to strengthen this objective approach to the *engendering* of trade and development research and policy work at UNCTAD from a positivist and economics perspective. I thank you in advance for sharing it with us.