



Informal Note

18 JULY 2003

INTER-AGENCY TASK FORCE ON GENDER & TRADE

UNCTAD organized a first meeting in Geneva on 17 and 18 July 2003

Over the past twenty years, the driving force behind the process of global integration has been the liberalization of international trade, investment and financial flows. But globalisation has also brought discontent and disillusion. Voices have been raised to reassess the social and economic impact of globalisation, as its benefits and costs are not distributed evenly between as well as within nations, most particularly between income and gender groups. In this context, the gender issue in trade has taken on increasing importance in the international policy fora.

The experiences of newly industrializing countries have demonstrated the important contribution of women in the export competitiveness of these countries. Women have represented an important source of cheap low-skilled labour in export processing zones and in labour-intensive export sectors such as clothing, footwear, electronics assembly and non-traditional agricultural exports. The challenge now is to promote and empower women, and make trade supportive of gender equality.

UNCTAD has been designated by the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality as the Task Manager of this Interagency Task Force on Gender and Trade. The establishment of this Inter-agency task force is very timely, for the first time the UN agencies and sister institutions looked at the gender impact on trade: UNCTAD held its first meeting on 17 and 18 July bringing together, ILO, OHCHR, World Bank, WTO, UNDP, ECE, FAO, UNEP and UNIDO. Other agencies and non-UN organizations will join the Task Force in the future.

The Terms of Reference of the Task Force, as agreed by Member agencies at this meeting, determine the objectives of the Task Force, the scope of its activities and the output of the task Force.

The main objective of the inter-agency task force is to sensitize policy makers at the national and international level on issues/policies identified by the Task Force as important for achieving gender equality and development. Other objectives include the promotion of gender perspectives in national and international policies, as well as in global economic processes and trade agreements.

In synergy with each other, member agencies will undertake a wide range of activities, including impact analysis of international trade and trade-related agreements, socio-economic analysis of the linkages between trade and gender, analysis of institutional issues,

capacity-building, and advocacy. Briefing notes will be prepared for dissemination and advocacy activities are planned.

The Task Force will also have its own website (to be announced at a subsequent date)
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