

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (UNCTAD)

Programme objectives

At the level of UNCTAD's programme and budget process, in early 2001 a thorough review was undertaken of the process of preparation of UNCTAD's programme and budget with the support of a consultant provided by the Division for the Advancement of Women. The purpose of the review was to assess to what extent a gender and development perspective could be reflected in programmes and related budgets, and its results, including recommendations on how the gender perspective could be better integrated into existing activities, were shared with all programme directors.

Operational activities

At the intergovernmental level, UNCTAD convened an Expert Meeting on Mainstreaming Gender in Order to Promote Opportunities. This meeting took place in November 2001. It had as its mandate to consider "ways to improve the contribution of women in developing their countries' and regions' competitiveness, in increasing trading opportunities and in attracting investment and technology". The Meeting was a collaborative effort of various divisions and programmes of UNCTAD, coordinated by the Departmental Focal Point on Women. The work of the Meeting concentrated on five thematic sessions covering gender issues in foreign direct investment (FDI), trade in services, trade in commodities, enterprise development and information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Most of the recommendations and policy options emerging from the Expert Meeting, and addressed both to government and the international community, including UNCTAD, were specific to the themes discussed. The intergovernmental Expert Meeting reflected an increasing consensus within the international community that greater gender equality is one of the decisive factors for development and also, that UNCTAD can play a significant role in mainstreaming gender issues in its substantive work.

The outcome of the Meeting was adopted by the Commission on Investment, Technology and Related Financial Issues and by the Commission on Enterprise, Business Facilitation and Development and endorsed by the Trade and Development Board. On the basis of the work programme established for mainstreaming gender in the five selected substantive issues, a network of divisional focal points on gender has been set up in UNCTAD. The Commission also made recommendations to carry out analytical and case-study-based work and develop sex-disaggregated indicators, and to cooperate with other agencies, such as the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) on gender and information and communication technologies (ICTs), including the identification of policies for mainstreaming gender in national ICT policies, in preparation of the World Summit on the Information Society to be held in Geneva in 2003.

Other activities

An UNCTAD-Civil Society Dialogue, held in December 2001 addressed gender and development as a cross-sectoral issue in the context of major tasks of UNCTAD, including the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted by UNCTAD X, the results of the Third United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries, and preparations for UNCTAD XI.

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In February 2003 UNCTAD was asked by the IANGWE to be the manager of the Interagency Task Force on Gender and Trade. The theme of the task force is very topical in the context of globalisation and liberalisation of trade, which requires a deepened understanding of the impact of trade on gender equality and related policy implications. This theme is also considered as an important trade issue to be considered in the preparations for UNCTAD XI. ■