

15 June 2004

PRESS BRIEFING ON TRADE AND GENDER BY UN MILLENNIUM CAMPAIGN COORDINATOR

Changes were required in property and marriage laws in order to give women farmers access to land and credit, so they could benefit from trade in agricultural goods, Eveline Herfkens, United Nations Executive Coordinator for the Millennium Campaign, said this afternoon.

She told correspondents at a São Paulo press conference that it was also important to institute labour market policies that would end wage discrimination, a problem for all women worldwide.

Describing a morning interactive debate on the links between trade and gender, she said the core demands of developing countries in the trade arena, from Doha and before, were very relevant to gender issues. If a woman growing tomatoes in Ghana could not sell her produce on the local market owing to the presence of subsidized canned Italian tomato paste, she could never lift herself out of poverty. Similarly, women milk producers faced competition from cheap Dutch powder milk.

While millions of women worked in the textile industry for low wages amid poor labour conditions, the alternative for many of them was unpaid labour in rural areas or in the informal sector, she said. Wealthy nations must help them sell their products in developed-country markets while developing countries ensured that export growth translated into inclusive, pro-poor policies.

Also present at the press conference were UNCTAD expert Ana-Nga Tran-Nguyen; Angela Benitez-Reyes, Chairperson of the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women; and Sabine Meitzel of the Geneva-based International Trade Centre.

* * * * *