

16 June 2004

**PRESS CONFERENCE BY UNCTAD SPOKESMAN AND PRESIDENT-ELECT**  
**OF DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

The highlight of today's events would be the adoption of a declaration at the ministerial level special session on Global System of Trade Preferences (GSTP) at 6:30 p.m., Conference Spokesperson Awni Behnam said at the daily press briefing this afternoon.

Describing the adoption of the declaration as a milestone for developing countries and the Group of 77, he said that Roberto Lavagna, Argentina's Minister of Economy, was expected to chair the session. Celso Amorim, Foreign Minister of Brazil, would address participants. The declaration would be made available to the press once it was adopted.

Also taking place today would be another trade-related event, the International Tropical Timber and Development Dialogue, to be held at 6 p.m. Tropical timber was a very specific area in which the contribution of UNCTAD XI had been its breaking of the silence on the issue. Today, the Conference would launch an international task force of 40 to 50 stakeholders who would identify commodity partnerships.

Mr. Behnam said the Geneva-based International Trade Centre would be promoting a session entitled "Building Business Competitiveness" at 3 p.m.

Earlier, the Spokesperson introduced President-elect Leonel Fernandez Reyna of the Dominican Republic, who discussed this morning's interactive thematic session "Assuring Development Gains", where he and Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni delivered keynote addresses.

The President-elect said that the widely held view that globalization had been a catastrophe for developing countries did not square with reality, adding that each country had to have its own strategic vision. Each must formulate political, economic, social and technological plans for integration, which, in turn, would be a source of economic growth.

The most important thing to acknowledge about globalization was that it represented both opportunities and challenges, he said. Each country must maximize the former and minimize the latter while striving to join the international economy, create jobs and ensure that it would benefit from the modern world.

He said that the biggest conflict in international trade at present was associated with the agricultural sector, whereby industrialized countries had still not accepted the need to eliminate subsidies for both the production and distribution of their produce. Attempts to deal with that issue would remain on the international trade agenda for a long time.

(more)

Responding to a correspondent's question as to what UNCTAD XI would be remembered for, he said there was now universal acknowledgement of the importance of international trade and its link to economic growth and development, which could not occur automatically.

Asked whether anything would change after the Conference, he cited UNCTAD X, held in Bangkok four years ago. Prior to the Asian financial crisis of 1997-1998, the international economy was insulated from recession, but the Bangkok meeting had reaffirmed its vulnerability to external shocks. It had acknowledged the need for developing economies to shield themselves through permanent plans and integration into the international economy.

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