

27 April 2004

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Julian Robert Hunte,
President of the 58th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Informal Briefing on the Status of Preparations for UNCTAD
XI**

Mr. Ricupero, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:

There is a particular message that has echoed in the several development fora and discussions in which I have participated recently, both in and out of the United Nations. It is that a more effective response is needed, and urgently, to the problems of development, problems including aid, trade, debt and related issues. There is also a sense of urgency that we must pick up the pace, if we are to meet the 2015 targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The obvious question that comes to mind is why, when we have had so many important conferences and summits over the past decade, including a pivotal conference on financing for development, the follow-up has not yet ensured the development results expected? Is it possible to get this "implementation" side of our work right?

International trade is vital to the achievement of sustainable development for all countries. Numerous developing countries, however, have particular concerns in this area. Many assert that international trade rules do not adequately respond to the problems that are posing the most serious problems for them, and that some of the rules may in fact be detrimental to them.

The capacity of many developing countries to participate in rule making is also limited. The prospect of not being around the table when decisions are being taken, and yet being bound by those decisions, is a very real challenge. Besides these general concerns, many developing countries have made known their interest in a truly "development agenda".

I am pleased to note that the issue of coherence is being given greater focus, as well it should be. As you know, this was a central issue of the Special Meeting between the ECOSOC, Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization, now joined by UNCTAD. It stands to reason that appropriate responses can only be formulated when all concerned institutions have the full picture of the country's circumstances.

As the principal organ of the General Assembly dealing with trade, investment and development issues, UNCTAD continues to play a central role in supporting sustainable development, including through the promotion of a fair trading system.

I have made these observations to underscore the juncture at which UNCTAD XI is being convened, and the key role the Conference must play in addressing an extensive list of

development concerns. As the only major United Nations economic conference to be convened this year, the priority issues UNCTAD must address are self-evident.

Given what is at stake for the developing countries, the Conference should take fully into account the need for translating commitments in the development field into action in areas ranging from trade to investment, commodities to ICTs for development. Helping to prepare developing countries to take advantage of opportunities arising from the Doha Round and reviewing coherence between national development strategies and global economic processes are but some of the issues to which I am sure that UNCTAD will turn its attention.

UNCTAD XI, however, has another very important task - to reorient the work of UNCTAD and to position it to better serve its Member States. It is work that might include efforts for building greater understanding of, and consensus on, issues such as small economies, and in that context, the economies of SIDS; the need to enable LDCs and SIDS to participate in the global economic system, lest they be further marginalized; commodity-related issues and policy responses at the national and international levels; and mainstreaming of trade and investment into poverty reduction strategies. UNCTAD's support to developing countries in trade policy formulation and trade negotiations has been valuable, and this aspect of its work could be further strengthened.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:

What brings us here this morning is an informal briefing on the status of preparations for UNCTAD XI. I myself am looking forward to an excellent presentation from Mr. Ricupero, and later on, to the remainder of the day's proceedings. I would urge your full engagement in this day's briefing, because I believe that the information we receive and the dialogue in which we will engage will contribute to an excellent outcome for UNCTAD XI.

I thank you.