

**Statement by Mr. Petko Draganov, Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD,
on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the adoption of
the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.**

**Fifty-fourth session of the
Commission on the Status of Women
New York, March 2010**

Chair,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

1. It is a great pleasure for me to address this important session of the Commission.
2. **UNCTAD welcomes the many positive developments** that have occurred with regard to gender equality and the advancement of women since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.
3. **Many developing countries are increasingly including the gender perspective in the national strategies for economic development.** This is reflected, inter alia, in the inclusion of gender-related objectives in the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, and, in the case of the Least Developed Countries, in the Diagnostic Trade Integration Studies under the Enhanced Integrated Framework. **Many developing countries are taking steps aimed at increasing women's participation in parliaments and executive cabinets.** The past decade has seen more girls enrolled in school, especially at the primary level, and a significant expansion of school infrastructure and facilities in most developing regions.

Ladies and gentlemen,

4. Moving to less positive developments, the global crisis is having extensive effects on all countries and in particular on the most fragile segments of the population, including women. **The crisis has demonstrated the need for a dramatic shift to a more equitable globalization.** Girls and women make up one half of the world's population: without their engagement, empowerment and contribution we can neither hope to effectively meet the challenge of a new development paradigm, nor achieve rapid economic recovery.

5. Integrating gender issues into policy discussions is particularly relevant for trade policies, given their strong redistributive effects both across economic sectors and among individuals. UNCTAD believes that action should be taken to make **trade an instrument for the empowerment of women and for achieving gender equality.** In practical terms, mainstreaming gender in trade policies means assessing the impact of trade policies on the wellbeing of men and women and ultimately on households. Such an assessment will help, **first of all**, to better understand the specific challenges and opportunities that women face from market liberalization and integration; **secondly**, design and implement complementary policies aimed at maximizing opportunities for women; and **thirdly**, facilitate the transition of women to a more competitive market structure, including through appropriate education policies and technical training.

6. **Many studies, and UNCTAD is proud to have authored some of them, have proved that there is a strong correlation between gender equality and national competitiveness:** gender inequality and discrimination slow down economic growth. More than ever, we have to send a clear message to policy-makers to incorporate gender equality and women's empowerment into their national priorities and development strategies. However, improved research and data are needed to develop a clearer understanding of the policies that are successful for reaching these goals and those that, conversely, may be inefficient or even harmful.

Ladies and gentlemen,

7. It is in this specific field that UNCTAD aims at making a contribution through its **new work programme on trade, gender and development**. It is our purpose to support developing and the least developed countries in the process of mainstreaming gender in their development strategies and more specifically in trade policy. By conducting analysis at the country-level, we want to establish what has been the impact of trade policy on productive sectors and assess the specific implications for women workers and ultimately for households. We also aim to find out which policy measures and which instruments would be useful in making trade a tool for women's empowerment and gender equality. Five research projects are about to start in two developing countries - Ecuador and Cape Verde - and three LDCs - Bhutan, Rwanda and Lesotho. **I expect that at the 2011 session of the Commission on the Status of Women, we will be able to share with you the preliminary findings of our research work.**

8. The economic empowerment of women in developing countries is supported by UNCTAD both at the level of trade policy formulation, and at the community and company levels. **UNCTAD has developed a rather unique portfolio of regional and country programmes that support women's economic empowerment through the enhancement of their productive, entrepreneurial and export capacities.**

9. Addressing the challenges and opportunities associated with striving towards more equal and inclusive societies will require concerted efforts by governments, international organizations, the private sector, and the civil society across the world. Ensuring information-sharing and best practice exchange, partnerships and collective problem-solving among these groups will be crucial. UNCTAD stands ready to collaborate in these efforts.

Thank you for your attention.