Ministerial Round Table: 
Women as Agents for Economic Change: Smallholder Farming, Food Security, Agricultural Upgrading and Rural Economic Diversification in LDCs

19 July, 4.30 to 6.00 p.m.
Room Tsavo 1
Kenyatta International Conference Centre, Nairobi

DESCRIPTION

The Ministerial Round Table will discuss how empowering women can raise productivity, integrate smallholder farms into regional and global markets, and boost synergies between agriculture and non-farm activities. The reflection and debate will centre on concrete policy recommendations based on successful experiences in some developing and least developed countries. Moreover, the Ministerial Round Table will provide the opportunity to debate how to translate reflection into real and implementable projects and activities.

KEY ISSUES

1. **Tackle poverty in rural areas**: Ending poverty demands actions to combat it in rural areas, where 70 percent of the world’s 1.4 billion extremely poor people live. This pattern of rural deprivation is reflected in a wide range of socioeconomic welfare indicators.

2. **Enhance economic opportunities for rural women**: Agriculture remains the most important source of employment for women in the poorest countries: about three quarters of employed women in the least developed countries work in agriculture. Rural women play an essential role in ensuring household food security and nutrition. They, however, face gender-specific challenges, including unequal access to productive resources, and discrimination in rural labour markets. As a result, women farmers produce on average consistently less per hectare than their male counterparts. Even more crucially, gender constraints obstruct and delay the dynamic potential of the rural economy in developing countries. It is thus imperative to identify and address these obstacles to increase rural productivity while also creating opportunities for rural economic diversification.

3. **UNCTAD’s approach to gender-sensitive rural development**: UNCTAD suggests a new approach to rural development centred on upgrading agriculture and developing viable non-farm activities through gender-sensitive policies and support to the development and consolidation of women’s non-agricultural enterprises in rural areas.
QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED

- What are the possible approaches to tackle the constraints faced by rural women and close the gender gap in agriculture?
- How can rural development strategies be made more gender sensitive?
- How can policy coherence between trade and rural development policies be ensured?
- How to start planning towards a gender-sensitive implementation of the SDGs that tackle gender equality and rural development?
- What role can the UN system play during the review of implementation of the SDGs?
- How to avoid rural labour market segmentation?
- What could be the avenues for the development of non-farm activities that would create a new female entrepreneurial class, adding to the dynamism and trade potential of rural economies?
- Which instruments could be used to alleviate women’s “time poverty”?
- Which financing instruments could be sought that go beyond microcredit?
- What would be the channels for rural organizations and networks to inform and influence decision-making? How to overcome the long-observed urban bias in policymaking?
- How to ensure that non-farm activities get the necessary policy attention and financing?

PARTICIPANTS

- H.E. Willy Bett, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, Kenya
- H.E. Zenebu Tadesse, Minister of Women and Children Affairs, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
- H.E. Mr. Jayanta Chand, Minister of Commerce, Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal
- H.E. Mr. Faizaz Siddiq Koya, Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism, Fiji
- Ms. Arancha González, Executive Director, ITC
- Mr. Kostas Stamoulis, Assistant Director-General, Economic and Social Development Department, FAO
- Ms. Diana Ofwona, Regional Director for sub-Saharan Africa, UN Women
- Mr. Debapriya Bhattacharya, Chair, LDC IV Monitor and Distinguished Fellow, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Dhaka, Bangladesh
- Ms. Pauline Ngari, Director, Hand in Hand Eastern Africa
- Ms. Sekai Nzenza, Head of Public Affairs, Amatheon Agri, Zimbabwe

CONTACTS

Simonetta Zarrilli (Simonetta.Zarrilli@unctad.org), Gender@unctad.org