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

4.30 – 4.35 p.m.  
**Opening remarks**
- Mr. Mukhisa Kituyi, Secretary-General of UNCTAD

Moderator: Mr. Debapriya Bhattacharya, Chair, LDC IV Monitor and Distinguished Fellow, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Each Session will include Q&A

4.35 – 5.00 p.m.  
**Session 1**
**Closing the gender gap in agriculture: towards gender-sensitive rural transformation**
Rural development is central to the overall development process; and structural transformation of rural economies is a critical dimension of the broader economic transformation essential for poor countries to benefit more fully from international trade and investment. The importance of rural development in developing and least developed countries is underlined by the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs that provide both the need and the opportunity for a new approach to rural development. Women farmers face specific disadvantages in terms of access to land, credit, farm inputs, extension services and labour markets. Moreover, social norms impose a double burden of unpaid care work and productive activities on them. Enhancing economic opportunities for rural women is critical to completing the virtuous circle of human and economic development in developing and least developed countries envisaged by the new global development framework.

Panellists
- H.E. Ms. Zenebu Tadesse, Minister of Women and Children Affairs, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
- Ms. Sekai Nzenza, Head of Public Affairs, Amatheon Agri, Zimbabwe

Respondent
- Mr. Kostas Stamoulis, Assistant Director-General, Economic and Social Development Department, FAO
5.00 – 5.25 p.m.  
**Session II**  
*Enhancing rural women’s economic empowerment through off-farm activities*  
Agro-industries may provide new and better employment opportunities in rural areas, contribute to the diversification of the rural economy and provide a route out of poverty for women. However, women are more likely than men to be segregated in part time, seasonal and/or low wage jobs. Women can be important agents of rural economic diversification, and key players in vibrant micro-entrepreneurial activities. Yet, women’s “time poverty”, financial illiteracy and lack of efficient means of financing small-scale productive investments, seriously impede the developing of export-oriented non-farm activities.

**Panellists**  
- H.E. Mr. Willy Bett, Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, Kenya  
- H.E. Mr. Jayanta Chand, Minister of Commerce, the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal

**Respondent**  
- Ms. Arancha González, Executive Director, ITC

5.25 – 5.55 p.m.  
**Session III**  
*Promoting coordination mechanisms at the national and local levels to advance gender-sensitive rural development*  
The multidimensional nature, and the sheer scale of complexity, of gender-sensitive rural economic transformation makes policy coordination essential. This indicates the need for an effective inter-ministerial coordination that includes the ministries in charge of gender issues. Rural development, however, is as much a local process as a national one. This underlines the importance of formal and informal organizations and networks at the local level, including women’s cooperatives and associations, as catalysts of rural economic transformation. Coordination and appropriate sequencing of interventions and investments at the national and local levels are critical to ensure that rural producers are ready to respond effectively to increased demand and to market opening.

**Panellists**  
- H.E. Mr. Faizaz Siddiq Koya, Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism, Republic of Fiji  
- Ms. Pauline Ngare, Director, Hand in Hand Eastern Africa

**Respondents**  
- Ms. Diana Ofwona, Regional Director for sub-Saharan Africa, UN Women

5.55 – 6.00 p.m.  
**Closing remarks**  
*Mr. Bhattacharya and UNCTAD*