



TWN Info Service on WTO and Trade Issues (Apr07/14)

30 April 2007

UNCTAD XII Theme and Sub Themes Agreed On

The 12th conference under UNCTAD (known as UNCTAD XII) will be held in Accra, Ghana on 20-25 April 2008.

A meeting of the UNCTAD's Trade and Development Board met recently and agreed to adopt "addressing opportunities and challenges of globalization for development" as its overriding theme.

Below is an article on the TDB decision. It was published in SUNS on 24 April.

**With best wishes
Martin Khor
TWN**

Theme and sub-themes for UNCTAD-XII agreed on

By Riaz K Tayob (TWN), Geneva, 23 April 2007

The Trade and Development Board of UNCTAD has adopted the theme and sub-themes for UNCTAD-XII, which is to be held on 20-25 April 2008 in Accra, Ghana.

The TDB's 41st Executive Session adopted "Addressing the Opportunities and Challenges of Globalisation for Development" as the over-riding theme for UNCTAD-XII.

The meeting, held here on 18-20 April, also adopted the following four sub-themes for UNCTAD-XII:

- (1) Enhancing coherence at all levels for sustainable economic development and poverty reduction in global policymaking, including the contribution of regional approaches;
- (2) Key trade and development issues and the new realities in the geography of the world economy;
- (3) Enhancing the enabling environment at all levels to strengthen productive capacity, trade and investment: mobilizing resources and harnessing knowledge for development; and
- (4) Strengthening UNCTAD; enhancing its development role, impact and institutional effectiveness.

Informal consultations on the themes and sub-themes have been held for several weeks before the TDB executive session. They were chaired by Ambassador Don Stephenson of Canada.

The result was a consensus text that was endorsed by the Trade and Development Board (TDB). It was also agreed that the expanded Bureau of the Board undertake the next steps for the preparation of UNCTAD-XII.

Stephenson said that during consultations, the criteria for the selection of discussion topics at UNCTAD-XII had to be narrow enough to focus on priorities, wide enough to permit a broad scan of issues and interesting enough to include new or

controversial issues.

He added that many of the issues are not new and the issue was how to breathe new life into these debates. The main theme, he said, recognised that the benefits of globalisation were not shared equally.

The first sub-theme (enhancing coherence at all levels for sustainable economic development and poverty reduction) is intended to invite discussion at all levels, including national, bilateral and regional, said Stephenson.

Thailand, for the Asian Group, said that this theme is intended to address systemic issues related to fostering consistency in the global economic system and enhancing the participation of developing countries in international decision-making.

Brazil (which coordinates GRULAC) said that this theme sets forth "the challenge of our times." It added that sustainable development and poverty reduction were priorities for its region.

Stephenson said the second sub-theme (key trade and development issues and the new realities) is intended to include discussion on what growth in developing countries means for South-South and North-South trade.

Thailand said that it supported the notion of examining greater South-South cooperation to complement the work of North-South relations.

The third sub-theme (enhancing the enabling environment at all levels to strengthen productive capacity, trade and investment: mobilizing resources and harnessing knowledge) has a broad focus because all countries need productive capacity and to increase employment and living standards, said Stephenson. It presents an opportunity to look at many substantive areas like increasing supply capacity and improving infrastructure.

Brazil clarified that the definition of resources is to be understood in the "broadest sense."

The fourth sub-theme (strengthening UNCTAD) has an inward and outward focus, Stephenson said. The sub-theme poses questions such as: How does UNCTAD work for its clients, the developing countries? Is UNCTAD adequately equipped and organised to be effective?

UNCTAD Secretary-General Supachai Panitchpakdi said that once the theme has been decided, it is practice for the Secretary-General to give a report of his ideas on the theme. This would be made available to member states in June. He suggested that there should be a brainstorming and a preliminary exchange of views on the report. He preferred the process to be as informal as possible.

In addition, Supachai said that he expected the UNCTAD-XII preparatory committee to prepare "as clean a text as possible."

Ambassador J. Delmer Urbizo of Honduras, for the G77 and China, said that UNCTAD-XII should transform the organisation according to the new realities in the field of trade and development.

Benin, for the Least Developed Countries, said that there is increased pressure for reform of the UN when participation by least developed and developing countries is made particularly difficult by governing bodies of international organisations.

Brazil (for GRULAC) said that these sub-theme discussions should look for ways and means for UNCTAD to assist developing countries adjust to all development challenges.

Ambassador Arcanjo do Nascimento of Angola, for the Africa Group, said that UNCTAD-XII must address issues central to African countries including problems related to commodities, productive capacity, international competitiveness, and multilateral and regional trade negotiations. He said that for tangible results, priorities will also need to be agreed to at the conference.

Benin said that it is important to have a focus on LDCs whose concerns are not just a cross-cutting issue. The needs of LDCs warrant specific attention.

Thailand, for the Asian Group, said that UNCTAD-XII is also an opportunity to address UNCTAD's contribution to major international conferences, in particular Financing for Development.

[BACK TO MAIN](#) | [ONLINE BOOKSTORE](#) | [HOW TO ORDER](#)

