



Agenda item: 7

General debate

Statement by:

Australia on behalf of the JUSCANNZ Group



UNITED NATIONS
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UNCTAD XV

Statement by Patricia Holmes, Deputy Permanent Representative, Australian Permanent Mission, Geneva, on behalf of the JUSCANNZ Group

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Excellencies, Dear delegates

I am very pleased to make this statement on behalf of the JUSCANNZ group – comprising Japan, the United States of America, Canada, Norway, New Zealand, Australia, Israel, Turkey, Switzerland and our newest member, the Republic of Korea.

I would like to thank our host, Barbados, including for the innovative way it has adapted to current global circumstances to enable this important conference to go ahead. I would also like to thank the UNCTAD Secretariat for the role it has played in organising the conference and shaping the agenda.

Let me start by offering warm congratulations to Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan on her appointment. We welcome your commitment to revitalise UNCTAD through reforming its mandates, processes, and improving its impact. We strongly support a reformed vision.

This 15th UN Conference on Trade and Development, with its overarching theme “From inequality and vulnerability to prosperity for all”, comes at a crucial time. We remain in the midst a global pandemic that has had immense human and economic costs. We are all aware of the set-backs the pandemic has caused and of the impact it has had on our ongoing efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, including to address inequality and promote inclusive growth.

UNCTAD has a critical role to play in the global economic recovery from the pandemic. UNCTAD is well positioned to make a constructive, positive contribution to the global response to the crisis, in particular by helping shape solutions in support of developing countries.

It is six years since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. This Conference presents an opportunity for UNCTAD to step up its

contribution towards the achievement of these goals. I would like to share the JUSCANZ Group's views on how UNCTAD might do so.

The mandate attributed to UNCTAD by the 14th conference of Nairobi remains valid. While UNCTAD is a focal point for trade and development and related issues, it is important to remember that UNCTAD is not primarily a development agency, nor is it a technology, finance or investment agency. UNCTAD's work should not duplicate the work of international fora with specific technical expertise.

The JUSCANZ Group underscores the importance of working together to deepen the integration of developing countries in a multilateral trading system that is rules-based, open, fair, non-discriminatory, transparent, and predictable. Regional integration, consistent with international trade rules and obligations, can also be an important catalyst to reduce trade barriers, implement policy reforms and enable firms, including MSMEs to participate in global value chains. The JUSCANZ Group emphasises the importance of continuing to work together to facilitate international trade and coordinate responses to COVID-19.

The JUSCANZ Group recognises the importance of UNCTAD's analytical work, products and toolkits on gender and trade. We urge UNCTAD to dedicate more resources to this work. Addressing the constraints of women's economic empowerment is fundamental to inclusive and sustainable growth, poverty reduction and to the achievement of gender equality. This should be mainstreamed in all of UNCTAD's work.

Sustainable development also requires the integration of environmental priorities into UNCTAD's policies and programs.

The JUSCANZ Group emphasises the importance of coherence in UNCTAD's publications, and in the work of the Secretariat more broadly. Priority should be given to objective, analytical reports, and peer review should be introduced for flagship reports. This would help to reinforce the credibility and influence of key UNCTAD products.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the digital transformation, and the JUSCANZ Group notes and commends the Secretariat's role in organising high profile and successful e-commerce weeks. We encourage UNCTAD to continue and strengthen statistical and analytical work on the digital economy and investment-related issues, including the opportunities and challenges for developing countries. We also urge it to

strengthen efforts to enhance capacity in developing countries, for example through the E-Trade for All initiative and related activities.

UNCTAD should continue to pursue reforms necessary to improve its efficiency, transparency and financial accountability. Several elements of UNCTAD's inter-governmental machinery still need to be revitalised including, for example, processes around the development of recommendations by intergovernmental groups of experts. UNCTAD should continue to focus reforms towards increased financial accountability, and value for money. Improvements are needed in UNCTAD's transparency, including reporting on extra-budgetary contributions, and on memoranda of understanding. All stakeholders deserve an UNCTAD with strong, independent oversight mechanisms, robust financial accountability, and clear links between spending and results.

We acknowledge that UNCTAD has undertaken positive efforts to strengthen its results-based management framework, and align this with the Sustainable Development Goals. However, further work is needed to close remaining gaps.

The JUSCANZ Group also encourages UNCTAD to increase oversight and accountability as it relates to staff, including to improve staff welfare, in particular during these challenging times as we all live and work amidst a global pandemic.

Let me close by reiterating the JUSCANZ Group's commitment to working constructively with all UNCTAD Members, the Secretary-General, and the Secretariat, to reform and revitalise the organisation and ensure it makes a positive contribution on international trade and development issues, including as we work to restore the global economy.

Thank you.