

Statement by the Executive Director, the South Centre, Martin Khor at the Plenary of UNCTAD XIII in Doha, 23 April 2012.

The South Centre is honored to take part in this general plenary of UNCTAD XIII. We in the South Centre ourselves are very close partners with UNCTAD. We are therefore committed to strengthen our collaboration with UNCTAD in a wide range of issues and activities.

The South Centre is a research organization established by governments of developing countries to support them in preparing for international processes and in thinking about their national development policies. Our areas of work include the global economy, the financial crisis and developing countries, trade and trade negotiations, technology, innovation and IPRs with interface with development and sustainable development.

In most of these issues, the South Centre shares with UNCTAD the interest in integrating them with development concerns and dimension. We have participated in several UNCTAD meetings on these issues and we have greatly benefited from the intellectual work of the UNCTAD staff. The research reports of UNCTAD have greatly benefited the developing countries, not only to policymakers but also to academics, civil society and parliamentarians. The high quality of analysis has helped shape the views and policies of developing countries as well as public opinion, and the proposals both at international and national level s. , have eventually been taken seriously and many of them adopted. To cite some examples –

- (1) UNCTAD formulated proposals for restructuring debt in Latin America in the 1980s and debt relief in relation to multilateral financial institutions in the 1990s, ideas that were later adopted in the Brady Plan and the HIPC initiative.
- (2) The need for an international debt arbitration system and tribunal was first proposed by UNCTAD and later taken up by the IMF Secretariat and now enjoys new interest in the light of the European debt crisis.
- (3) UNCTAD warned about the destabilizing effects of unregulated capital flows and proposed both international regulation and capital regulation at national level, and continued to provide clear analysis of the need to subject the financial sector to the needs of the real economy and development.
- (4) UNCTAD has also taken a balanced view on trade, promoting the view that export promotion and import liberalization have to be seen in the context of development needs.

Today as the world faces acute challenges in the areas of finance, macroeconomy and trade, the role UNCTAD is even more appreciated. The South Centre therefore joins others in calling on the UNCTAD membership to promote a strong mandate to the organization of continue and expands its

work in all 3 pillars of research, intergovernmental discussion and technical assistance. Personally, I have attended the previous UNCTAD sessions in Accra, Sao Paolo, Bangkok, and Durban and I am happy to be here in Doha. Each of these UNCTAD sessions have had a fair share of great openings, interesting panel discussions, tense negotiations and eventually successful conclusion with an agreed outcome document.

We are confident that UNCTAD XIII will be in line with this trend. We may debate about the priority issues that UNCTAD should take up in a particular period, and about the conclusions of its reports. However, the role of UNCTAD to be the focal point of the UN and indeed of the international system for integrating trade and development and its interrelation with other issues such as finance, technology, and sustainable development, as has been mandated, remains of critical importance especially in this period of global crises and development challenges. If UNCTAD does not exist, we would have to invent it. Since it exists, we need to reaffirm its role and strengthen it further. The South Centre is happy to expand its cooperation with UNCTAD for many years to come.