



Statement by Pedro Manuel Moreno, Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD

## World Investment Forum 2023: High-level panel on FDI and women empowerment

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates  
19 October 2023

(Held in partnership with UN Women and ILO)

Your Excellency, Ms. Lucia lipumbu, Minister of Industrialization and Trade, Republic of Namibia,

Your Excellency, Ms. Clara Manuela De La Luz Delgado Jesus, Permanent Representative of Cabo Verde in Geneva,

Dear Ms. Mia Seppo, Assistant Director General of the International Labour Organization,

Dear Mr. Moez Doraid, Deputy Executive Director a.i. for UN Coordination, Partnerships, Resources and Sustainability of UN WOMEN

Dear Fellow Panelists,

Dear Moderator, Babita Sharma,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to this high-level panel on FDI and Women Empowerment which adds an important dimension to our quest for women empowerment and gender equality.

And this is much needed because recent crises have eroded hard-won gains on women empowerment and gender equality. According to the Gender Snapshot Report of UN Women and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, gender equality is nearly 300 years away if we don't act.

So we must act.

This is why women empowerment and gender equality are key features of this Forum with dedicated sessions on gender and with gender as a transversal issue.

On Tuesday, we discussed the power of stock exchanges to foster inclusivity, through facilitating inclusive business practices and increasing the pace of women appointments to boards and senior leadership.

We also looked into the role of Investment promotion agencies to promote gender-inclusive linkages between multinational enterprises and local companies and to boost a better gender distribution in the accountancy profession.

We discussed women entrepreneurship with the culmination of yesterday's Women in Business Award.

We thus have a clear message: Private investment and multinational Enterprises – MNEs – can help advance women's empowerment and gender equality.

Today, we want to focus on MNEs, which as global players have the power to transmit positive gender policies and practices to host countries. For instance, by adopting non-discrimination policies, or ensuring equality in hiring practices, pay, and promotion opportunities across their networks of affiliates. They can also support women's empowerment in host economies through spill-over effects to labour markets, influencing cultural norms and reducing discriminatory practices.

Yet, these positive outcomes are not automatic and require support from many actors.

In our report on Multinational Enterprises and the International Transmission of Gender Policies and Practices, we provide a roadmap for policymakers and business leaders on how to maximize positive impacts of foreign investment and of MNE's operations abroad.

The roadmap highlights that policies in both home and host countries of MNEs are key to promoting gender equality across their international operations.

Initiatives to enhance women's capacity to supply MNEs, training and awareness or role model campaigns can make a difference. It is very important that host country policies and programmes strengthen local absorptive capacity and develop such inclusive linkages.

International standards and the global policy environment for investment also offer opportunities to advance positive gender policies.

For example, through international reporting standards. Yet, according to our data, only 23 out of the 100 largest MNEs report on gender practices in their global networks.

In terms of the global policy environment, gender equality objectives in trade and investment agreements could help ensuring positive policies and practices. Agreements could discourage the lowering of labour market standards for the purpose of promoting investment. Yet, at the moment, only few International Investment Agreements include gender provisions.

In home countries, where governments provide support to MNEs for investment overseas, support could be made conditional on reporting on gender practices throughout affiliate networks and on achieving targets in terms of the gender composition of the overseas workforce.

So, as we can see, a lot remains to be done.

UNCTAD has advanced knowledge on those issues. And to stay ahead of the curve, we want, in today's event, to gain further insights from you on potential policy paths of foreign investment that can accelerate our pace towards women empowerment, towards gender equality.

I can assure you that your ideas and recommendations will guide the future of our technical assistance and policy advisory work in this area.

Dear Friends,

We need to tap the potential of private investment to advancing gender equality.

There are many opportunities but also many challenges. It is thanks to the collaboration with partners that we can better understand the challenges and seize the opportunities.

I thus want to take this opportunity to thank our partners - UN Women and ILO - for working with us and pushing this agenda forward.

Thank you for your attention.



**United Nations Conference  
on Trade and Development**

[DELEGATES](#) | [CIVIL SOCIETY](#) | [JOURNALISTS](#) | [TECHNICAL COOPERATION](#) | [CAREERS](#)

Connect with us     

UNCTAD - Palais des Nations, 8-14, Av. de la Paix, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Signup for our Newsletter

© Copyright | [Privacy notice](#) | [Terms of use](#)

Your email

