

UNCTAD World Investment Forum 2018
Closing Ambassadors Roundtable
Speaking points for
H.E. Mr. R. D. S. Kumararatne
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka
to the World Trade Organization

Geneva, Friday 26th October 14:00 – 17:00

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank you chair for giving me the floor.

It is a privilege for me to participate in the Ambassadors roundtable, which closes a highly successful World Investment Forum. My delegation wishes to convey our appreciation to the Secretary-General Dr. Kituyi, Mr. James Zhan, Director and his team for the timely decision and the achievements.

The delegations who participate at the World Investment forum have experienced UNCTAD's commitments for Sustainable Development Agenda and as the major institution in taking up investment policy debate towards successful achievement in SDGs.

All SDGs are investment oriented. Secretary General of UNCTAD on his opening remarks at the Investment forum mentioned that the investment gap to fulfil the SDGs is US\$ 2.5 Trillion. It is a daunting task to fulfil these investment requirements at national and international level, particularly, under the current global trading and investment climate. As reported by UNCTAD, the global foreign investment flows fell by 23% in 2017. During the first half of 2018, this fall has been 41%. Under such developments, the great challenge faced by developing countries and in particular, small economies are how to formulate their investment strategy to attract FDI to their development oriented policies.

Further, FDI investors' main focus would depend on possible rate of return to their investment and the level of risk to be undertaken. Balancing investors' interest and maintaining the required policy space is great challenge for many countries.

Consequently investment in SDG focused developments will be a burden on national governments for many developing countries.

We all are encountered with the dilemma on how to find ways to ensure that FDI contributes in the best possible manner to sustainable development. With the SDG deadline, much focus is demanded for possible action to direct investments towards the objectives. Integrating investment policy in the development strategy in encouraging private sector participation has many facets. In one hand how to ensure quality of services at affordable prices, in particular, in SDG sectors such as power, transport, telecommunication, water and sanitation etc, which are of interest to private investments.

On the other hand, investing in the SDGs in the areas of food security, climate change mitigation, climate change adaptation, bio-diversity, health and education etc. the question would be whether public sector funding capabilities are sufficient to meet the demand. For example, disciplining fisheries subsidies under SDG 14.6 is discussed in the Rules Committee at WTO with the aim bringing such disciplines under the Agreement on Subsidies and countervailing measures. In order to eliminate IUU fishing and subsidies for overfishing and over capacity, many management measures such as making necessary legislative changes, introducing vessel monitoring, entry of catch data, maintaining logbooks, vessel supervision, fishing harbour management etc, are pre-requisites for successful controls. This will require significant investment particularly in developing nations which are yet to introduce these fisheries control measures.

At the same time, as stated, how to maintain adequate policy space for the national governments in the investment policy making is a great concern. In this regard, addressing many of these critical issues, the leading role played by UNCTAD in developing investment treaty reform options and guiding the member countries are commendable. This has been focused in UNCTAD's 2018 World Investment Forum report which launched "Phase 3 Investment Policy Reforms". In this context, the World Investment Report refers to issues such as human rights, health, environment, social issues, tax, trade and others.

These interlinkages between issues are very real here in Geneva. In fact, many of the themes with which investment interacts are being dealt with international organizations headquartered in Geneva. I can think of trade, labour, intellectual property, human rights, health, climate, migration, etc.

The 2018 World Investment Forum has helped to respond to these interlinkages between different areas of policy making. We have had sessions on investment and migration, investment and agriculture, the investment and trade nexus.

It is my view, we - as the Geneva Ambassadors - are naturally placed to cut across themes, and make sure that interlinkages between different policy areas are harnessed for sustainable development. We can advocate and promote the work of the numerous international organizations in Geneva. The scale and importance of the World Investment Forum this week already demonstrates the convening power of the UN in Geneva on these issues. All of this makes Geneva a natural choice for a work hub on the SDGs and the 2030 development agenda.

To conclude, I would like to add Sri Lanka's support to the work of Permanent Missions in Geneva on finding solutions to the financing of the SDGs and to the establishment of an initiative to carry our work forward.

Thank you.