



CABINET DU SECRÉTAIRE GÉNÉRAL
DE LA CNUCED

SECRETARY-GENERAL'S
OFFICE

OHCHR REGISTRY

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Palais des Nations
CH-1211 Genève 10

Téléfax: +41 22 917 00 42
Téléphone: +41 22 917 5806/5634

Ref No:
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Recipients : N. M. Arbour 25 April 2007

(Encl.)

Dear Ms. Arbour,

I greatly welcome your interest in UNCTAD's work, as expressed in your letter dated 8 March 2007. More specifically, you asked us to send information that could be relevant for the Office of the High Commissioner when preparing the study requested by the Council's decision 2/104 on human rights and access to water.

In that context, I wish to draw your attention to the documentation prepared in the context of the UNCTAD Expert Meeting on Universal Access to Services, held in Geneva from 14 to 16 November 2006. The morning session of 15 November was entirely devoted to enhancing universal access to water services.

In that meeting, experts put forward their views on how Governments of developed and developing countries could play an active role (at national and international levels) to ensure that universal access to essential services is achieved. Some of the six sessions addressed sector-specific issues and experiences (e.g. challenges related to achieving universal access to water, education, health or telecom services), while others addressed cross-cutting issues of relevance to numerous essential services sectors (e.g. what is the role of government and the private sector respectively, and how can the public/private interface be best managed).

We were pleased to have Mr. Eibe Riedel, Special Rapporteur on the Right to Water, present at the meeting, and are grateful for his informative and constructive intervention. Subsequently, UNCTAD presented the results of the meetings at the Informal Consultation on the Impact of International Trade on the Enjoyment of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights organized by the Office of the High Commissioner in November 2006.

Please find enclosed a copy of the background note (TD/B/COM.1/EM.30/2) and the report of the meeting (TD/B/COM.1/EM.30/3), both prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat. We hope that you find the information contained therein useful.

For any follow-up questions, please contact Ms. Mina Mashayekhi, Head of Branch, Trade Negotiations and Commercial Diplomacy at UNCTAD. (Email: mina.mashayekhi@unctad.org Phone: 022 917 5866).

Yours sincerely,

Supachai Panitchpakdi
Secretary-General of UNCTAD

Ms. Louise Arbour
High Commissioner for Human Rights
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
Palais des Nations
1211 Geneva 10