



Eunice Ndabih ibvm writes: "I am first of all grateful for the opportunity to attend the conference. For the 8 days starting with 2 days of civil society pre conference sitting to come up with a CSO declaration document to be presented in the main event- which was very intense and touched on among issues like gender in relation to women empowerment in global value chain and especially in cross border trade in developing countries, illicit financial flows, bad debts(in the name of fulfilling the implementation of the SDGs), harmful tax incentives and tax practices that has seen economies like Greece and Argentina collapse, under or mis invoicing which amounts to huge financial loses and the overall mandate of the UNCTAD as an advisory/ research body within the UN umbrella. There was also the concern that most of the superpowers

were not fully involved but were only present to rubber-stamp and assist where and when they were needed - there was need for their active participation. **The issue of mistrust among trading nations was also raised as it was a huge block to development and partnerships.**

I was much interested in the youth forum in which the youth was invited to take our rightful position on "shaping the world we want." - this was the theme for the youth forum. Some speakers and panelists included youth who, in spite of graduating with honors on their areas of studies, had ventured into their areas of interest like entrepreneurship and some in media and performing arts. Manu Chandaria- a philanthropist and chairperson of Kenya manufacturers association encouraged the youth to cultivate resilience and patience in small undertakings that with perseverance would yield greatly.

The UNCTAD Secretary **General Dr. Mukhisa Kituyi** also urged the youth to claim their rightful position in shaping the world and the future they want and to question and monitor their government's task of meeting the SDGs. He said, "we cannot always build the future for the youth but we can build the youth for the future." He enlightened us on some misappropriations of some governments who had heavily borrowed but used the loans for other things - the youth have the task of questioning bad or skewed systems. He also asked the youth to make good use

of the funds endowed to them and training opportunities presented to empower them. At the end of the youth forum, there was presentation of awards after entrants presented their projects. The overall winner and the runners up were young ladies a Ugandan who was involved in cosmetic production using Shea butter and jojoba oil (natural products) and a Kenyan who was involved in fashion design. Most of the other entrants did not make it to the event due to the situation in Turkey at that time.



I also had the opportunity to participate in some side events. One had the theme of "breaking bad" it was mainly talking about the tax incentives given by nations to attract foreign investors but these investors repay their hosts by profit shift to their own countries hence instead of developing them, they cripple them even the more. **The issue of tax havens and most of these being developing countries was also raised and the paradox is that EU countries blacklist other countries while protecting their own.** In this issue, the UNCTAD was seen as just a toothless barking dog as action could only be taken by bodies like Amnesty international or the Tax justice network.

Unpaid work was another topic that interested me as most of it was done by women and especially in developing countries, these include house work, care of the invalid, subsistence farming among others. There is need to consider pay for these as if they were to be done by skilled people this would be paid work. This is still underway and I hope for a positive outcome on this. Economic empowerment of women was also key as power imbalances was to be put on check, ownership and control of resources, access to ICTs and having conducive policy environment for women investors.

There was also need for the encouragement of south-south trade in which countries were encouraged to trade with countries of their own caliber as opposed to otherwise. Need to mechanize and do own production was emphasized as most of the developing countries especially produce the best coffee, tea, cocoa yet they export for processing and import finished products which paradoxically they can't afford. (This was presented as a joke which unfortunately is the reality- the African paradox: "the farmer is hungry and the tailor naked.") **On the care for the environment, countries were called upon to embrace green energy and some countries were applauded for making small steps like in production of Jatropha and the use of solar energy.**

Although I did not attend, there was a high level event- promoting a global environment for prosperity for all whose main speaker was His Eminence Cardinal Turkson, Holy See. This matched the Holy Father's intention for the month of July to end poverty by prayer and action.

As I live IBVM charism especially in the service of the youth, I will do my best to empower them with the life skills they need to claim their position in the global map. Coincidentally it's the girl child that I deal with and this amounts to "women empowerment."

