



Ms. Isabelle Durant, Acting Secretary-General of UNCTAD

Biographical Note

Ms. Isabelle Durant (Belgium) took up the position of Acting Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) on 16 February 2021, following three and a half years as its Deputy Secretary-General.

A former Minister and Senator of Belgium as well as Vice-President of the European Parliament, Ms. Durant brings to UNCTAD a solid experience in public affairs, intergovernmental processes and concrete assistance to countries. She is well-known for her skills in empowering people, addressing vulnerabilities at local and national levels and supporting Governments towards good governance and sustainable policies.

As Deputy Prime Minister of Belgium and Vice-President of the European Parliament from 2009 to 2014, Ms. Durant chaired different permanent delegations, notably one responsible for the follow-up of the Cotonou Agreement between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, as well as economic partnership agreements. She was also a member of the Budget Committee, working with the European Investment Bank on Eurobonds - which support infrastructure investment - as well as the monitoring of Galileo, the European Union's Global Navigation Satellite System.

Ms. Durant also possesses in-depth knowledge of the links with civil society and the private sector. Most notably, she was the Vice-President of the European Parliament responsible for the relations with civil society.

Ms. Durant served as Minister of Transport and Energy between 1999 and 2003. In this position, she directly oversaw the design and implementation of policies on mobility, infrastructure, energy and sustainable development. She also held the presidency of the European Union Council of Ministers of Transport.

As a Senator for Belgium from 2003 to 2009, Ms. Durant served on the Committees for Foreign Affairs and for Social Affairs and participated in many election observation missions, including in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt and Tunisia.

Ms. Durant also worked for the United Nations Development Programme as a senior consultant on the empowerment of women in local government, in Algeria in 2015 and 2016. In addition, she participated in or headed European Parliament delegations to Haiti, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Myanmar.

Immediately prior to becoming Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD, Ms. Durant was a member of Parliament of the Brussels-Capital Region and its Economic Affairs Committee. In the framework of a large reform of regional economic tools, she was especially involved in innovation and circular economy.

Born in Brussels in 1954, Ms. Durant holds a Master of Science degree in Economic and Social Policy from the Université Catholique de Louvain in Belgium.

She is married and has three children.