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## RECENT AND UPCOMING EVENTS

### Civil society meets to prepare for UNCTAD XI

Within the framework of the preparations for UNCTAD XI (to be held in São Paulo, Brazil, from 13 to 18 June 2004), a civil society meeting took place during the fiftieth session of the Trade and Development Board of UNCTAD, from 15 to 16 October in Geneva.

The purpose of the meeting was to involve civil society actors not only in the preparatory process of the Conference, but also in the Conference itself. The meeting began with a briefing by the UNCTAD secretariat on the conference theme, *Enhancing coherence between national development strategies and global economic processes towards economic growth and development, particularly of developing countries*, and its subthemes, *Development strategies in a globalizing world economy; Building productive capacity and international competitiveness; Assuming development gains from the international trading system and trade negotiations; and Partnerships for development*. The fourth subtheme, which cuts across the entire conference agenda, concerns how civil society can contribute to the development process and to achieving the Millennium Development Goals set by the United Nations General Assembly. The briefing was followed by an exchange of views among civil society representatives and the UNCTAD secretariat.

The other sessions were devoted to issues that, while strongly linked to the economy and trade, go far beyond them in scope: the links between trade and poverty; trade and gender; and trade and the creative industries, the latter viewed from their economic perspective.

Civil society representatives participating in the meeting also had an opportunity to exchange information through two presentations. The first one focused on UNCTAD's mandate as the UN focal point for integrated treatment of trade and development and related issues in the areas of finance, technology, investment and sustainable development. Participants were briefed on UNCTAD's work and its cooperation with all stakeholders, including civil society organizations. They were then briefed on the organization's vision for UNCTAD XI. The second presentation gave a preliminary overview of the structure and organization of a series of events and activities to be held before and during the conference in São Paulo. The UNCTAD XI civil society event was also highlighted.

The Secretary-General of UNCTAD, Rubens Ricupero, pointed out in his opening statement that "UNCTAD and organized civil society are natural allies, as they share the goal of changing the status quo in search of fairer trade and finance systems, and generally share the same critical attitude towards many contemporary trends, and are moved by the same trust in organized actions".

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Mr. Ricupero added that UNCTAD XI would be an opportunity to take stock of recent developments in international trade and trade negotiations. He expressed the hope that, in addition to the conference theme and subthemes, the conference would address three areas holding enormous potential for close cooperation between UNCTAD and civil society. These are the links between (a) trade and poverty; (b) trade and gender; and (c) trade and creative industries. They all encompass problems of an economic or trade nature, but with important human or social values. UNCTAD's role in the debate would be to catalyse the focusing of attention on the centrality of the problems.

In this context and in relation to the Millennium Development Goals, UNCTAD XI should contribute to policy making at the national and international levels. The role and contributions of civil society will be crucial in ensuring that trade effectively supports poverty reduction, gender equality and the promotion of culture.

*The Preparatory Committee was established by the Trade and Development Board and held its first meeting on 15 and 16 October.*

The participants suggested specific mechanisms for constructive interaction between civil society and UNCTAD, and for contributions by civil society to the preparatory process and the conference itself. They also discussed some substantive and organizational matters related to the role of civil society in UNCTAD XI. A preliminary statement summarizing the issues discussed among participating civil society representatives will be presented at an upcoming meeting of the Preparatory Committee for UNCTAD XI.

## Gender and trade dialogue

On 10 October, during the fiftieth session of the Trade and Development Board, a parallel event was organized to introduce the theme of *Gender and trade*, which will be an important special topic discussed at UNCTAD XI. A panel composed of women ambassadors of Geneva-based missions, representatives of international organizations and UN agencies members of the UN Interagency Task Force on Gender and Trade, and NGO representatives presented their views on the subject. The Secretary-General of UNCTAD said that the topic of gender and trade straddled economic and social areas of analysis and added an ethical dimension to trade. The panellists also recognized the importance of the subject in the context of the quest for equity and fairness in the multilateral trading system. However, it was recognized that the policy discussion needed to be underpinned by more research and better understanding of the many facets of the subject in both the economic and social spheres.

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## Eminent persons discuss commodity issues

General Assembly resolution A/57/381 requested that the Secretary-General of UNCTAD designate eminent persons to examine and report on commodity issues for consideration by the Trade and Development Board at its executive session and, subsequently, by the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. The meeting of Eminent Persons on Commodity Issues took place in Geneva on 22-23 September.

The group comprised very diverse backgrounds, institutional affiliations and experiences as well as different philosophical and political approaches to commodity problems and possible solutions. Among eminent persons participating at the meeting were representatives from civil society organizations. The eminent persons agreed on a set of recommendations published in the meeting report (TD/B/50/11). In spite of the group's heterogeneity, the recommendations were remarkably substantive, focused, prioritized and operational. They were discussed during the meeting of the Trade and Development Board and forwarded to the General Assembly. A panel discussion on the subject convened by the President of the General Assembly took place on 17 October with the participation of some of the eminent persons. Subject to the General Assembly's decision, and to availability of resources, UNCTAD plans to pursue the recommendations of the meeting, in particular to explore the possibilities of a new partnership in the area of commodities.

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## ICT strategies for Latin America, the Caribbean and transition economies

Information and communication technologies (ICT) are playing an increasingly crucial role in improving the export competitiveness of national and regional economies. Therefore, the development of ICT goes hand in hand with economic development and regional integration.

Having acknowledged the implications of ICT for development, UNCTAD and UNECE co-organized a Regional Conference for Transition Economies on "ICT and E-Commerce Strategies for Development" in Geneva from 20 to 21 October. This initiative is part of UNCTAD's work on ICT and e-commerce for development and UNECE's activities regarding international standards for e-business and global supply chains, as well as the development of the knowledge-based economy in transition countries.

The conference focused on the development of ICT, e-business and e-commerce in transition economies. It considered appropriate policies and strategies for enhancing the capacities of these countries to use or even produce ICT-related technologies, primarily in the area of e-business and in particular e-trade applications.

ICT issues will also be discussed at the UNCTAD Regional Conference on "ICT Strategies for Competitiveness and Development: Promoting E-Business, Trade Facilitation and Logistics in Latin America and the Caribbean" to be held in Rio de Janeiro from 25 to 27 November. Government officials, civil society and private-sector representatives are invited to share their experience on ICT.

The achievement of a common position on ICT issues is particularly desirable because it would constitute an important contribution to the preparatory process of UNCTAD XI as well as the World Summit on Information Society to be held in Geneva this coming December.

The Rio conference will focus on strategies and policies that can enhance the contribution of e-business, trade facilitation and logistics to economic development and regional economic integration. The conference will begin with a discussion of current national and regional initiatives on ICT strategies for development, both in general and in the field of trade facilitation and logistics. Subsequently, two tracks of thematic working groups will address specific issues including the role of open-source software in e-business development; security requirements and the role of ICT in meeting them; transport information communities; and transport networks in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The conference will conclude with a Ministerial Session that will establish an agenda for action aimed at achieving specific objectives at the regional and national levels in order to make more effective use of ICT for competitiveness and development.

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For more information, please consult <http://www.unctad.org/ecommerce>.

### Science and technology for meeting millennium goals

The UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) held a panel meeting on Promoting the Application of Science and Technology to Meet the Development Goals (MDGs) Contained in the Millennium Declaration in Tunis, Tunisia, from 29 to 31 October. Resource persons included Albert Sasson, former assistant director-general of UNESCO; Norman Revell, dean, School of Computing Science, Middlesex University; and Jean-Marie Leclerc, director general of the Information and Communication Technology Centre of the State of Geneva. The panel addressed policies and measures that can lead to (a) improving the policy environment for the application of science and technology to development by identifying potential risks and benefits of new and emerging technologies; (b) strengthening basic and applied research in developing countries and international scientific networking; (c) strengthening technology support institutions and science advisory mechanisms, building human capacity, identifying new technologies and applications, and encouraging international collaboration to support research in neglected fields; and (d) promoting affordable universal Internet access and building strategic partnerships in science and technology for development and capacity building for competitiveness.

The meeting was attended by CSTD members and other high-level experts. The findings and recommendations of the panel will be submitted for consideration by the CSTD at its seventh regular session, scheduled to be held in Geneva in May 2004.

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For more information on the CSTD, please visit the Science and Technology for Development Network at <http://www.unctad.org/stdev>.

## Experts focus on link between services FDI and development

An expert meeting on Foreign Direct Investment and Development was held in Geneva from 29 to 31 October.

The meeting highlighted the development dimension of FDI in services. This issue is important because nowadays, services FDI accounts for more than half of total FDI in host countries. A good part of services FDI has occurred through participation by foreign investors in privatization programmes. Expected benefits for development depend largely on host countries' policies. Accordingly, the meeting focused on the impact of privatization-related FDI on competitiveness, and on policy implications.

Issues addressed during the meeting included the role of FDI in the services sector, particularly privatization-related FDI; its impact on competitiveness and other development impacts; and policy issues and implications.

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For more information on the meeting, please consult [Meetings](#).

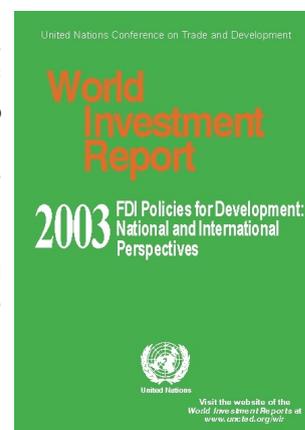
## NEW PUBLICATIONS

### Trends in worldwide FDI

The *World Investment Report 2003* was launched on September 4. This year's *Report* focuses on the downturn in foreign direct investment (FDI), its causes, and the role of national policies and international investment agreements (IIAs) in enabling countries to attract FDI and benefit from it. In 2002, FDI flows dropped drastically, and no rebound is expected in 2003. As the *Report* points out, the main factors behind the decline were slow economic growth in most parts of the world and dim prospects for recovery, at least in the short term. Also significant were falling stock market valuations, lower corporate profitability, a slowdown in the pace of corporate restructuring in some industries, and the winding down of privatization in some countries.

The *Report* also examines key issues that straddle national FDI policies and IIAs from the development viewpoint. Special attention is given to the emergence of IIAs, the right to regulate, home country measures and corporate social responsibility.

The *Report* includes a statistical annex of 122 pages.



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For more information on UNCTAD publications, please consult [Publications](#).

### Trade and Development Report 2003

This year's *Trade and Development Report* begins by examining the trends that have shaped the world economy in recent years, as well as future prospects for growth and development. For the third consecutive year, the world economy is in a state of malaise, and little recovery is expected in 2003. "The world economy is now facing a widening deflationary gap created by deficient global demand", says the *Report*.



It examines the impact of the global downturn on the different developing regions. Special attention is given to Latin America, whose "record in terms of growth, employment and poverty reduction has been disappointing", as is noted by UNCTAD's Secretary-General, Rubens Ricupero.

The *Report* expresses concern regarding the pressure on currency markets created by huge payment imbalances, which emerged in the 1990s and have been intensified by differences in policy responses and continuing disparities in the strength of domestic demand among countries. The *Report* argues in favour of more expansionary and better coordinated macroeconomic policies in the major developed countries. Otherwise, currency adjustments "will only serve to redistribute the deflationary gap and unemployment among countries, without bringing much support to global recovery". Only a rapid recovery of the world economy can bring a sustainable expansion of trade and capital flows.

In its second part, the *Report* provides an in-depth analysis of the links between policy reforms and economic performance in developing countries since the 1980s. It examines the level and structure of fixed capital formation, productivity growth, structural change, industrialization and international competitiveness in various parts of the developing world.

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For more information on UNCTAD publications, please consult [Publications](#).

### Upcoming events

- Expert Meeting on Market Entry Conditions Affecting Competitiveness and Exports of Goods and Services of Developing Countries: Large Distribution Networks, Taking into Account the Special Needs of LDCs, 26-28 November 2003
- Commission on Enterprise, Business Facilitation and Development, 8-12 December 2003

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For more information, please check [Events and Meetings](#).

NGOs enjoying observer status with UNCTAD automatically receive official notifications inviting them to participate in and contribute to the debate and discussions of Expert Meetings, sessions of the Commissions of the UNCTAD Trade and Development Board, and quadrennial sessions of the Conference. Competent and relevant NGOs interested in contributing to UNCTAD's programmes and activities may wish to consider applying for observer status.

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For more information, please visit UNCTAD's website:

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