

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

# UNCTAD

*in brief*

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UNITED NATIONS

Established in 1964 as a permanent intergovernmental body, UNCTAD is the principal organ of the United Nations General Assembly dealing with trade, investment and development issues. It is also the United Nations focal point for the least developed countries.

### **Main goals:**

Maximize the trade, investment and development opportunities of developing countries and assist them in their efforts to integrate into the world economy on an equitable basis

### **Membership:**

### **Headquarters:**

### **Secretariat:**

191 member States

Geneva, Switzerland

Secretary-General: Mr. Rubens Ricupero (Brazil), since September 1995  
400 staff members

### **Budget:**

US\$ 45 million a year from the United Nations regular budget and US\$ 24 million from extrabudgetary resources.

## **WHAT DOES UNCTAD DO?**

- Provides a forum for intergovernmental consensus-building where all member States interact freely on policy issues concerning trade and development.
- Carries out policy and research analysis, capacity-building activities and technical cooperation in the following areas:

**International trade:** promotes the participation of developing countries in international trade and assists them in their trade negotiations; strengthens service-sector capacities in developing countries; promotes the integration of trade, environment and development; analyses issues related to competition law and policy; seeks to reduce commodity dependence through

**Investment, enterprise development and technology:** analyses trends in foreign direct investment and their impact on development; helps countries to promote international investment and understand the issues involved in international investment agreements; devises strategies for the development of small and medium-sized enterprises; identifies policy options and implements capacity-building programmes to encourage the use of new technologies.

**Globalization and development:** researches the broad trends and prospects in the world economy; proposes effective solutions to the debt problem of developing countries and to the management of external debt; examines successful development experiences; contributes to the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF).

**Services infrastructure, transport and trade efficiency, and human resource development:** facilitates trade through better use of information technologies in trade-supporting services; carries out capacity-building and training in these areas; analyses the opportunities developing countries could derive from e-commerce and e-business practices.

**Least developed, landlocked and island developing countries:** monitors the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs); analyses the effects of major international initiatives on the LDCs and assists them in understanding the key issues in multilateral trade negotiations. As United Nations focal point for the LDCs, UNCTAD has played a leading role in organizing the three United Nations Conferences on the Least Developed Countries (Paris 1981 and 1990, Brussels 2001).

All activities take into account the issues of sustainable development, gender and economic cooperation among developing countries.

# HIGHLIGHTS OF MAIN ACTIVITIES

## Trade and commodities

- Positive Agenda Initiative and Commercial Diplomacy Programme to assist developing countries in all aspects of their trade negotiations.
- Commodity diversification and development: promotes the diversification of production and trade structures. Helps Governments to formulate and implement diversification policies and encourages enterprises to adapt their business strategies and products to the international trading system.
- Competition and consumer policies: provides capacity-building in competition and consumer protection laws and policies in developing countries. Publishes regular updates of a Model Law on Competition.
- Trade Analysis and Information System (TRAINS): comprehensive computer-based information system that uses UNCTAD's database on trade control measures. The CD-ROM version includes 119 countries.

## Investment and enterprise development

- International investment and technology arrangements: helps developing countries to participate more actively in international investment rule-making at the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels. These arrangements include the organization of capacity-building seminars and regional symposia, and the preparation of a series of issues papers.
- Investment Policy Reviews: intended to familiarize Governments and the private sector with the investment environment and policies of a given country. Reviews have been carried out in Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Mauritius, Peru, Uganda and Uzbekistan.
- Investment guides and capacity-building for the LDCs. So far five countries have been involved: Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique and Uganda.
- EMPRETEC: promotes entrepreneurship and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises in its 20 member countries. An information network provides entrepreneurs with access to business databases.

## Macroeconomic policies, debt and development financing

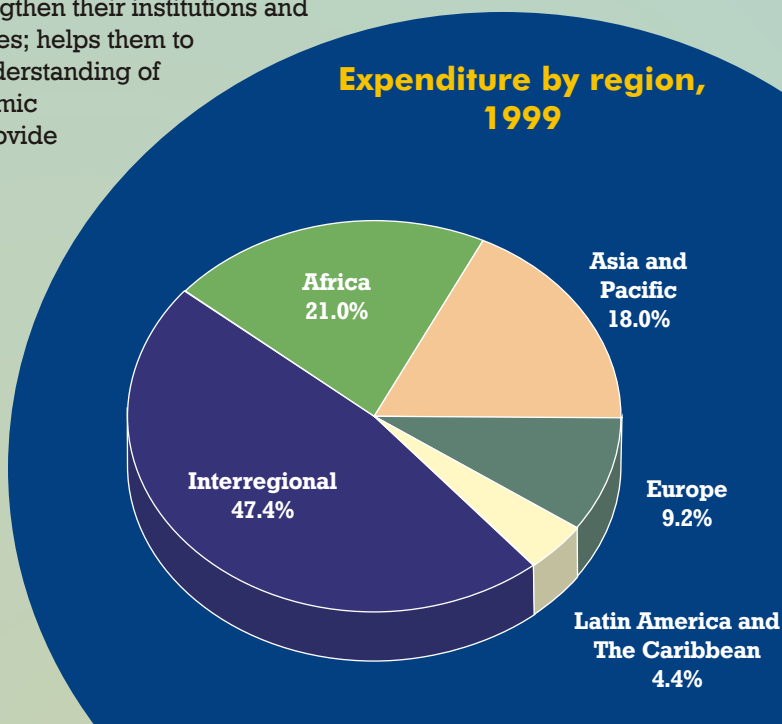
- Policy and research papers for submission to UNCTAD meetings and the United Nations General Assembly on issues linked to global economic interdependence, the international monetary and financial system, and macroeconomic and development policy challenges.
- Technical and advisory support: provides support to the intergovernmental group of developing countries (G24) in their negotiations and discussions with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and with donor countries, including the Paris Club of creditors.
- DMFAS programme: computer-based debt management and financial analysis system specially designed to help countries manage their external debt. Started in 1982, and now installed in 52 countries.

## Transport, customs and information technology

- ASYCUDA programme: integrated customs system that speeds up customs clearance procedures and helps Governments to reform and modernize their customs procedures and management. The latest version also facilitates the introduction of e-business practices. Installed in over 80 countries, it has become the internationally accepted standard for customs automation.
- ACIS programme: computer-based cargo tracking system installed in 20 developing countries of Africa and Asia.
- Global Trade Point Network (GTPNet): 150 centres around the world provide traders with trade-related information and services, and assist in the introduction of e-business practices.
- TRAINFORTRADE programme: builds training networks and organizes training in all areas of international trade to enable developing countries to increase their competitiveness. Currently developing distance learning programmes focusing on the LDCs.

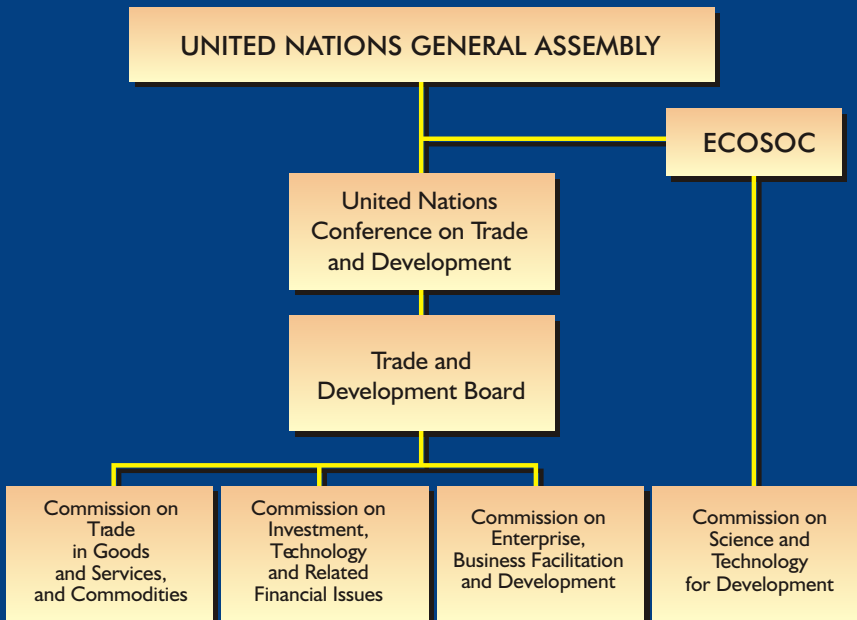
## TECHNICAL COOPERATION

UNCTAD is involved in some 300 technical assistance projects in over 100 countries. It aims at enhancing the capacity of developing countries and countries in transition to strengthen their institutions and development policies; helps them to acquire a better understanding of international economic problems and to provide their own solutions; strengthens the negotiating capacities of developing countries in the areas of international trade, finance and investment.



# HOW UNCTAD WORKS

## INTERGOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE



## Intergovernmental machinery

- **The Conference :**  
UNCTAD's highest policy-making body meets every four years at ministerial level to formulate policy guidelines and set work priorities.  
The last Conference was held in Bangkok, Thailand, in February 2000.
- **The Trade and Development Board:** meets in Geneva once a year in regular session to review the secretariat's activities and up to three times a year in executive session to deal with urgent policy issues as well as management and institutional matters.
- **The Board has three Commissions:**  
Commission on Trade in Goods and Services, and Commodities  
Commission on Investment, Technology and Related Financial Issues  
Commission on Enterprise, Business Facilitation and Development

The Commissions meet once a year in regular session and may convene up to ten Expert Meetings a year on specific issues.

## UNCTAD'S RECORD

- Generalized System of Preferences (1971): over US\$ 70 billion p.a. of developing country exports receive preferential treatment in developed country markets due to the GSP.
- Agreement on a Global System of Trade Preferences (GSTP) among developing countries (1989).
- International commodity agreements, including those for cacao, coffee, sugar, jute and jute products, tropical timber, olive oil and grains.
- The Common Fund for Commodities set up to provide financial backing for maintaining international stocks and R&D projects in the field of commodities (1989).
- Guidelines for international action in the area of debt rescheduling (1980).
- UN Conventions on Code of Conduct for Liner Conferences (1974) and International Carriage of Goods by Sea (1978).

UNCTAD's work has also prompted or facilitated the following decisions: agreement on ODA targets, including the 0.7 per cent GNP target for developing countries in general and the 0.15 per cent target for least developed countries; creation of the Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) by the IMF; reduction of the commercial bank debt for the heavily indebted poor countries

## UNCTAD AND CIVIL SOCIETY

UNCTAD believes that the successful integration of developing countries into the global economy depends on cooperation between the private and the public sectors, and seeks ways to include non-governmental organizations, academia, parliamentarians and business associations in its intergovernmental machinery. NGOs made a landmark contribution at UNCTAD X in Bangkok in 2000, and set an irreversible trend for the increased participation of civil society in the international organizations' deliberation process.

# ANNUAL PUBLICATIONS

## **Trade and Development Report**

Analyses current global economic performance, regional trends and the interaction of trade, investment and financial flows; discusses development strategies and current policy issues of interest to developing countries

## **World Investment Report**

Analyses trends in foreign direct investment (FDI); provides a balanced view of the interrelationship between FDI and transnational corporations; proposes policy recommendations to further FDI contributions to development

## **Least Developed Countries Report**

Identifies major challenges facing the LDCs and monitors international support measures; comprehensive and authoritative source of socio-economic analysis and data on the 49 LDCs

## **Handbook of UNCTAD Statistics**

Provides a comprehensive collection of statistics relevant to the analysis of world trade and development; covers basic development indicators. Exists also in CD-ROM

## **E-commerce and Development Report**

Identifies the challenges and prospects of e-commerce in the development process

## **Review of Maritime Transport**

Examines trends in seaborne trade and analyses the comparative performance of different geographic regions, in particular in developing countries.

## **Guide to UNCTAD Publications.**

**For further information please consult the UNCTAD website at:**

**<http://www.unctad.org>**

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