



2014 PUBLIC SYMPOSIUM

18–19 June 2014
Palais des Nations – Geneva

A Better World Economic Order for Equality and Sustainable Development Post-2015

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). In 1964, Member States participating in the first Conference identified a range of systemic challenges and risks to peace and development that are still relevant today. As the international community is engaged in a comprehensive global discussion on the contours of a new global development agenda beyond 2015, the fifth UNCTAD Public Symposium provides a unique opportunity to discuss these challenges in the current context – before negotiations on the post-2015 agenda at the United Nations General Assembly begin in September 2014.

The founders of UNCTAD were determined “to seek a better and more effective system of international economic cooperation, whereby the division of the world into areas of poverty and plenty [could] be banished and prosperity achieved by all.” They recognized that “universal peace and prosperity [were] closely linked” and realized in this regard “the dangers of a widening gulf in living standards between peoples,” noting that “[i]f privilege, extremes of wealth and poverty, and social injustice persist[ed], then the goal of development [was] lost.” In the current post-2015 multi-stakeholder discussions, addressing growing inequalities within and between countries is emerging as a major priority, including the need to address structural and systemic root causes. This sense of urgency is as alive today as it was 50 years ago, when the founders of UNCTAD were “determined to do their utmost to lay the foundations of a better world economic order”.*

The Public Symposium will examine ways to address these challenges and contribute to ongoing United Nations General Assembly discussions on framing the post-2015 development agenda. Through a combination of high-level plenary sessions and in-depth breakout sessions organized by UNCTAD, civil society and other stakeholders, the Symposium will also provide an opportunity to brainstorm on what role UNCTAD should play regarding these issues in the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.

MAIN TOPICS

- 1. Macroeconomic dimensions of inequality**
- 2. From best policy practices to global transformation**

* The quoted text is taken from the Preamble, First Part, of the Final Act of UNCTAD I (1964), pp. 3–4.

1. MACROECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF INEQUALITY

The first UNCTAD Public Symposium in 2009 highlighted already the macroeconomic implications of growing inequalities as a factor in the accumulation of global imbalances and the eruption of the 2008 global financial crisis. Growing income inequalities within and between countries translate into insufficient aggregate demand and increased reliance on unsustainable debt-driven consumption. At the same time, the boom-and-bust cycles that have plagued the global economy in the last few decades and the asymmetric recessionary measures applied to tackle global imbalances have worsened inequalities, mass unemployment and public protests against injustice worldwide. This segment of the Symposium will examine these and other aspects of inequality related to trade, finance, investment and technology. It will also seek to identify which systemic and structural reforms are required to reverse current patterns towards more sustainable and equitable forms of economic development worldwide.

2. FROM BEST POLICY PRACTICES TO GLOBAL TRANSFORMATION

In different countries and regions around the world, there is a plethora of successful policy practices and development strategies that could be replicated elsewhere and brought to scale. These include macroeconomic and sectoral policies that aim for more employment-intensive forms of growth, redistributive social programmes, changes in property relations (such as through land reform or the expansion of cooperatives), carefully designed public-private partnerships and innovative forms of regional financial and monetary cooperation. Can political partnerships between different stakeholders help to replicate and scale up these best practices in the lead up to 2015 and beyond? Are there undue constraints on the required policy space of countries and regions to implement such measures? How far can national and regional initiatives lead to meaningful global transformation in the absence of development-oriented changes in the rules of global trade and finance?

This year the Symposium will open with the *Third Geneva Dialogue*, part of a series of events where experts from the Geneva trade hub and other stakeholders debate global economic issues, including the post-2015 development agenda.

ABOUT THE UNCTAD PUBLIC SYMPOSIUM

The UNCTAD Public Symposium is organized in cooperation with the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service and other partners. It is UNCTAD's annual outreach event where government officials, civil society representatives, academics, the private sector and other stakeholders come together to engage in open and interactive dialogue on key global economic issues affecting development. With its broad participation and emphasis on multi-stakeholder cooperation, the Symposium offers a unique opportunity to share best practice and engage a wide range of development actors in constructive policy dialogue.

The Symposium is open to representatives of governments, civil society organizations, businesses, trade unions, parliamentarians, academics and other international organizations.

Simultaneous interpretation into the official United Nations languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Spanish and Russian) will be available during the plenary sessions, but not the breakout sessions

OUTCOME

This year's Symposium is timed to coincide with the week-long (16–20 June 2014) series of commemorative events for the fiftieth anniversary of UNCTAD. As in the past, the outcome of the Symposium will be transmitted to the UNCTAD Trade and Development Board and through the Board, to the United Nations General Assembly. The conclusions of the Symposium can also inform parallel processes, including forthcoming negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda.