



# Civil Society Forum



PROGRAMME

Date online 22 – 24 September 2021

## 15<sup>th</sup> session of UNCTAD under the theme *From inequality and vulnerability to prosperity for all*



### Background

UNCTAD 15 is set to take place against the backdrop of a world economy in crisis, a public health catastrophe, and a global society teetering on the brink of instability, uncertainty and confusion. Just shy of 18 months ago, in the first quarter of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic was considered as a major global health challenge, the likes of which was not encountered for 100 years. The call by the UN Secretary-General in 2019 for a decade of action to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was a recognition that progress on the Goals was lagging in both speed and scale<sup>1</sup> (United Nations, 2020).

The need for international cooperation to effectively respond to the new environment has been acknowledged (OECD, 2020).<sup>2</sup> In these circumstances, there is strong motivation, for the upcoming UNCTAD 15 Conference to be a 'game changer'. The Conference is the highest decision-making body of UNCTAD at which member states assess current trade and development issues and formulate global policy responses.

The hosting of UNCTAD 15 in October of 2021, by a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) offers a critical opportunity to ground the discussions in the present and future realities and prospects of the most vulnerable countries and their populations. The theme of UNCTAD 15, *From Inequality and Vulnerability to Prosperity for All*, provides a platform to re-energize and refocus development efforts and commitments. It also presents a unique opportunity for member states to respond strategically by reinforcing the value of multilateralism and providing a renewed mandate for a strengthened UNCTAD.

This civil society forum is intended to contribute to the transformative discourse that needs to take place to address some of the systemic and structural inequalities in the trade and development space.



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/decade-of-action/>

<sup>2</sup> OECD Policy Response to Coronavirus in Latin America and the Caribbean: Regional socio-economic implications and policy priorities. Key Messages (<http://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/covid-19-in-latin-america-and-the-caribbean-regional-socio-economic-implications-and-policy-priorities-93a64fde/#boxsection-d1e31>)



### Objectives

- To facilitate robust and substantive dialogue amongst civil society, Member States and United Nations institutions that advances concrete recommendations on the thematic areas identified;
- To facilitate an inclusive space which is representative of the diversity of civil society which contributes to a comprehensive agenda for action;
- To advance a clear set of actionable proposals which builds upon previous civil society declarations and is reflective of the current and future context of trade and development concerns;
- To agree on future actions to accelerate progress and monitor the implementation of agreed actions;
- To identify specific challenges and concerns of Small Island Developing States and countries of the Global South that impact the achievement of sustainable development.

### Preliminary programme

Interpretation in English, French and Spanish will be available from 3 to 6 p.m. CEST, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. AST

### Wednesday, 22 September

#### Time in CEST

14:30–14:55 **High-level Opening**

**Speakers** **The Honorable Mia Amor Mottley**, Prime Minister of Barbados  
**Ms. Rebeca Grynspan**, Secretary-General of UNCTAD  
**The Honorable Colin E. Jordan**, Minister of Labour, Social Partnership Relations and the Third Sector, Barbados

15:00–15:15 **Introduction and Workshop overview**

*Overview of the Civil Society Forum Agenda, Objectives and Protocols*  
**Speaker** **Mr. Richard Jones**, Caribbean Policy Development Centre, Barbados, UNCTAD 15 Host country Civil Society Organization for the Civil Society Forum

15:20–17:35 **The crisis of multilateralism – Wither UNCTAD rediscovering its original mandate to confront key challenges of the global south**

*The plenary session will seek to discuss UNCTAD's mandate and role in the context of today's conjuncture and its ability to confront current challenges, particularly those facing the global South, including:*

- *The need for re-balancing of the current global division of labor and advancing socio-economic transformation;*



- *Advancing the climate/ecological transition*
- *Advancing the transition towards a feminist care economy; and*
- *Confronting the techno-structural aspects of digitalization.*

*Speakers*

**Mr. Tetteh Hormeku-Ajei**, Head of Programmes, Third World Network-Africa  
**Ms. Diyana Yahaya**, Gender and Trade Coalition  
**Mr. Alvin Mosioma**, Executive Director, Tax Justice Network Africa  
**Ms. Kai-Ann Skeete**, The University of the West Indies  
**Ms. Anita Gurumurthy**, Executive Director, IT for Change  
**Mr. Daniel Bertossa**, Assistant General Secretary, Public Services International

*Moderator*

**Mr. Stephen Fletcher**

*Closing*

**Ms. Kozel Peters-Frazer**, Member of the International Civil Society Facilitation Committee of the UNCTAD15 Civil Society Forum

## Thursday, 23 September

Time in CEST

13:30–15:45

### Trade, technology and development reframing the discourse

The plenary session will focus on:

- The role that UNCTAD could play in exploring strategies that could shift the barycenter of economic activities of Southern countries towards the national and regional;
- Reframing trade agreements and international cooperation to advance economic structural transformation; and
- Building local economic resilience through technology justice.

*Speakers*

**Ms. Susana Barria**, Public Services International  
**Mr. Parminder Jeet Singh**, Senior Fellow, IT for Change  
**Ms. Sanya Reid Smith**, Legal Adviser and Senior Researcher, Third World Network  
**Mr. Adam Wolfenden**, Trade Justice Campaigner, Pacific Network for Globalization  
**Ms. Sofia Scasserra**, Associate Researcher, Transnational Institute  
**Ms. Jane Nalunga**, Expert on trade, tax and investment related issues, SEATINI

*Moderator*

**Ms. Deborah James**, Coordinator, Our World Is Not For Sale

*Closing*

**Ms. Sandra Massiah**, Member of the International Civil Society Facilitation Committee of the UNCTAD15 Civil Society Forum



16:00–18:20

### Systemic reforms for fiscal space

The plenary session will focus on systemic reforms (including economic governance reforms) that can ensure adequate fiscal space for Southern countries to pursue their development pathways, including:

- Global acceptance of vulnerability as a key trigger for accessing debt relief, concessional finance, ODA, and special facilities in trade and financial agreements;
- Debt & Human Rights, debt sustainability, and reform of the international financial architecture and governance systems;
- Achieving equity and transparency in international tax governance/regulation, while protecting against illicit flows; and
- Fostering South-South cooperation by harnessing financial and investment opportunities between developing countries.

*Speakers*

**H.E. Mr. Khalil Hashmi**, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Geneva

**Mr. Dereje Alemayehu**, Executive Coordinator, Global Alliance for Tax Justice

**Mr. Anisuzzaman Chowdhury**, Public Services International

**Mr. Christopher Sinckler**, Caribbean Policy Development Centre

**Ms. Lidy Nacpil**, Asia Pacific Movement on Debt and Development

**Mr. Mandkhaitseten Urantulkhur**, Centre for Human Rights Development

*Moderator*

**Ms. Shantal Munro-Knight**

*Closing*

**Mr. Stefano Prato**, Member of the International Civil Society Facilitation Committee of the UNCTAD15 Civil Society Forum

## Friday, 24 September

Time in CEST

14.45-15:00

### Closing

*Speakers*

**Ms. Kozel Peters-Frazer**, Caribbean Policy Development Centre and host country civil society coordinating organization

**Ms. Arlette Verploegh**, Chief, Communications and External Relations, UNCTAD

**Ms. Shantal Munro-Knight**, Barbados UNCTAD15 Civil Society Forum Lead



- 15:05–16:20 **Solidarity and system change are the only way forward to overcome the global economic, health, and human rights crisis: feminist perspectives from Asia and the Pacific**  
*Side event organized by the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development*
- 15:05–16:20 **Exploring the divide between the global north and south**  
*Side event organized by Tax Justice Network Africa*
- 16:25–17:40 **Sustainable solutions to debt crisis, the role of UNCTAD**  
*Side event organized by the Global Policy Forum*
- 16:25–17:40 **How do we build a just recovery from the COVID crisis**  
*Side event organized by Friends of the Earth International*
- 17:40–19:40 **Discussion on the Civil Society Declaration**  
*The session will provide for discussion and confirmation of the Civil Society Declaration*
- Facilitator* **Drafting Group Member**  
*Closing* **Chair, International Civil Society Facilitation Group**

This document has been prepared by the UNCTAD 15 International Civil Society Facilitation Committee.