NOTIFICATION

Short courses on key international economic and development issues for delegates from permanent missions to the United Nations Office at Geneva and the World Trade Organization

Second semester, 2026
Palais des Nations, Geneva

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The UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) secretariat is pleased to announce that another series of short courses on key international economic and development issues for delegates from permanent missions to the United Nations Office at Geneva and the World Trade Organization will be held in the second semester of 2026.

The aim of the courses is to give delegates from permanent missions an opportunity to become better acquainted with topical issues and developments on the international economic agenda as they are reflected in the work of UN Trade and Development. Course descriptions are provided below.

Four courses will be held at the Palais des Nations on Monday, 28 September; Tuesday, 3 November; Friday, 20 November; and Tuesday, 15 December 2026.

The courses will be held from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and will be delivered in English, with simultaneous interpretation into Arabic, French and Spanish. Courses will begin promptly at 10 a.m. to allow sufficient time for debate after the presentations.

The secretariat invites permanent missions to nominate delegates who follow matters pertaining to the mandate of UNCTAD in the areas of international trade and development, and related aspects of finance, investment and technology. Course applications may be completed online at short courses, second semester.

Queries concerning the courses should be addressed to Ms. Randa Jamal, Chief, Policy Capacity-Building Section, Technology, Innovation and Knowledge Development Branch, Division on Technology and Logistics, UNCTAD; tel.: 41 22 917 2718; email: randa.jamal@un.org.

Pedro Manuel Moreno

Acting Secretary-General of UN Trade and Development

19 August 2026

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Short courses on key international economic and development issues for delegates from permanent missions to the United Nations Office at Geneva and the World Trade Organization

Second semester, 2026, course descriptions

Borrowers' Platform: Strengthening capacity for sovereign debt management
Delivered by the Division on Globalization and Development Strategies
28 September 2026, Council Chamber

The Borrowers' Platform, recently launched at UNCTAD, is an initiative aimed at strengthening the capacity of developing countries to navigate an increasingly complex sovereign debt landscape. By improving access to debt-related information, analytical tools and practical resources, the Borrowers' Platform helps empower borrowing countries to make informed financing decisions, enhance debt transparency and engage more effectively in discussions with creditors and the international community. At a time of elevated debt vulnerabilities, tighter global financial conditions and increasing uncertainty, many developing countries face significant challenges in securing financing that supports sustainable development, in addition to paying debt in a sustainable manner. Access to timely, reliable and borrower-focused information is essential in order to mitigate information asymmetries and enable countries to better articulate priorities and interests in debt-related negotiations and policy discussions. This course introduces delegates to the Borrowers' Platform, including objectives, key tools and practical applications, and shows how the Platform can support policymakers and Geneva-based delegates by providing evidence, knowledge and tools that help strengthen participation in international discussions on debt and finance for development. By fostering greater transparency and enhancing analytical and negotiating capacity among countries, the Borrowers' Platform contributes to more balanced engagement between borrowers and creditors and supports sustainable and development-oriented financing solutions. The course is relevant to Sustainable Development Goal 17, particularly with regard to strengthening the means of implementation and promoting international cooperation for sustainable development.

At the end of the course, delegates will have gained knowledge of the following:

- The challenges faced by developing countries in the present sovereign debt landscape and the importance of reducing information asymmetries
- The objectives, structure and main functionalities of the Borrowers' Platform
- How the Borrowers' Platform may be used to strengthen debt transparency, support evidence-based policymaking and improve access to borrower-relevant information
- How the Borrowers' Platform helps empower borrowing countries to engage more effectively in debt-related dialogues and negotiations with creditors and other stakeholders
- The role of the Borrowers' Platform in promoting sustainable financing and strengthening the voice of developing countries in the global financial architecture

Voluntary sustainability standards and how they interrelate to sustainable production, international trade and market access
Delivered by the Division on International Trade and Commodities
3 November 2026, Council Chamber

This course introduces voluntary sustainability standards and their significant role in sustainable production, international trade and market access. It explores how voluntary sustainability standards are used to mitigate the environmental impacts of production and, in some cases, the economic and social impacts that influence long-term economic growth and sustainable development. By addressing the environmental, economic and social dimensions, the use of voluntary sustainability standards can contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the broader sustainable development agenda. The course also examines the increasing integration of voluntary sustainability standards into trade policy, free trade agreements, public procurement and sustainability due diligence frameworks, highlighting the challenges and opportunities for developing countries; and the supporting role of the United Nations Forum on Sustainability Standards. The aim of the course is to deepen understanding of the opportunities and challenges associated with voluntary sustainability standards and their practical application. As tools with which to support sustainable development, voluntary sustainability standards can improve market access and help producers and countries participate more effectively in sustainable global markets. Trade policies are increasingly incorporating such standards and such standards are exerting greater influence on market access and trade flows. However, implementing such standards can generate additional costs for producers.

At the end of the course, delegates will have gained knowledge of the following:

- Voluntary sustainability standards and their role as important market tools with which to demonstrate environmental and, to a lesser extent, social and economic sustainability performance
- How voluntary sustainability standards can enhance market access, competitiveness and export opportunities and, potentially, generate price premiums for certified products
- How voluntary sustainability standards can contribute to the achievement of many of the Sustainable Development Goals
- How Governments are increasingly incorporating voluntary sustainability standards into trade policy, free trade agreements, public procurement and sustainability due diligence frameworks
- The implementation challenges associated with voluntary sustainability standards, including compliance costs, fair revenue distribution and living income, along with the implications for developing countries

Trade and Development Report 2026
Delivered by the Division on Globalization and Development Strategies
20 November 2026, Council Chamber

This course examines recent developments in the global economic landscape and presents the main findings in *Trade and Development Report 2026*, which is focused on the increasing importance of geoeconomics in shaping international trade and development. Recent macroeconomic trends will be reviewed, along with the outlook for the world economy in 2027, with particular attention paid to the challenges faced in developing countries in a period of heightened global uncertainty. The course explores how increasing geoeconomic fragmentation is reshaping the development landscape by eroding the benefits of globalization and widening technological, strategic and financial gaps between developed and developing countries. As strategic considerations increasingly shape economic policymaking, many developing countries face persistent constraints that limit participation in higher value added activities, including insufficient productive capacities and technological capabilities and underdeveloped domestic financial systems. The course will also provide an opportunity to discuss the policy implications of such developments and foster dialogue between Geneva-based delegates and UNCTAD on strategies with which to promote inclusive and sustainable development in an increasingly fragmented global economy.

At the end of the course, delegates will have gained knowledge of the following:

- Recent developments in the global economy and the macroeconomic outlook for 2027
- The main findings and policy messages in *Trade and Development Report 2026*
- How geoeconomic fragmentation is affecting trade, investment, technology and development prospects for developing countries
- The structural challenges that limit developing country participation in higher value added segments of the global economy
- Policy options for strengthening resilience, productive capacities and sustainable development in an increasingly uncertain global environment

Building an inclusive digital economy: Electronic commerce, digital trade and global governance
Delivered by the Division on Technology and Logistics
15 December 2026, Council Chamber

This course provides an overview of opportunities, challenges and recent policy debates shaping the digital economy and its implications for trade and sustainable development. The concept of an inclusive digital economy will be explored, examining how digitalization, electronic commerce (e-commerce) and digital trade can contribute to economic growth, job creation, innovation and broader participation in the global economy, while addressing persistent digital divides and inequalities. In the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and ahead of the issuance of the Digital Economy Report in 2027, the course examines how digital technologies can support progress on many of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 8 on sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth. The course also highlights the role of UNCTAD in international digital policy processes, including the World Summit on the Information Society process following the 20-year review and the implementation of the Global Digital Compact, both of which promote a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented digital future. The course presents the work of UNCTAD on measuring the digital economy, e-commerce and digital trade, emphasizing the importance of robust and internationally comparable data for evidence-based policymaking. Finally, an overview is provided of recent developments in international digital trade governance following the fourteenth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization, including discussions on e-commerce, the plurilateral Agreement on Electronic Commerce and the lapse of the multilateral moratorium on customs duties on e-transmissions.

At the end of the course, delegates will have gained knowledge of the following:

- The key dimensions of an inclusive digital economy and their contributions to sustainable development
- The role of e-commerce and digital trade in supporting economic diversification, competitiveness and development, particularly in developing countries
- The links between digital economy policies, the Sustainable Development Goals, the World Summit on the Information Society process and the Global Digital Compact
- The importance of measuring the digital economy and the role of internationally comparable data in supporting evidence-based policymaking
- UNCTAD work on measuring the digital economy, e-commerce and digital trade, including support for developing countries
- Recent developments in international digital trade governance, including outcomes related to the fourteenth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization, the Agreement on Electronic Commerce and the joint initiative on e-commerce
- Emerging policy challenges and opportunities for developing countries in an evolving digital economy and digital trade landscape