

Thirteenth UNCTAD
Debt Management
Conference

Geneva, 5 to 7 December 2022

PROGRAMME

(Speakers to be confirmed)



UNITED NATIONS
UNCTAD



Thirteenth UNCTAD Debt Management Conference “Relief, Restructuring and Recovery: Dealing with Debt in Times of Global Crisis”

PERIOD:	5 to 7 December 2022
VENUE:	Conference Room XVII, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland
TARGET AUDIENCE:	Senior decision makers in the area of debt management and public finance
OBJECTIVE:	<p>The Conference will explore current and topical issues in debt management and public finance, with a focus on forward-looking policy options to address debt and debt management challenges. Topics will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The growing need for comprehensive debt relief○ Integrating climate change challenges and SDG financing requirements into viable debt sustainability assessments○ Further improving debt transparency: balancing lender and borrower responsibilities○ The role of Fintech for debt management○ Sovereign debt restructurings: Experiences on the ground and reform requirements○ Operational risk management /IFMIS <p>Presenters will include a balance of national experts, academics and representatives of international and regional organizations and civil society. Debate and discussion will be promoted.</p>
INVITATIONS:	Sent to all UNCTAD member States, relevant international and regional organizations and selected representatives of non-governmental organizations and academia.
REGISTRATION:	Registration for the Conference should be completed online at https://indico.un.org/event/1000434/ . Only registered participants will be included in the list of participants.

- PARTICIPATION COSTS:** Attendance at the Conference is free of charge, but participants will need to meet the costs of their travel and accommodation.
- INTERPRETATION:** Simultaneous interpretation will be provided into Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.
- DOCUMENTATION:** Presentations will be delivered in English, French or Spanish. All papers will be made available in electronic format after the Conference.

8 – 10 a.m. Security control to enter the United Nations grounds

Entrance to the United Nations grounds is via the Pregny Gate. Entry badges will be prepared in advance for all registered participants. All participants are requested to bring their passports and their original registration forms.

10 – 10.30 a.m. Opening of the thirteenth UNCTAD Debt Management Conference

Opening remarks by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD

10.30 – 11:30 a.m. Keynote speeches

11.30 a.m. – 1 p.m. Panel 1: Debt crises in developing countries – a ‘new normal’ or time for substantive debt relief?

Alarm bells about escalating debt crises in the developing world have been rung by the Bretton Woods Institutions as well as by the UN - including UNCTAD - for many years. But new challenges are fast piling up: The on-going Covid-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war and, of course, a rapidly worsening environmental and climate crisis all combine to exacerbate economic, financial and debt vulnerabilities in developing countries.

This panel sets the stage for further debate and discussion by providing an overview over new and old challenges for the management of rising developing country debt burdens and by considering the effectiveness (or otherwise) of recent multilateral policy responses to growing debt distress in these countries.

1 – 3 p.m. Lunch break

3 – 4.30 p.m. Panel 2: The multiple dimensions of assessing debt sustainability: From climate change to the Sustainable Development Goals

What constitutes sustainable sovereign debt - and therefore what, if any, debt relief may be required - is not an exact science. Since sovereigns cannot be unwound in the way insolvent firms can in accordance with national bankruptcy laws, debt sustainability assessments (DSAs) in this context are subject to normative considerations about wider economic, social, and political objectives. Recent examples include the urgent need to integrate financing needs for climate change adaptation and to meet the 2030 Agenda more systematically in DSAs.

In this session, panelists will provide an overview over the history of DSAs and their role as an important decision-making tool for both sovereign debtors and their creditors, discuss key issues related to the intersection between climate change and debt challenges, and consider ways in which to bridge SDG financing gaps without imperiling developing country debt sustainability.

4.30 – 6 p.m. Panel 3: Debt crisis resolution I: Recent developing country experiences

According to the IMF's debt sustainability assessments for 69 low-income PRGT-eligible countries, as of end May 2022, 8 countries were in debt distress and another 30 countries were at high risk of debt distress. This does not include middle-income developing countries, a growing number of which have either defaulted or teeter on the brink of default and high debt distress.

This session brings together policymakers from low- and middle-income developing countries with practical recent experience of what it means to negotiate debt relief in the current international debt architecture. Panelists are asked to discuss core difficulties encountered from their perspective as sovereign borrowers and to identify the most urgent and important areas for reform.

6.30 – 8 p.m. Cocktail

TUESDAY, 6 DECEMBER 2022

10 – 11.30 a.m. Panel 4: Debt crisis resolution II: What should the international debt architecture look like in five years' time?

There is wide-spread agreement that the current fragmented international debt architecture is not fit for purpose, especially in times of multiplying global crises. The G20 Common Framework has been welcomed as a first step towards a more comprehensive approach to sovereign debt restructuring in developing countries. But there also is considerable skepticism as to the framework's potential to effectively address multiple urgent challenges, such as reforms of debt sustainability assessments and policy conditionalities as well as much stronger inclusiveness in terms of country eligibility and creditor participation.

In this session, panelists are asked to lay out their priorities for a reform of the international debt architecture over the next five years and how best to achieve these. The focus will be on practical policy and institutional proposals tailored to advancing and accelerating needed debt relief programmes as well as wider reforms.

11.30 a.m. Panel 5: Debt transparency as a public good: Re-visiting lender and borrower responsibilities

Debt transparency has featured prominently in multilateral efforts to improve the international sovereign debt architecture over the past decade. Prioritisation of debt transparency has underpinned a progressive improvement of workstreams and initiatives in multilateral institutions

including UNCTAD, the IMF and the World Bank, as well as in the Group of Twenty, the OECD and the Institute of International Finance.

However, significant gaps remain: Initiatives that place the burden on either voluntary disclosure by an increasingly complex group of lenders or independent improvements at the national level by borrowers are bound to produce piecemeal results. This session will take a fresh look at approaches to debt transparency and ways in which current achievements can be improved to further embed an understanding of debt transparency as a public good and common endeavour from which both lenders and borrowers stand to benefit.

1 – 3 p.m.

Lunch break

3 – 4.30 p.m.

Panel 6: The role of Fintech for sovereign debt management in developing countries

The role of digital technologies in the design and provision of financial services – the so-called Fintech – has advanced considerably, not least in the context of the pandemic and more recently the Russia-Ukraine war. This includes discussions about the introduction of central bank digital currencies, the launching of retail debt programmes and a range of new Fintech applications in bond markets.

Panellists are asked to survey and assess these new developments and financial instruments with a specific focus on whether and how these technologies can realistically and concretely help to lower borrowing costs in developing countries and, more generally, facilitate financial resource mobilization in these countries.

4.30 – 6 p.m.

Panel 7: Operational Risk Management in Debt Management Offices

The COVID-19 crisis emphasized the need for effective operational risk management frameworks in government debt management offices. Weak operational risk management can lead to severe financial, reputational and political damage for a government. Debt management operations must be conducted in secure environments and business continuity must be ensured in all circumstances. Debt management offices should have contingency and business continuity plans in place to ensure their capacity to operate on a continuous basis and limit losses arising from any business disruption.

This panel explores best practices for implementing operational risk management frameworks in the context of debt management, using well-established operational risk management principles. It will provide guidance on identifying risks, assessing risk exposures, mitigation strategies, monitoring and control. The role of the external audit will also be discussed.

10 – 11.15 a.m. Panel 8: Integrating debt management within Integrated Financial Management Systems (IFMIS)

Public finance reform programs increasingly include integrating government debt management systems with other government finance systems such as treasury, budget and accounting, normally within an Integrated Financial Management Information Systems (IFMIS). While many governments have successfully implemented integration projects, the complexity involved has created considerable challenges for others. Experience has shown that while the benefits of integrating debt management systems are well known, successful integration requires extensive planning and management.

This panel will discuss lessons learnt and best practices in designing, planning and implementing projects for the linkage of public debt management systems with IFMIS and examine the implications for debt managers.

11.15 a.m. - 12.45 p.m. Panel 9: Capacity Building Needs in Debt Management: Responses from International Organizations

The debt management landscape has become increasingly complex and government debt management offices are faced with a range of new challenges that require continuous adaptation and strengthening of capacity.

This panel reviews the efforts of international and regional organizations to meet the needs of debt management offices in today's environment and to support governments in their efforts to strengthen their capacity. It discusses the support available in the form of capacity development and technical assistance and identifies any gaps, with concrete examples from international and regional organisations. The critical success factors for the delivery of technical assistance are also addressed.

12.30 – 1 p.m. Closing of the thirteenth UNCTAD Debt Management Conference

Closing remarks by the Director of the Division on Globalization and Development Strategies of UNCTAD.