



Global Services Forum

23 October 2025
Time: 10–11:30 a.m.
Assembly Hall



Services: A new frontier of economic transformation for equitable, inclusive and sustainable development

The services sector has become a key driver for boosting economic activity, jobs and exports. UNCTAD research shows that, over the last decade, global services exports grew 5.3 per cent annually, more than double the growth of goods exports. This trend has intensified in the context of evolving globalization, financialization, digitalization, the roll-out of artificial intelligence, the energy transition and technological and geoeconomic shifts.

Services are playing a growing role in the production of goods, a phenomenon called servicification. Services can make up as much as two thirds of the value of exported manufactured goods, highlighting their importance for competitiveness, diversification and economic resilience.

Some developing countries have been able to leverage services to accelerate structural transformations. Others have seen growth in the services sector though with a limited corresponding upgrading of productive and trade structures. Moreover, the non-tradable services sector of such countries remains relatively large.

Participants at the Global Services Forum will identify challenges and opportunities for developing economies. The discussion will centre on strategies and policies to leverage the services sector as a new frontier for structural transformation, economic diversification and resilience-building. Trade and productive transformation policies will be given special emphasis. The forum will likewise serve as a platform for policy dialogue and peer learning.

Programme

Opening remarks: UNCTAD Secretary-General/Deputy Secretary-General

High-level panel and interactive discussion

Questions

- What policy lessons can developing countries, including the least developed countries, draw from successful service-enabled development strategies?
- How can services be integrated into national policies to foster structural transformation? What are the key binding constraints for developing services and how can they be addressed?
- How can international trade frameworks and partnerships better support developing countries in growing service sectors that drive sustainable development and economic resilience?
- How are services and servicification reshaping economies and global value chains? What policy frameworks can maximize opportunities and reduce risks? How can the challenges of measuring servicification and digitalization be overcome to support policymaking?
- What is the role of non-tradable services in contemporary development strategies, particularly in poorer countries?

Moderator: To be confirmed

Language

Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Spanish, Russian

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