



Charting a New Development Course in a Changing World

UNCTAD's 60th Anniversary Global Leaders Forum

Geneva, Palais des Nations 12th – 13th June 2024
CONCEPT NOTE

Global Context

At times of great change, not everything changes at the same speed.

In the sixty years since UNCTAD's creation, the world economy has seen the rise of the Global South, the introduction of a vast digital economy, and the largest reduction in poverty and hunger in human history.

At the same time, these six decades have borne witness to ever-growing inequality within and among countries, growing boom-bust cycles of trade and finance, and the looming threat of climate catastrophe especially in the places that have done the least to cause it. Most recently, since at least the COVID-19 pandemic, the world has seemingly lost its capacity to recover inclusively from crises – as evidenced in rising poverty and hunger, and consecutive retreats in the Human Development Index.

Amidst this great change, our systems of global economic governance have not changed fast enough.

The result has been a contradiction at the heart of globalization, one that can be measured in ever more frequent crises meeting ever-weaker international responses, a worrying trend towards economic slowdown and geopolitical fragmentation, and a world system that simultaneously connects and divides, enriches and impoverishes, empowers, and marginalizes.

UNCTAD was created with the explicit goal of ensuring that globalization left no one behind. Sixty years on, delivering this mission calls for a profound paradigm shift. In how we leap-frog through technology, in how we finance and ready-up trade for a global race of climate action, in how we define and measure progress, and in how we ourselves adapt and change to meet and lead a changing world order. A new 'polyglobal' reality is emerging, marked by growing economic diversity and decentralization, even as we become ever-more interdependent at a global level.

In June 2024, UNCTAD will celebrate its 60th anniversary with a Global Leaders Forum, "*Charting a New Development Course in a Changing World*". This Forum represents a seminal moment, an opportunity to reflect on the lessons learned over the past six decades and forge a new path forward. It will bring together leaders from across the globe, representing a spectrum of nations and interests, all converging with a common purpose: to redefine the course of development in a world where prosperity for all remains central and fundamental.

The Global Leaders Forum addresses key emerging challenges and opportunities for sustainable development, advocating for novel policy frameworks at the global, regional, and local dimension. It will discuss strategies to reinvigorate sustainable and inclusive growth that closes ever-widening inequalities. And it will explore ways and means to reform and strengthen multilateralism for the 21st century.

In exploring new strategies for development, the Global Leaders Forum will focus on UNCTAD's integrated treatment of trade and development, and interrelated issues of finance, technology, investment, and sustainable development. The Forum will specifically address the needs of developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, small island developing states, and landlocked developing countries.

"*Charting a New Development Course in a Changing World*" is a call to action to reimagine development in the age of polyglobalization. As we adapt to changing times, this theme provides a framework for building a future that is resilient, equitable, and sustainable.

Leading voices, critical issues

The Forum will be opened by the UN Secretary General and will feature a two-day program with high-level participation from Heads of State, Heads of Institution and leading economists and experts who will engage in debate on innovative approaches to addressing sustainable development challenges and enhancing UNCTAD's role and impact.

Objectives

It aims to forge a viable development path in the new era of global economy with a shared vision for the future, identifying change imperatives and strategic actions, facilitating consensus on guiding principles for future global economic systems, Boosting multilateralism among key development stakeholders, and exploring how to amplify UNCTAD's role in support of developing countries.

Attendance at the event, by invitation only, will be offered to United Nations agencies, representatives of Permanent Missions and Embassies in Geneva, representatives of Civil Society networks and academic institutions, representatives of leading private sector organizations and UNCTAD partners.

Additional program offered to speakers

High-level speakers in the UNCTAD's 60th anniversary Global Leaders Forum will benefit from an extensive media program, inclusive of outreach opportunities engaging key public and private sector stakeholders. Additionally, they will receive ongoing support aimed at enhancing their participation and ensuring meaningful engagement throughout the two-day event.

