



COURSE ON KEY ISSUES ON THE INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC AGENDA

DESIGNING TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES FOR EFFICIENT INTEGRATION INTO THE WORLD ECONOMY

Opening markets and reducing trade barriers are important elements in facilitating the economic integration of countries into the globalized economy. However, for developing countries, these measures mean precious little if they lack the capacity to evaluate trade opportunities, supply competitive products to world markets, provide an enabling macroeconomic and microeconomic environment to their companies, and negotiate trade agreements reflecting their national interests.

Efforts to address the capacity gap between developed and developing countries to take advantage of opportunities offered by globalization must not limit themselves to providing guidance on meeting existing trade obligations. Capacity-building efforts must provide sufficient analytical depth of international economic issues and their interrelationships to empower developing countries to craft their own policies and negotiating positions.

“UNCTAD’s courses on key international economic issues are based on the premise that policy-making should be supported by analysis and evidence – something that is particularly important in the ongoing trade negotiations. It is designed to give policy-makers a birds-eye view of the different economic policy issues, but also to draw attention to the fact that many of them are inherently related.”

Supachai Panitchpakdi,
Secretary-General of UNCTAD



The UNCTAD Course on Key Issues on the International Economic Agenda offers policymakers in government ministries and agencies, and in permanent missions to the United Nations in Geneva, a comprehensive overview of how economic factors such as international trade, finance, investment and technology are related to one another; how they impact on the economic and social development of their countries; and how adopting certain policies can help their countries maximize the benefits from the globalized economy.

Backed by UNCTAD’s analytical research on trade, finance, investment, technology and enterprise, the course’s integrated treatment of trade and development enables participants to understand the links between their specific work and the overall economic development objectives of their countries, and prepares them to better contribute to the formulation of national policies and international negotiating positions coherent with their countries’ interests.

“The participant we nominated is head of the Ethiopian Intellectual Property Office, entrusted with negotiations related to TRIPS, and member of the national WTO technical committee. Therefore, the content of the course is highly relevant for his work. The information and knowledge have been used in the preparation of the memorandum of trade regime in Ethiopia, which is required to start the WTO accession process.”

Amha Mulugata, Commissioner,
Ethiopian Intellectual Property Office

HISTORY

Launched in 2001 at UNCTAD's 10th quadrennial conference, the course responds to a request from member states for capacity-building programs that draw on the organization's perspectives and expertise on trade and development, and that disseminate and enhance the understanding of UNCTAD's analytical work, as well as the lessons drawn from its technical cooperation activities.

The first two courses were held in Geneva and Turin, Italy in 2001 and 2002. The seven-module programme included an overview of UNCTAD's activities and the work of country delegates in Geneva, and discussions on the impact of globalization and interdependence, international trade, finance and investment, on development. The last two modules included elements for policymaking and a simulation exercise on national decision-making. Fifty-seven participants, selected from a pool of 140, attended the training.

The courses were refocused in 2003, in response to participants' feedback requiring that the core elements be made more relevant to their country's particular situations. UNCTAD has since then, held 16 regional courses for Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Western Asia, and countries with economies in transition.

Following recommendations of an independent evaluation of the course conducted in 2005, the course stepped up efforts to involve more stakeholders in the design of the programme, to increase "problem-based learning", and to include more regionally relevant data and case studies.

Since the inception of the programme in 2001, more than 400 government officials, academics and trade professionals from 115 countries have participated in the regional courses.

The success of the regional courses prompted state members to request similar training for its Geneva-based representatives. In 2004 and 2005, a modified, shorter version of the course was conducted for diplomats in Geneva, and in 2007, the "Short Courses for Geneva-based delegates" became a regular, monthly venue where country representatives have a chance to discuss the latest research and emerging economic issues with experts at UNCTAD.

"I particularly learnt much about the role of FDI in African development, particularly for Tanzania, and how FDI can promote exports, enhance domestic productive capacity, generate jobs, expand the tax base, etc. I improved my ability to research, analyze and advise appropriately on key international issues with a wider focus and objectives."

Geoffrey Idelphonse Mwambe,
Economist, Central Bank of Tanzania



"Iraq is still rebuilding transport infrastructures and services. The module on the relevance of trade and transport facilitation and the importance of information technologies in trade transactions was most useful."

Halah Al-Behadili, Assistant Manager,
Central Bank, Republic of Iraq

CURRENTLY, THE COURSE DELIVERS TRAINING IN TWO FORMS:

- Intensive, three-week regional courses for country-based government officials
- Short, half-day specialized courses for Geneva-based diplomats

REGIONAL COURSES

The three-week regional course comprises five modules dealing with developmental aspects of trade and financial systems, foreign direct investment and enterprise development, the knowledge economy, international trade and transport facilitation, and multilateral and regional trade agreements.

Each module surveys the theme, discusses case studies and best practices, and analyzes policy options, gradually building the knowledge needed to effectively participate in the course's final simulation exercise, which allows participants to take on roles in a negotiation process of a current WTO issue.

The programme of the course integrates global, regional and national perspectives on trade, finance, investment and development issues and is designed with the collaboration of UN regional commissions, experts from UNCTAD Virtual Institute university members, and national experts from the host country.

SHORT COURSES

The objective of the short courses is to update Geneva-based diplomats on the most recent issues and developments on the international economic agenda, so that they may provide relevant information and advice to their governments and best represent the interests of their countries in international negotiations.

The programme of the courses is demand-driven: the diplomats themselves propose areas on which they would require updating. Their suggestions are complemented by courses on emerging topics on which UNCTAD conducts research work.

To facilitate the access to and the use of course materials by both the participants and other interested parties unable to attend the courses, UNCTAD created a dedicated website — <http://p166.unctad.org/shortcourses> — containing all the documentation, including publications, background readings, and, most recently, videos of the presentations given at each course.

An average of 33 diplomats from developing, transition and developed countries have participated in each short course, with a peak attendance of 63 participants.

"The simulation exercise held at the end of the training made effective use of the knowledge acquired during the course. It was a challenge to put participants in different roles, to experience balancing the different interests and concerns."

Venzislava Dacheva, State Expert,
Investment Policy Directorate,
Ministry of Economy and Energy,
Bulgaria



"I didn't know that the topic of trade negotiations in agriculture was so complex and full of variables. I found interesting the simulation where we had to put ourselves in the position of developed countries, in order to understand their perspective."

Luciano Scarpanti, Technical
Counsellor, Ministry of Economy,
Argentina



THE IMPACT OF THE COURSE

UNCTAD pays particular attention to the course's impact and its multiplier effect in participating countries. Evaluations conducted six months after each regional course confirm that the vast majority of respondents have used the knowledge gained at the course in policymaking processes. Feedback from the short courses shows similar results, with 70 percent of the participants finding that the training, debates and materials were useful in their work.

A systematic inclusion of academics, both as participants and presenters, ensures a multiplier effect, as the professors integrate the course materials into regularly taught academic programmes in their countries.

The course has forged itself a solid reputation and is recognized as an innovative product on the market of trade-related technical assistance. The number of candidates invariably exceeds the number of places available and member countries show an increasing interest to host the course, often willing to share some of the costs.

"I have started presenting seminars and also provide advice to Master's level students in their dissertation and final papers from the knowledge and information (I) gained from the course."

Orlando Da Silva, Professor,
Department of Economics, Federal
University of Viçosa, Brazil

"(The short courses) were very useful to understand the background of economic concepts which have helped us to further our negotiations in WTO skilfully."

Ravi Bhattarai, Deputy Permanent
Representative, Nepal



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