



Sixteenth session

Geneva

20–23 October 2025

Inclusive trade and the creative economy**Summary prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat**

1. In his opening remarks, the Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD highlighted the creative economy as a vital and dynamic driver of innovation, inclusion and economic diversification. He noted its global increase, with tripled exports over the past decade and significant contributions to gross domestic product and employment. However, he stated that, while the digital revolution had transformed creative trade, benefits remained uneven across countries. The Deputy Secretary-General stressed the need for stronger institutional and regulatory frameworks, to ensure fair compensation and intellectual property protection, and emphasized UNCTAD partnerships and international cooperation, aimed at making creativity central to inclusive, sustainable development.
2. The parallel event, following opening remarks by the Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD, featured four panellists and two responders: Minister of Culture and Creative Industries, Cabo Verde; Minister of Industry, Commerce and Employment, Bhutan; Director for Trade, Industry, Commodity and Intellectual Property, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Indonesia; Director, Multilateral Relations, Regional Director, Europe, International Federation of the Phonographic Industry; Senior Vice-President, Public Affairs, Europe and Multilateral Relations, Universal Music Group; and Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Department for Economics and Data Analytics, World Intellectual Property Organization.
3. One panellist highlighted the strategic vision in Cabo Verde, aimed at making the creative economy a key driver of sustainable growth and global competitiveness. He stated that, by leveraging cultural capital and digital platforms, Cabo Verde empowered local enterprises, women and youth, while overcoming geographical limitations. Finally, the panellist underscored the importance of policies on intellectual property, finance, education and international partnerships, to scale the creative economy.
4. Another panellist emphasized the vision in Bhutan, aimed at integrating the creative economy within the gross national happiness framework, whereby cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge formed the foundation of creativity and national identity. He highlighted reforms made in order to strengthen institutions, provide financial stimulus and consolidate intellectual property under one framework, to promote creative commercialization. Finally, the panellist underscored that the creative economy bridged the industrial sector and digital transformation, offering decent work while remaining human-centred, inclusive and reflective of the country's core values.
5. One panellist highlighted the creative economy in Indonesia, rooted in cultural heritage and central to growth as a middle-income country. The creative economy generated



millions of jobs and contributed significantly to the gross domestic product. Government efforts focused on intellectual property protection, financing and infrastructure, to expand global market access and competitiveness. Finally, the panellist stated that Indonesia promoted inclusion by supporting entrepreneur access to finance and global value chains, while actively engaging in international forums.

6. Another panellist noted that the music industry had undergone repeated disruptions, and artificial intelligence was part of the latest. He emphasized that the creative economy was both a cultural and strategic pillar, essential for cultural sovereignty and preserving heritage. In this regard, the panellist stated that legal and licensing frameworks were vital in order to protect intellectual property, strengthen local markets and maintain independence in a globalized environment.

7. One responder emphasized that music was not only entertainment but a driver of economic and social development. With expanding digital access, music fuelled export growth and cultural exchanges. However, many regions lacked the infrastructure and legal frameworks needed to turn talent into sustainable markets. Finally, the responder emphasized the need for investment in copyright protection, education and infrastructure.

8. Another responder highlighted the importance of reliable, up-to-date data, for effective creative-sector policy. He noted the Partnership on Intangible Assets in the Global Economy of the World Intellectual Property Organization and the Luiss Business School, Italy, tracking investment in brands, designs and artistic works, which served as an example of how intellectual property and creativity could help enhance competitiveness and national branding together.

9. During the ensuing discussion, one participant stressed that creative industries were productive, trade-generating sectors, dominated by small firms and freelancers and providing jobs and export opportunities, particularly for women and youth; however, persistent data gaps, particularly in services trade, limited visibility, yet the value chain in creative industries spawned many supporting sectors beyond the initial creative activity, both domestically and internationally, which in turn supported trade in services. Another participant emphasized the need for greater recognition, with regard to artists, of economic roles, fair compensation and opportunities for international collaboration. One participant noted the impacts of the use of artificial intelligence on creative value chains, underscoring the need for ethical and human-centred innovation. The panellists highlighted the need for investment in digital skills among youth; the healing aspects of the creative economy; that intellectual property was key in sustainable industries; and the need for local copyright systems that kept human artists as central in the era of artificial intelligence.

10. In her closing remarks, the Director, Division on International Trade and Commodities of UNCTAD, reaffirmed the need for better data, smarter policies and targeted skills development, to unlock creative potential. The discussions at the event would inform the publication, *Creative Economy Outlook*, to be issued in 2026; actions taken by UNCTAD in accordance with resolution 78/133 of the General Assembly; and expanded cooperation with international organizations, including during the World Conference on Creative Economy, to be held in Indonesia.
