



UNCTAD XIII

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

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LUNCHTIME EVENT

PUBLICATION LAUNCH *TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT REPORT, 1981-2011: THREE DECADES OF THINKING DEVELOPMENT*

23 APRIL 2012, 12 noon – 2 p.m.

BACKGROUND

The first *Trade and Development Report (TDR)* appeared in 1981. Therefore, the release of *TDR 2011* marks a milestone in the history of the publication. In its 48 years of existence, UNCTAD has evolved from a negotiating forum to a development think tank, and the *TDR* has been its main outlet. Presenting the results of the secretariat's policy analysis as mandated by the diverse conferences, the *TDR* has served both as a document for debate in intergovernmental bodies, primarily in the UNCTAD Trade and Development Board, and as a publication directed at a much broader audience.

In this context, the UNCTAD Division on Globalization and Development Strategies on 20 February 2012 organized a panel discussion on the topic, *Thinking development: Three decades of the Trade and Development Report*, as a pre-conference event for UNCTAD XIII. The panel discussion gathered a number of experts in the field of macroeconomics and development strategies to discuss the contribution of the Report to the debate on development during the past three decades. The panel focused on the origins, evolving ideas and macroeconomic reasoning of the *TDR*, its approach to development strategies and evolving issues in international economic governance.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this lunchtime event is to launch the publication, *Trade and Development Report, 1981-2011: Three Decades of Thinking Development*. The publication, which features a background paper prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat, reviews the key issues that have been addressed by the *TDR* over the past three decades. It also includes the contributions of the panellists at the pre-Conference event, as well as a summary of the discussions.

OUTCOME

This publication aims to identify key issues in the global economy and the design of development strategies that have been explored in the *TDR* over the past three decades and to trace these through the various editions of the *TDR*. It also intends to show how ideas, opinions and proposals expressed in the *TDR*, and the analytical approaches used, differ from those of the mainstream and how they have evolved in response to new challenges arising from developments in the world economy.

The originality of the TDR lies in the discussion of national policies and strategies in a context of the performance of the global economy and its institutions, aiming to provide substance to the notion of global partnership for development.

By launching the TDR series, UNCTAD has taken a novel approach to the discussion of development challenges and development policies, abandoning the dichotomy between short-term economic issues and long-term development issues that had shaped development economics during the post-war era. The TDR particularly emphasized the importance of the external environment for development in developing countries, thereby anticipating the notion of globalization. A recurrent aspect of the TDR has also been its frequently implicit discussion of the role of the State in economic activity in general, and in economic development in particular.

This excursion into the past 30 issues of the TDR reveals that its analyses frequently anticipated emerging economic problems at an early stage and that in many cases, policies came to be practised that were in line with TDR recommendations that had been made several years earlier.

The world economy has undergone major changes since the inception of the TDR series in the early 1980s, partly as a result of institutional developments, notably the creation of the World Trade Organization and increased developing country membership in the Organization, partly as a result of structural changes in many countries. However, the main rationale of the TDR remains valid: to provide a critical assessment of current economic developments and policy action, a forward-looking analysis and evidence-based policy recommendations.

The salient issues reviewed in this publication are as follows:

- The concept of interdependence, which has shaped the TDR's policy analyses and recommendations for three decades;
- The TDR's approach to macroeconomic and financial policies in both developed and developing countries;
- Its contribution to the debate on the shortcomings and the reforms of global governance in trade, finance and macroeconomics;
- Assessments of the failures and successes in development policy that have been made in the TDR, as well as the recommendations the TDR has formulated for development strategies, taking into account lessons learned from past experiences;
- Current and new emerging issues that could well remain in, or join the trajectory of, the TDR in the coming years.

ORGANIZATION

Presentation of the publication by:

- Mr. Heiner Flassbeck, Director, Division on Globalization and Development Strategies, UNCTAD
- Mr. Alfredo Calcagno, Head, Macroeconomic and Development Policies Branch, Division on Globalization and Development Strategies, UNCTAD

Questions and answers

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