



FACTS & FIGURES

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Investment

From capital to impact: Reigniting global investment for sustainable growth

Global investment is at a crossroads. With uncertainty deepening and capital flows slowing, countries risk losing momentum for financing future growth. [UNCTAD16](#) – the UN's global conference on trade and development (Geneva, 20–23 October 2025) – will spotlight investment as one of its four core themes, alongside trade, finance and technology. The goal: to get international investment back on track, directing capital where it matters most – from renewable energy and sustainable infrastructure to the digital economy – and turning ambition into impact.

What's inside

The following brief distils the main messages and trends shaping UNCTAD16's investment track. It outlines the conference's core focus on practical solutions to global investment stagnation and how UNCTAD's convening power can help turn today's uncertainty into a catalyst for sustainable development.



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Investment drives development, but global flows are losing steam

- *Global foreign direct investment (FDI)*. Global FDI fell 11% in 2024, excluding a few financial centres.
- *Investment in key sectors slumped*. Renewable energy (-31%), transport (-32%) and water and sanitation (-30%).
- *Globalization is changing*. Trade still grows, but FDI lags, putting progress on multiple development goals at risk.

Firms are cautious to invest amid rising uncertainty

- *FDI Prospects*. UNCTAD projects FDI continue to drop in 2025 (excluding conduit flows).
- *Geopolitical tensions*. Rising tariffs, policy volatility and regional conflicts are fuelling investor caution and delaying projects. Cross-border mergers and acquisitions (M&A) values fell 23% in the first half of 2025.
- *Some bright spots remain*. Easing financial conditions, stronger M&A activity in the third quarter of 2025, buoyant greenfield projects in the digital economy and AI, and higher spending by sovereign wealth funds could support a rebound by year-end.

Regional divides are widening

- FDI to *developed economies* fell 22% in 2024. Europe was hardest hit, down 89% in Germany, with sharp drops in Spain, Italy and France.
- *North America* moved in the opposite direction, up 23% on the back of semiconductor megaprojects in the United States.
- *Africa* posted record growth of 75%, driven by a mega project in Egypt. Even excluding it, inflows rose 12%, reflecting reforms and stronger investment facilitation across the continent.
- *Asia* remained the world's top destination, despite a 29% drop in China. Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) economies stood out, with inflows up 10% to a record \$225 billion.
- *In Latin America and the Caribbean*, FDI fell 12%, though new projects in Argentina, Brazil and Mexico signaled renewed investor appetite.

- **Vulnerable economies** remain sidelined. Least developed countries drew only \$37 billion – 2% of global flows – mostly concentrated in a few countries. Landlocked economies saw inflows fall 10%, while small islands posted modest 14% growth.

How does UNCTAD16 address the investment challenge?

- **Convening power.** UNCTAD16 brings together policymakers, business and investors to tackle investment challenges in key sectors – from renewable energy and health to digital infrastructure – and in the world's most vulnerable economies.
- **A global platform.** Business and government leaders will explore how to align international investment with the areas of greatest development need and keep it high on the global agenda.
- **Showcasing results.** UNCTAD16 will highlight countries that have successfully attracted and facilitated investment. Discussions will focus on how de-risking, blended finance and effective promotion can channel capital to priority sectors, from renewables to digital networks.

More broadly, what is UNCTAD doing to help?

- **Data and analysis.** UNCTAD provides evidence-based analysis of international finance and investment and investment policy, including global trends, investment agreements, and capital market developments, including sustainable finance.
- **Policy advisory.** UNCTAD's investment policy work analyzes national frameworks and advises on reforms to attract investment and boost its development impact.
- **Capacity building and partnerships.** UNCTAD helps countries make investment climates more predictable and transparent – for example by simplifying procedures and using digital tools such as single-window systems to cut costs.

Key reports

- For full data and analysis, see: [World Investment Report 2025: International investment in the digital economy](#)

About UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

UNCTAD is the UN's leading body on trade and development. Founded in 1964, it supports 195 member states with expert analysis, technical assistance, and serves as a platform for intergovernmental dialogue.

UNCTAD helps developing countries make trade, finance, investment, and the digital economy work for inclusive and sustainable development.