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16th UN Conference on Trade and Development concludes with record participation of 170 countries and an agreed declaration on trade and development, “The Geneva Consensus”

The four-day conference in Geneva gathered delegations from 170 countries – an all-time record in UNCTAD’s 60-year history – and adopted the Geneva Consensus and a political declaration, reaffirming the organization’s central role in advancing multilateral cooperation.

- 170 delegations from member states attended, a historic record for a UN conference on trade. Attendance by 80 ministers and vice ministers of trade and economy, leading voices from the private sector and strong participation from developing countries, least developed countries and small island developing states – alongside major economies and key trade actors – underscored UNCTAD’s key relevance.
- Leaders committed to reforming global systems for fairer, more predictable and inclusive development.
- UN Secretary-General António Guterres praised UNCTAD’s “vital work” helping developing countries harness trade and development to drive their economies.



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- *New partnerships and funding pledges were announced to advance action on debt relief, the digital economy, investment and supply chain resilience, proving that multilateralism remains alive, relevant and capable of delivering results.*

Geneva, 23 October 2025 - The 16th United Nations Conference on Trade and Development ([UNCTAD16](#)), held from 20 to 23 October in Geneva, Switzerland, concluded with the adoption of the **Geneva Consensus and a political declaration**.

The conference took place against a complex global backdrop, as the agreed document underlines a context of subdued economic growth, persistent inequalities within and among countries.

Economies, particularly the most vulnerable, struggle with compounding challenges, including increasing challenges to trade, limited fiscal space, weak investment levels, unsustainable debt burdens, digital divides and fragile productive capacities. Yet the 195 UNCTAD member states demonstrated renewed unity and purpose.

Themed “Shaping the future: Driving economic transformation for equitable, inclusive and sustainable development”, UNCTAD16 renewed multilateral efforts to place development back at the heart of the global economic debate.

Over four days, **more than 170 national delegations, 80 ministers and vice ministers** of trade and economy from all regions gathered in Geneva. This is historically **the highest participation of member states in an UNCTAD conference**.

Across more than 40 high-level sessions and 24 expert panels, participants examined practical pathways to strengthen trade, finance, productive capacities, commodities, the Global System of Trade Preferences, finance and debt, artificial intelligence, the digital economy, investment, supply chains and regionalism.

Additionally, there were meetings of ministers of the Group of 77 and China, Africa, least developed countries (LDCs), small island developing states and landlocked developing countries.

“This is a conference of renewal – renewal of UNCTAD’s mandate, renewal of your commitment, renewal of our shared purpose,” underlined Secretary-General Grynspan. [Read her full statement](#).

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The **Geneva Consensus** charts UNCTAD's path forward with strong support for the organization as well as concrete mandates that lay out a clear and actionable roadmap for the organization in the years ahead.

Countries agree on the Geneva Consensus

UNCTAD16 has delivered an agreement by all 195 member states called "**The Geneva Consensus for a Just and Sustainable Economic Order**".

This declaration reaffirms the fundamental belief that development must leave no one behind and commits to building a more inclusive global economy and it underlines:

- **On trade**, countries reaffirmed the centrality of a rules-based, open, transparent and equitable multilateral trading system, and recognized that quality trade in services is the new frontier for development.
- **On investment**, the conference addressed the decline and uneven distribution of global investment flows, investment facilitation measures, policy frameworks that lower the cost of capital, and support to domestic and international ecosystems that can multiply foreign investment.
- **On the digital economy**, technological advances are creating opportunities and divides, and countries called for UNCTAD to support developing countries with skills, infrastructure and frameworks to harness the digital economy.
- **On debt and financing for development**, following the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development (FFD4), member states agreed the establishment of a Borrowers' Forum – a new space for developing countries to build collective capacity, share experiences and strengthen their voice in global debt discussions.
- **On support for least developed countries**, member states committed to strengthening their support, including through a dedicated graduation support programme. They called for tailored support for **small island developing states** facing climate disasters and soaring transport costs. And for landlocked developing, they committed to continuing work on trade facilitation and transit corridors. Additionally, during UNCTAD16, [the launch of the Sevilla Forum on Debt](#) was announced – a breakthrough platform to open the dialogue to support developing countries to tackle sovereign [debt](#) challenges.

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Support for UNCTAD

During the course of UNCTAD16, participating countries agreed to support key UNCTAD work for the coming year, such as:

- **Trade and supply chains:** The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia confirmed it will host [the 2nd UN Global Supply Chain Forum November 2026](#), in partnership with the Saudi Ports Authority (MAWANI). UNCTAD leads this new initiative to make global supply chains more resilient, efficient and sustainable by addressing issues such as critical infrastructure, digital trade systems, financing for small businesses and workforce training.
- **Digital economy:** The Government of Switzerland announced new funding of 4 million Swiss francs to bolster UNCTAD's work on [e-commerce and the digital economy](#) for developing economies. Also, **UNCTAD signed an agreement with the Digital Cooperation Organization** to work on digital economy data and measurement, and on empowering women in the digital economy and providing support to startups and small and medium-sized enterprises.
- **Investment:** [Qatar confirmed it will host the 9th World Investment Forum \(WIF\) in 2026](#). The flagship UN platform will scale solutions and partnerships to power sustainable investment globally, ensuring that finance fosters inclusive growth and shared prosperity.

At the closing of the conference, Secretary-General Grynspan welcomed the agreement reached in the Geneva Consensus and underlined the political significance of the agreement, saying: **"This is what multilateralism looks like – not perfect, not easy, but possible. Always possible."**

Closing Stakeout: [UNCTAD16 – UNCTAD Secretary-General](#).

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.