



3rd United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries Brussels, 14-20 May 2001

UNCTAD at a glance

Established in 1964 as a permanent intergovernmental body, the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) is the principal organ of the UN General Assembly dealing with trade, investment and development. As the Organization's focal point for the least developed countries (LDCs), UNCTAD has played a leading role in organizing the three UN Conferences on the Least Developed Countries (Paris, 1981 and 1990; Brussels, 2001).

Main objective:	To maximize the trade, investment and development opportunities of developing countries and assist them in their efforts to integrate into the world economy on an equitable basis
Membership:	191 member States
Secretariat:	Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland Secretary-General: Mr. Rubens Ricupero 400 staff members
Budget:	Approximately US\$ 45 million a year from the United Nations regular budget and US\$ 24 million from extrabudgetary resources

What does UNCTAD do?

- ◆ Provides a forum for intergovernmental consensus-building where all member States can interact freely on policy issues concerning trade and development
- ◆ Carries out policy and research analysis on the challenges of globalization and the integration of developing countries into the international trading system
- ◆ Provides technical assistance: some 300 projects covering all areas of UNCTAD's activities are currently being implemented in over 100 countries

Highlights of main activities

Trade and commodities

- ◆ Positive Agenda Initiative and Commercial Diplomacy Programme: helps developing countries to participate more effectively in multilateral trade negotiations.
- ◆ Commodity diversification and development: promotes the diversification of production and trade structures. Helps governments to formulate and implement diversification policies and encourages enterprises to adapt their business strategies and products to the international trading system.
- ◆ Competition and consumer policies: provides capacity-building in competition and consumer protection laws and policies in developing countries. Publishes regular updates of a model law on competition.
- ◆ Trade Analysis and Information System (TRAINS): comprehensive computer-based information system that uses UNCTAD's database on trade control measures, for use by researchers, negotiators, policy makers and importers/exporters. The CD-ROM version covers 119 countries.

Investment and enterprise development

- ◆ International Investment and Technology Arrangements: helps developing countries to participate more actively in international investment rule-making at the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels. Includes capacity-building seminars, regional symposia and the preparation of issues papers.
- ◆ Investment Policy Reviews: intended to familiarize governments and the private sector with the investment environment and policies of specific countries. Reviews have been carried out in Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Mauritius, Peru, Uganda and Uzbekistan.



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- ◆ Investment guides and capacity-building activities for the LDCs: five countries have been involved to date — Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique and Uganda.
 - ◆ EMPRETEC: promotes entrepreneurship and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises in 20 member countries. An information network provides entrepreneurs with access to business databases.

Macroeconomic policies, debt and development financing

- ◆ Drafting of policy and research papers for UNCTAD meetings and the UN General Assembly on such issues as global economic interdependence, the international monetary and financial system and macroeconomic and development policy challenges.
- ◆ Technical and advisory support: provides support to the intergovernmental group of developing countries (G-24) in their negotiations with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and donor countries, including the Paris Club of creditors.
- ◆ DMFAS programme: computer-based debt management and financial analysis system designed to help countries manage their external debt; started in 1982 and now installed in 52 countries.

Transport, customs and information technology

- ◆ ASYCUDA: integrated customs system that speeds up customs clearance procedures and assists governments to reform and modernize their customs procedures and management. The latest version also facilitates the introduction of e-business practices. Installed in over 80 countries, it has become the internationally accepted standard for customs automation.
- ◆ ACIS: computer-based cargo tracking system installed in 20 developing countries in Africa and Asia.
- ◆ Global Trade Point Network (GTPNet): 150 centres around the world provide traders with trade-related information and services and assist in the introduction of e-business practices.
- ◆ TRAINFORTRADE: builds training networks and organizes training in all areas of international trade to enable developing countries to increase their competitiveness. Is currently developing distance learning programmes focusing on the LDCs.

How UNCTAD works

- ◆ **The Conference:** UNCTAD's highest policy-making body meets every four years at the ministerial level to formulate policy guidelines and set work priorities. The tenth Conference (Bangkok, February 2000) renewed UNCTAD's mandate to analyse and monitor the effects of major international initiatives on the LDCs and assist them in understanding the key issues in multilateral trade negotiations.
- ◆ **The Trade and Development Board:** Meets in Geneva once a year in regular session to review the secretariat's activities and up to three times a year in executive session to deal with urgent policy issues as well as management and institutional matters. The Board has three commissions, on Trade in Goods and Services, and Commodities; Investment, Technology and Related Financial Issues; and Enterprise, Business Facilitation and Development. The Commissions meet once a year in regular session and may convene up to 10 expert meetings a year on specific issues.

Annual publications: UNCTAD publishes three flagship reports each year (the *Trade and Development Report*, *World Investment Report* and *Least Developed Countries Report*) and other periodic publications, including the *Handbook of Statistics*, the *Maritime Transport Review*, the *Transnational Corporations Journal* and the *E-commerce and Development Report*.

Up-to-date information on publications, meetings and other activities, as well as UNCTAD press releases, may be obtained from the UNCTAD website at: <http://www.unctad.org>

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