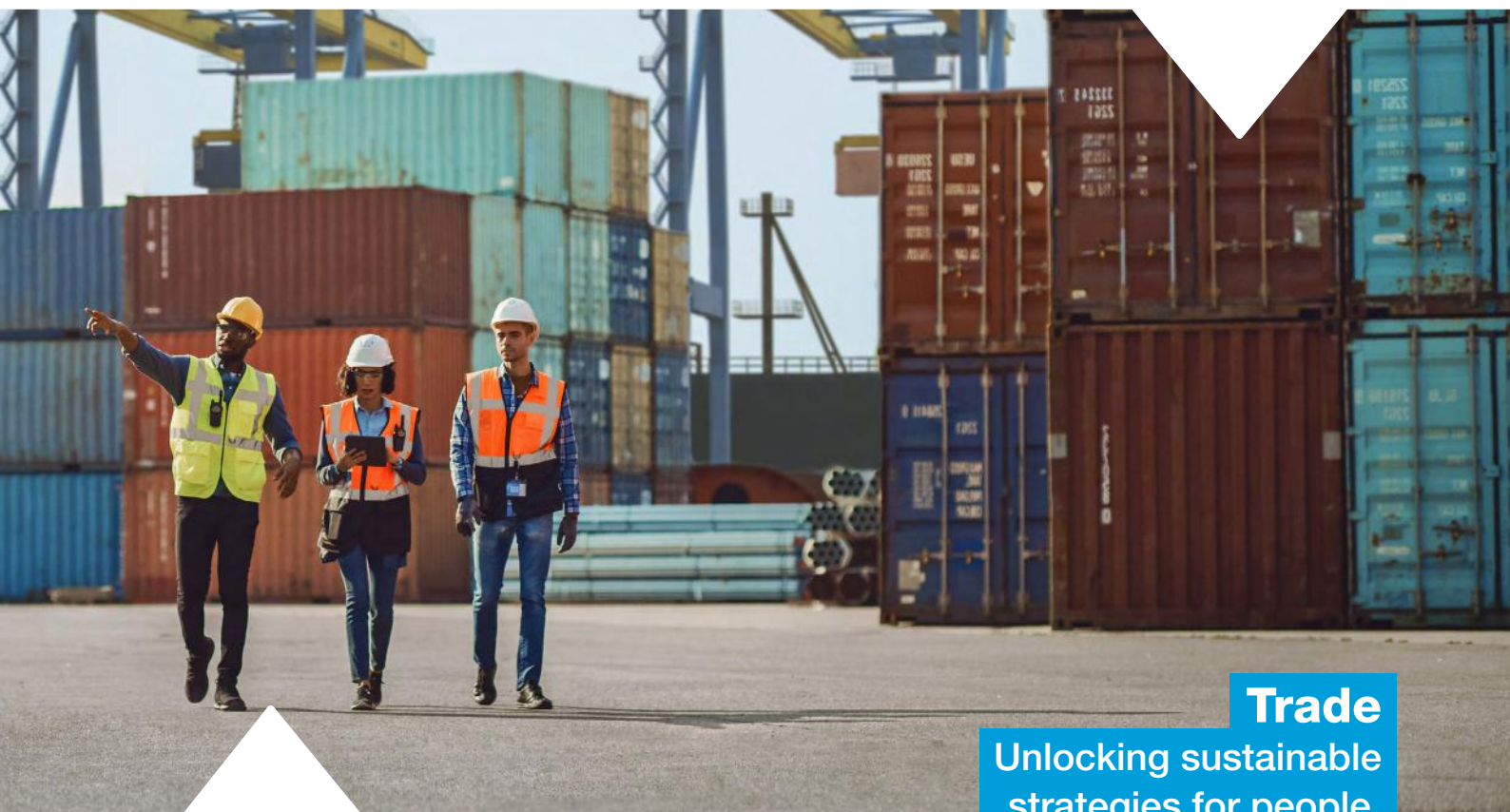




# ANNUAL REPORT 2023

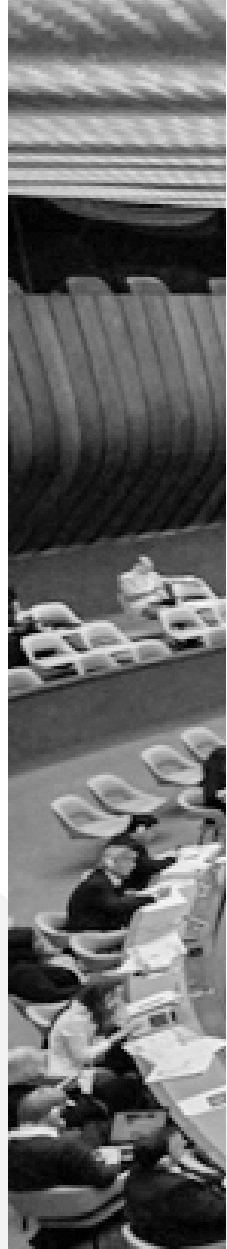


**Trade**  
Unlocking sustainable  
strategies for people,  
planet and prosperity



**United  
Nations**





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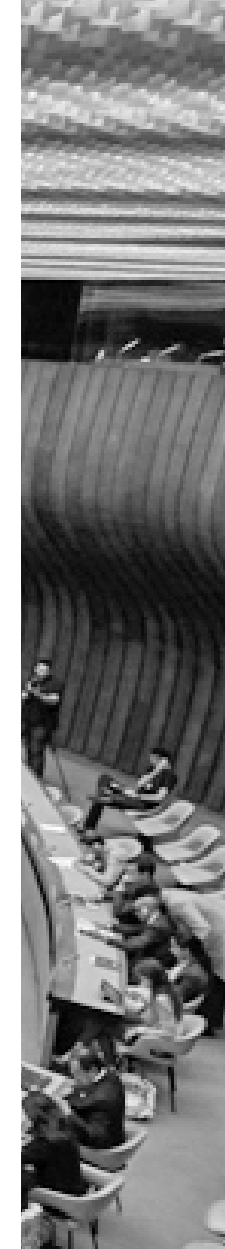
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Rebeca Grynspan  
UNCTAD Secretary-General





## Foreword

The year 2023 presented a complex landscape of global challenges, testing our resilience while revealing new opportunities for cooperation. Though some economies seem to have navigated a ‘soft landing’, many developing countries continue to suffer disproportionately. Weak growth, investment and trade, wars, growing debt burdens and the ongoing climate crisis continue to underscore the need to fight complacency and bring about transformative change.

Throughout this turbulence, UNCTAD has not only remained steadfast but has pushed on, adapting to meet evolving needs. In these pivotal times, we have increased and updated our technical cooperation toolkit, shed light on emerging global trends through world-class research, and bolstered our capacity to build consensus.

In 2023, we released over 146 reports, including our seven flagships<sup>1</sup>. These explored complex issues ranging from a “Blue Deal” to safeguard ocean resources, to updating the financing gap for the Sustainable Development Goals in the developing world; from Africa’s critical minerals potential for structural transformation, to measuring trade geopolitics; from providing timely, ahead-of-the-curve data for negotiations in the Black Sea, to uncovering the mounting debt crisis in the Global South. Likewise, the yearly report by UNCTAD on its assistance to the Palestinian people, submitted pursuant to United Nations General Assembly resolution 77/22, was delivered at the end of 2023. The report sheds light on the very precarious situation in which the Palestinian people were living, even before the current conflict and humanitarian crisis started.

At the same time, reforms undertaken in 2022 to strengthen UNCTAD statistical capacity began to bear fruit last year, with important outputs delivered on areas such as Beyond GDP, SDG costing exercises at the national level, and measuring synergies within SDG transition pathways. At the same time, we are reinforcing our role as United Nations custodians on measuring and analysing South–South cooperation.

An initiative to bring a holistic strategy for small island developing states was agreed with relevant stakeholders, to be presented in 2024. The inter-divisional gender working group created in 2022 began to convene expert level consultations with policymakers and academics studying trade and development from a gender perspective, with the view of developing a stronger gender and trade analysis.

Last year, our commitment to finding solutions was underlined by our resolve to grow through collaboration. We worked closely with the Secretary-General office in New York and other United Nations agencies and regional economic commissions, as exemplified by our co-authorship of the World of Debt report, as well as three distinct policy briefs in preparation for the Summit of the Future on Beyond GDP, the International Financial Architecture, and the Global Digital Compact. And our growing participation in international forums such as the Group of 20, UN climate change conference COP28, and African Union Summit allowed us to bring the perspectives of developing countries to the forefront of global discussions, a task bolstered by the deliberations of our own Board – and related forums and commissions – whose consensus-building capacity is strengthening.

<sup>1</sup> *Digital Economy Report, Economic Development in Africa Report, Review of Maritime Transport, Technology and Innovation Report, The Least Developed Countries Report, Trade and Development Report and World Investment Report*



Thanks to the stronger engagement and greater interaction from our member States, last year we organized 245 intergovernmental meetings, up from 198 in 2022. The number of people attending our meetings grew even more rapidly – with a significant increase in event registrations compared to 2022: from 12,986 in 2022 to 18,526 in 2023 (42 per cent increase). We also organized induction courses for new delegates. These sessions were coordinated with various UNCTAD divisions to provide new delegates with comprehensive information on the functioning of the organization’s intergovernmental machinery.

At the same time, we deepened our engagement in New York-based consensus-building efforts. UNCTAD was instrumental in building consensus at the Economic and Financial Committee of the General Assembly (Second Committee) on several key development issues. UNCTAD took the lead in preparing and presenting the reports of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for the following resolutions: international trade, commodities, investment, information and communication technologies, science, technology and innovation, the creative economy, debt sustainability, and illicit financial flows. Furthermore, UNCTAD directly supported the month-long negotiation of seven of the 41 resolutions considered by the Second Committee during its 78<sup>th</sup> session.

We have also increased our strategic engagement with the private sector – with the International Chamber of Commerce on the Black Sea Initiative, with the maritime industry to push for a transition to sustainable fuels, with the investment community of our World Investment Forum – in the belief that they too play a vital role in shaping a better future. These partnerships have ensured that our research and analysis does not stay just in the ink and paper of the reports we work so hard to produce, but shapes the responses needed to address the challenges we face.

A measure of our effectiveness is our ability to communicate effectively. Last year, UNCTAD hit new milestones by crossing the millionth mark in publication downloads, receiving more than eight million visitors to our website, and engaging nearly one million followers on social media. At the same time, we also made concrete progress towards a renewed, strategically managed brand, ahead of the organization’s 60-year anniversary in June 2024.

The path ahead remains perilous, but we find hope in our work, our partnerships, and our commitment to our mandate. As we approach our 60th anniversary in 2024 and UNCTAD16 in 2025, we are re-energized and more determined than ever to advance trade and development for all. The future depends on our collective ability to rise to the challenge, and UNCTAD will be at the vanguard of that effort.

**Rebeca Grynspan**  
Secretary-General of UNCTAD







195

member States



513

staff members



\$79.3

million in regular budget



\$59

million in technical cooperation expenditure



244

publications, research and analytical materials, and parliamentary documents



219

projects in 74 countries

## UNCTAD at a Glance

➤ **The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) is the leading body in the United Nations dealing with trade and development.**

UNCTAD is a permanent intergovernmental body established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1964. It has a membership of 195 countries, **one of the largest in the United Nations system.**

UNCTAD supports developing countries to access the benefits of globalization more fairly and effectively. It provides world-class economic and trade analysis, facilitates intergovernmental processes and consensus-building, and carries out **over 200 technical assistance projects in more than 70 nations.**

Working at national, regional and global levels, UNCTAD helps countries to harness trade, investment, finance and technology for inclusive and sustainable development. It also supports countries to address pressing challenges such as soaring debt, **inequality and climate change.**

UNCTAD Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan coordinates the **United Nations Global Crisis Response Group Task Team on Food, Energy and Finance**, mobilizing policy solutions to help economies, particularly the most vulnerable ones, to tackle cascading crises of food, energy and finance in the wake of the war in Ukraine.

Secretary-General **Rebeca Grynspan** is an economist, former Vice President of Costa Rica and renowned advocate of human development. She is the **organization's first female Secretary-General.**

UNCTAD is headquartered in **Geneva** and has regional offices in **New York** and **Addis Ababa**

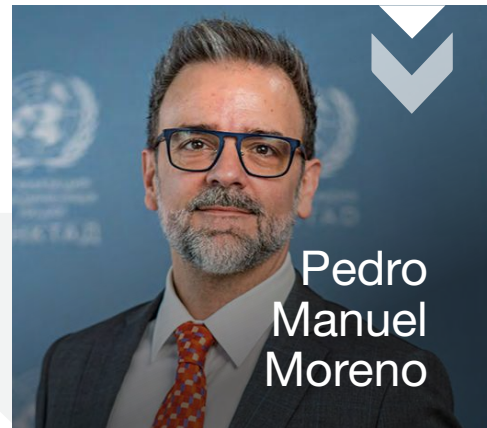


## Senior Leadership in 2023



Rebeca  
Grynspan

Secretary-General



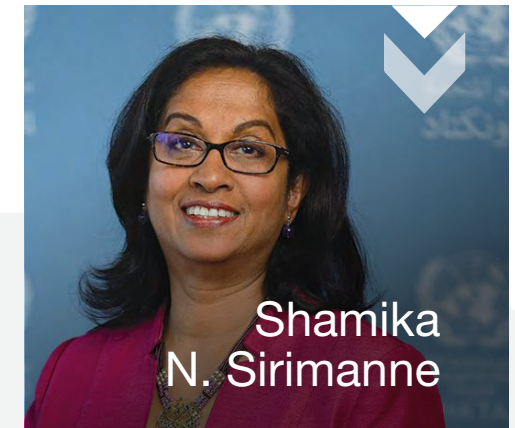
Pedro  
Manuel  
Moreno

Deputy Secretary-General



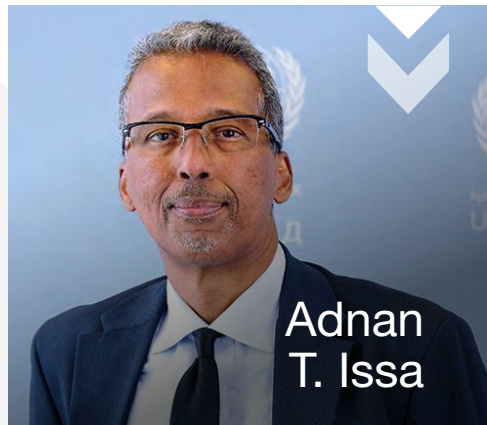
James  
Zhan

Director  
Division on Investment and  
Enterprise



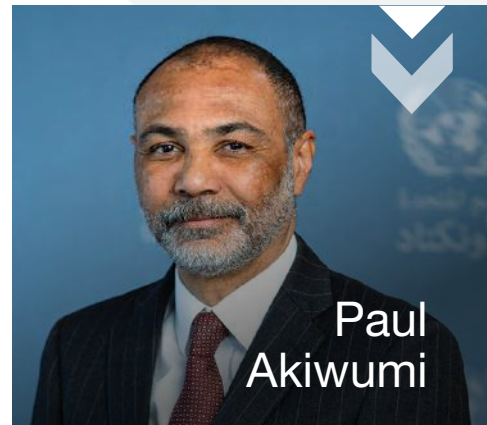
Shamika  
N. Sirimanne

Director  
Division on Technology  
and Logistics



Adnan  
T. Issa

Chief of Staff  
Director, Programme Support and  
Management Service



Paul  
Akiwumi

Director  
Division for Africa, Least Developed  
Countries and Special Programmes



Anu  
Peltola

Officer-In-Charge  
Statistics Service



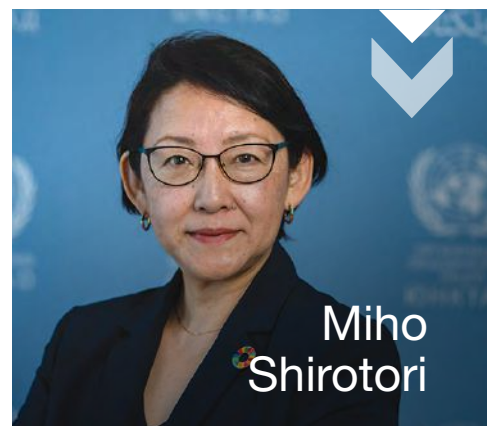
Miguel  
Bautista

Director  
Intergovernmental Outreach and  
Support Service



Richard  
Kozul-Wright

Director  
Division on Globalization and  
Development Strategies



Miho  
Shirotori

Acting Director  
Division on International Trade and  
Commodities





## Office of the Secretary-General

### 2023 was a challenging yet transformative year for UNCTAD.

The world wasn't quite out of the woods, as seen in the ongoing and widespread consequences of the cascading crises suffered since the COVID-19 pandemic. These challenges added to the pressing issues of high energy and food prices, supply chain disruptions and mounting debt and climate crises, all of which hit developing countries hard.

Led by Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan, UNCTAD redoubled its efforts to advocate for developing economies on the world stage, while continuing to advance its three pillars of work in the fields of research and analysis, consensus building, and technical cooperation.

Throughout the year, UNCTAD contributed to essential reforms of the international financial architecture and provided thought leadership in global policy arenas concerning trade, investment and technology. Furthermore, UNCTAD accelerated the implementation of the Bridgetown Covenant through results-based management practices.

UNCTAD also worked to ensure that gender perspectives were included in its wide-ranging mandate, with the dual aim of dismantling the particular barriers that women face when participating in trade and promoting fairer and more inclusive trade benefits.

### Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan: Strong global presence, extensive agenda

#### In 2023, UNCTAD continued to increase its participation at various high-profile global events.


In May, Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan accompanied United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres to the 49th Group of Seven Summit held in Hiroshima, Japan, bringing a focus on the global South to the discussions there.

In June, as part of the official delegation of United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, the UNCTAD chief joined the Paris Summit for a New Global Financing Pact, focusing on exploring solutions to make the global financial systems fairer, more effective and responsive.

In September, Secretary-General Grynspan led an UNCTAD delegation to the high-level week of the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly, in New York.

While there, Secretary-General Grynspan joined world leaders in pushing for financing to keep the promise of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, while outlining the very concrete actions the international community can take to bolster investment, debt restructuring, and liquidity and contingency funding for developing countries.

The UNCTAD chief also engaged in a range of high-level engagements to advocate for trade and development policies that support developing countries to tackle the compounding and complex global crises emanating from climate change and the war in Ukraine, in a post-COVID-19 world.



© United Nations Foundation/Sara Kerens | UNCTAD Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan (pictured left) received The United Nations Heroes Award in New York on 16 November, for the work she led in bringing about the Black Sea Initiative and its parallel memorandum of understanding between the Russian Federation and the United Nations.



© UNCTAD | Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan addresses the 2023 SDG Summit Leaders' Dialogue 6 on 19 September, representing the United Nations system.



## Shaping UNCTAD as a force of real change

Under the leadership of Secretary-General Grynspan, in 2023 UNCTAD continued to demonstrate that the organization is more than a conference and a think tank, and serves as a force of positive change in the real world.

Through more than 200 technical cooperation projects in over 70 countries, as well as contributing to the work of the United Nations Global Crisis Response Group (GCRG) on Food, Energy and Finance, UNCTAD worked to rally support to tackle some of the world's thorniest development challenges.

The GCRG was set up by United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres in March 2022 to respond to the unprecedented food, energy and finance crises worldwide.

UNCTAD Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan coordinated the work of the GCRG Task Team comprised of three workstreams on Food, Energy and Finance, with UNCTAD co-leading the finance workstream.

Through the GCRG, UNCTAD continued working closely with the Executive Office of the United Nations Secretary-General's office in New York, providing crucial inputs

and accompanying the United Nations chief to high-impact events, such as the Group of Seven summit in Hiroshima and the Paris Summit for a New Global Financing Pact.

In 2023, the GCRG produced two reports: one on multidimensional fuel, food, financial global vulnerabilities; and the other on the issue of soaring global public debt, which reached a record \$92 trillion in 2022. The report noted that about 3.3 billion people live in countries that spend more on servicing their debt than health or education.

The latter, entitled *A World of Debt: A Growing Burden to Global Prosperity* provides an innovative, data-driven platform that consolidates United Nations system-wide knowledge on debt, with contributions from UNCTAD, the GCRG, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the five regional economic commissions of the United Nations.

*A World of Debt* provides an online toolkit, empowering policymakers with insights into a country's debt situation, and has been widely cited by global leaders and the media.

The report is among the finalists for the 2023 United Nations Secretary-General Award in the category of United Nations 2.0 – Quintet of Change.

## UNCTAD as one: Interdivisional delivery results

Throughout the year, the Office of the Secretary-General was instrumental in driving interdivisional efforts, ensuring that UNCTAD contributed to global conversations around trade and development in a cohesive and coordinated manner.

On issues related to international financial system reforms, UNCTAD created a new interface bringing together experts from across divisions, while collaborating closely with UNDP and DESA.

The synergy led to enhanced engagements of UNCTAD with the Group of 20, receiving a seat at finance ministers' meetings and on the Sherpa Track, overseeing agenda-setting and negotiations.

The collaborations also helped to strategically position UNCTAD in discussions leading up to the Paris Summit for a New Global Financing Pact, the 2023 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Summit, and the Summit of the Future in 2024.

Turning to the environment and climate change, cross-divisional experts came together to ensure the coherence of policy and proposals presented at the United Nations climate change conference, the 28th Conference of the Parties (COP28), covering key topical issues ranging from climate finance and investment, supply chain decarbonization, critical minerals, the blue economy, and addressing plastic pollution.

For the first time, the United Nations annual climate conference dedicated an entire day to trade and saw the establishment of a joint trade pavilion, whereby UNCTAD partnered with the World Trade Organization, the International Trade Centre and the International Chamber of Commerce.

On supporting small island developing states (SIDS), UNCTAD devised a strategy involving experts from across divisions. The strategy involves multiple interventions, aiming to help SIDS better integrate into the global economy, enhance economic resilience, and promote inclusive and sustainable growth.

The strategy, reviewed by the Geneva-based SIDS Group, has been delivered. Related pilot programmes are expected to start as soon as possible.

## A renewed UNCTAD at upcoming 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary

Looking to the year ahead, UNCTAD will mark 60 years since its inception, with official celebrations set for 12–14 June 2024 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, headlined by United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres.

Preparations for the celebration already began in 2023, with outreach underway to heads of state, policymakers, leading economists and experts from prominent global institutions.

The activities will seek to foster meaningful discussions on the mandate of the organization, notably trade, finance, technology, investment, and sustainable development – underscoring a revitalized UNCTAD, well-prepared to support member States amid the myriad challenges of a new era.





© UNCTAD | Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan speaks on 4 December 2023, while opening first-event “Trade Day” at COP28 held in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates.



## Deputy Secretary-General Pedro Manuel Moreno

2023 marked the first full year since Deputy Secretary-General Pedro Manuel Moreno assumed his current functions, after being appointed by United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres to the position on 4 November 2022.

### Highlights of the Deputy Secretary-General's activities throughout the year

#### Major speaking engagements

At the 5<sup>th</sup> United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries held on 5–9 March 2023 in Doha, Qatar, Deputy Secretary-General Moreno called for bold action and development cooperation to foster inclusive growth and sustainable development in the world's most vulnerable economies.

Finance and investment were at the core of many speaking engagements. In April, the Deputy Secretary-General addressed the Financing for Development Forum held by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in New York.

The Deputy Secretary-General emphasized the importance of stepping up efforts to reform the sovereign debt architecture and tap into the sustainable finance market for investing in the Sustainable Development Goals. In October, at the 4<sup>th</sup> Qingdao Multinationals Summit, he stated that partnerships and investment are key to tackling today's challenges.

© UNCTAD | Deputy Secretary-General Pedro Manuel Moreno speaks on 11 October 2023 at the opening ceremony of the 4th Qingdao Multinationals Summit in China.





Speaking at the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Financing for Development on 1 November 2023 in Geneva, Switzerland, the Deputy Secretary-General underscored the need to scale-up green finance, which is key to helping developing countries propel the transition towards inclusive and sustainable industrial development.

Digitalization and technologies for sustainable development were another major theme of the speaking engagements. The Deputy Secretary-General spoke at the opening of the 2023 World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Forum, which took place in Geneva on 14 March. The forum is a multistakeholder platform to coordinate implementation activities, exchange information and knowledge, showcase innovation and best practices, and foster partnerships to ensure information and communication technologies remain a key enabler in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

## Positioning UNCTAD on the world stage

Deputy Secretary-General Moreno positioned UNCTAD in various meetings and fora where key players discussed solutions to global challenges. The Deputy Secretary-General participated in the 2023 Commonwealth Trade Ministers Meeting held in London on 5–6 June, discussing how to support the multilateral trading system and ensure that it fosters inclusive and sustainable development.

In the follow up to the Paris Peace Forum on 10 November 2023, Deputy Secretary-General Moreno participated in the ministerial roundtable on a new global financial pact and discussed enhancing the allocation of concessional finance and bridging the global challenges of food security and climate change.



© The Commonwealth | UNCTAD Deputy Secretary-General Pedro Manuel Moreno took part in the 2023 Commonwealth Trade Ministers Meeting, with a focus on strengthening the multilateral trading system for inclusive and sustainable development.



© International Telecommunication Union | UNCTAD Deputy Secretary-General Pedro Manuel Moreno speaks at the opening of the WSIS Forum on 14 March 2023 in Geneva, Switzerland.

## Driving cross-functional work to enhance coherence of work across UNCTAD

In 2023, Deputy Secretary-General Moreno chaired various working groups and committees, bringing together cross-functional teams across UNCTAD to strengthen collective efforts related to publications, statistics coordination, the development of a high-impact, new generation strategy to power development for small island developing states, and the engagement with the World Trade Organization. These cross-divisional efforts promoted synergies and ensured consistency of messages across the institution.

The Deputy Secretary-General also chaired the advisory board of the Automated System for Customs Data programme, known by its acronym as ASYCUDA, which is the largest technical cooperation programme run by UNCTAD.

Deputy Secretary-General Moreno regularly engaged with member States, including through sessions of the UNCTAD Working Party on the Programme Plan and Programme Performance bilaterals and meetings with groups, such as the Geneva Group, which studies governance and management across the United Nations system.

Additionally, the Deputy Secretary-General led the steering committee dedicated to preparations for the 60th anniversary of UNCTAD, for which celebrations are set for 12–14 June 2024.



# Management Highlights

New United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks **9**  
Common Country Assessments **10**

## The role of UNCTAD within the United Nations

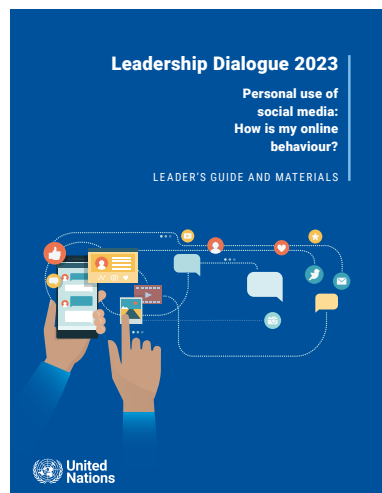
UNCTAD is a member of the Chief Executives Board, which is chaired by the United Nations Secretary-General to provide broad guidance, coordination and strategic direction for the United Nations system in the areas under the responsibility of Executive Heads.

UNCTAD is committed to the United Nations Development System Reform and works with United Nations resident coordinator offices and partner entities from the United Nations inter-agency cluster on trade and productive capacity. UNCTAD also has a prominent presence in an increasing number of United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCF). In 2023, UNCTAD signed nine UNSDCF agreements with Angola, Cambodia, Egypt, Haiti, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Montenegro and Seychelles. In this regard, UNCTAD benefited from a resource mobilization strategy developed at country level, with successful access to funds. This included UNCTAD gaining access to One United Nations Country Funds and Thematic One United Nations Funds such as the Millennium Development Goals Fund (MDG-F), Delivering Results Together Fund (DRT-F) and Sustainable Development Goal Fund (SDG-F). In 2023, UNCTAD managed six Sustainable Development Goal Funds.

UNCTAD contributed to 10 Common Country Assessments in Armenia, Cabo-Verde, Comoros, Lesotho, Ethiopia, Mongolia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

## Management commitments

UNCTAD holds high standards of ethics and integrity. This includes proactively identifying and mitigating any potential conflicts of interest and zero tolerance of sexual harassment and abuse, and taking environmental responsibility seriously. Each year in a leadership dialogue, managers discuss ethical challenges in the workplace. In 2023 the topic was “Personal use of social media”. In 2022, on “Living the United Nations Values: What this means in practice for each of us”; and in 2021, the topic was “The accountability system in the United Nations Secretariat”. UNCTAD is part of the United Nations Secretariat and operates under the United Nations Secretariat accountability framework.



## Transparency and oversight

**100%**  
of 2023 audit recommendations implemented

It is important for UNCTAD to have robust, independent oversight of its activities. UNCTAD strictly adheres to all recommendations. Various entities assure independent oversight of UNCTAD, and these include the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), which constitutes the internal oversight body of the United Nations, and the Board of Auditors, through which member States’ supreme audit institutions provide external audits to the United Nations on a rotating basis. In the last five years, the Office of Internal Oversight Services conducted two audits at UNCTAD. The audits focused on the automated system for customs data (ASYCUDA) and the implementation of the delegated authority framework at UNCTAD. All recommendations due for 2023 were implemented.

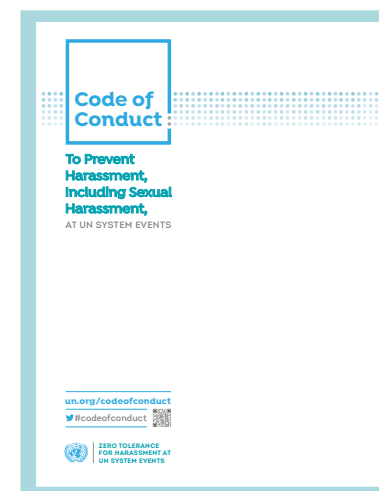


## Financial disclosure programme

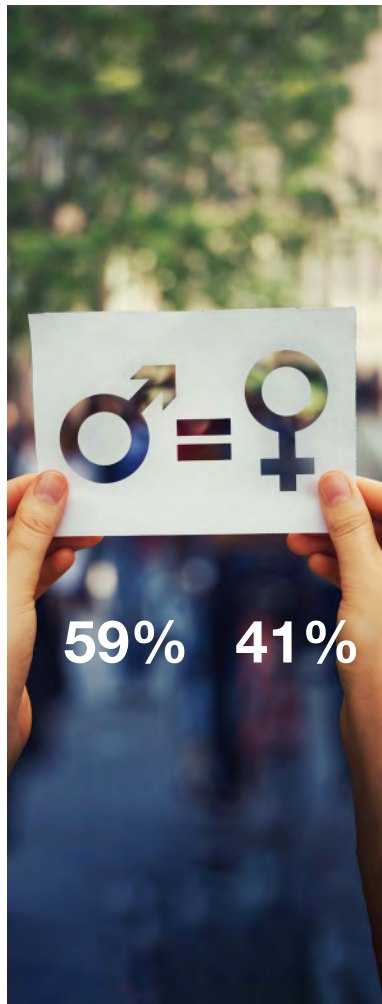
UNCTAD continued to adhere to the United Nations Financial Disclosure Programme, which identifies, resolves and mitigates conflict of interest risks arising from staff members’ personal financial assets, liabilities, investments and outside activities. All staff members at director level and above, and those with specific financial and procurement responsibilities are required to complete a confidential online annual disclosure of their assets, liabilities, outside activities and affiliations for themselves, their spouses and dependent children.

## Zero tolerance of sexual harassment and abuse

UNCTAD has made multiple commitments to keep staff and conference participants safe. UNCTAD adheres to the initiatives of United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse, and the United Nations Model Code of Conduct to prevent harassment at United Nations system events. As an institution, UNCTAD requires all of its partners to affirm their zero tolerance for sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse, and firmly commits to preventing incidents. UNCTAD also has a due diligence process that requires that prospective partners do not have any convictions, charges, or investigations relating to sexual abuse and/or harassment.







## Gender mainstreaming and geographic diversity

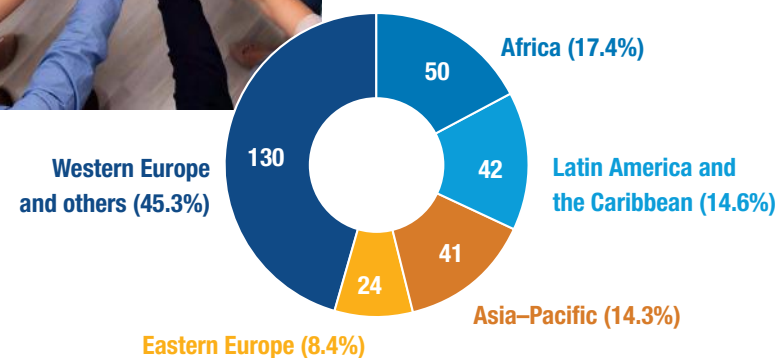
UNCTAD continued to pay due attention to gender mainstreaming and equitable geographical representation of staff. UNCTAD continued mainstreaming gender throughout the institution and made further progress in its performance on the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (SWAP), reporting a strong performance for the second consecutive year. SWAP is the United Nations accountability framework designed to promote shifts in systems and mindsets towards institutional change and gender equality. UNCTAD is on track to outperform indicators on strategic planning and reporting on gender-related SDG results, policy, leadership and knowledge and communication, and consolidating its performance on gender architecture as well as meeting the indicator on capacity assessment for the first time.

## Working towards gender parity

As UNCTAD works towards full gender parity, the proportion of female staff increased by six percentage points (from 35 per cent to 41 per cent) between December 2020 and December 2023. The trend in this regard has been progressively positive, however, much remains to be done. Progress on this front takes various forms and remains a priority for management. Additionally, it is worth noting a historic milestone: in 2021 UNCTAD welcomed its current and first female Secretary-General, Rebeca Grynszpan.

## Geographic diversity

UNCTAD is also striving for broader geographic representation, making consistent efforts to narrow the gap between groups. The share of staff from less-represented regional groups has been steadily increasing. Ongoing initiatives are underway to further minimize the gap between regional representation since Secretary-General Grynszpan assumed office in September 2022.



## Environmental responsibility

UNCTAD is playing its part to combat climate change by integrating environmental sustainability into its facilities and operations.

Since 2007, the United Nations Environment Programme annually collects and analyses environmental impact information for each United Nations system entity. This data is published and available in the recent *Greening the Blue Report 2023*.

UNCTAD is a non-resident agency co-located at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. All operations are managed by the United Nations Office at Geneva, and this includes offsetting emissions, managing waste and water, energy efficiency, sustainable cafeterias, park management and more. According to the *Greening the Blue Report 2023*, while overall United Nations system-wide Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions increased by 16.5 per cent compared to 2021, the report shows that emissions at the United Nations Office at Geneva decreased by 38.3 per cent.



At entity level, UNCTAD has found ways to become more sustainable. The organization eliminated all 400 printers and replaced them with network printers. Most desktop computers were replaced with laptops. This has resulted in more flexibility for staff to telecommute, which has now become a common practice within the organization. It also created an enabling environment in which most files and workflows have been digitized, eliminating the need for most paper documents. As a result, the organization significantly reduced printing-related emissions by consuming less supplies, paper and energy.

UNCTAD continues to learn from the COVID-19 pandemic to host and engage in virtual and hybrid events when appropriate. This reduces carbon emissions due to less travel and the need for paper documents.

Annual carbon offsets are purchased to offset the organization's limited travel needs. The ministerial quadrennial conference is paper smart and mostly uses digital technologies. All UNCTAD services, including research and policy advice to clients throughout the world, are also available online.

As part of the internal clearance process for new technical cooperation programmes, a checklist on environmental aspects has been put into place, to be completed by project managers.





## Supporting member States

**Despite the challenges posed by an increasingly complex geopolitical landscape, the Intergovernmental and Outreach and Support Service (IOSS) worked with member States to find consensual outcomes to their discussions within the UNCTAD intergovernmental machinery. Throughout the year, the team focused on fostering consensus and reaching agreements that addressed the diverse needs and perspectives of all parties involved.**

In 2023, IOSS organized 245 events, each dedicated to addressing priority issues outlined by UNCTAD. This was a notable increase from the 198 events held in 2022 and reflects a growing interest in fostering dialogue and collaboration by member States on crucial global topics.

Event participation saw a marked rise this year, with a significant surge in event registrations compared to 2022: approved registrations rose from 12,986 in 2022 to 18,526 in 2023. This uptick in engagement underscores the growing importance of UNCTAD initiatives and the growing interest from member States and other stakeholders worldwide. The number of events that required online registration to attend also increased, up from 113 in 2022 to 171 in 2023.

To ensure even greater engagement from member States in UNCTAD intergovernmental processes, induction courses were hosted for new delegates.

These sessions were coordinated with various divisions within UNCTAD to provide new delegates with comprehensive information on the functioning of the organization's intergovernmental processes and the ways in which countries can contribute to consensus-building and negotiating outcomes. These important courses are designed to facilitate delegates' understanding of the work of UNCTAD and enhance mutual engagement. Support was also extended to regional groups to address their specific needs and facilitate their full engagement with UNCTAD activities.

The team continued to disseminate critical information through publications that advance the mission of UNCTAD. In 2023, a total of 146 publications were released, encompassing official and non-official documents. Additionally, 98 parliamentary documents were published, further contributing to the wealth of knowledge shared within the UNCTAD community.

**Held induction sessions for new delegates** to familiarize them with UNCTAD functions and their role in the intergovernmental process

### 245 events in 2023

events are important to facilitate dialogue and knowledge exchange



▶ UNCTAD arranged intergovernmental meetings and supported **member States to reach consensus**



## A leading advocate for trade, development, and shared prosperity

### Impact-focused and evidence-based communication and external relations: Driving innovation and priority issues



*Effective communication is part of our mandate delivery. On this front, the results speak for themselves.*

*Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan at the 75<sup>th</sup> executive session of the Trade and Development Board*

Guided by an annual strategic communications plan, in 2023 UNCTAD hit **new milestones** by crossing the millionth mark in publication downloads, receiving more than eight million visitors to the organization's website (unctad.org) and engaging nearly one million followers on social media.

Through a dedicated communications task team, which pools organization-wide expertise, UNCTAD strengthened **institutional positioning and alignment**, while undertaking **major steps to revamp internal communications** to keep staff members informed and engaged.

UNCTAD also made concrete progress towards a **renewed, strategically managed brand**, ahead of the organization's 60-year anniversary in June 2024.

#### The wide-ranging efforts on communications and external relations sought to:

- Position UNCTAD as the **leading, credible, evidence-based voice** in global trade, economic and development deliberations
- Mobilize support for UNCTAD policy recommendations by **informing and engaging a diverse and broad-based global audience**
- Raise the visibility of the organization's **world-class research and analysis, amplifying expert insights** into shared global challenges
- Deepen the **internal consensus for a coherent organizational narrative** on cross-cutting topical issues, by aligning communication objectives across the board, and regularly establishing shared editorial priorities

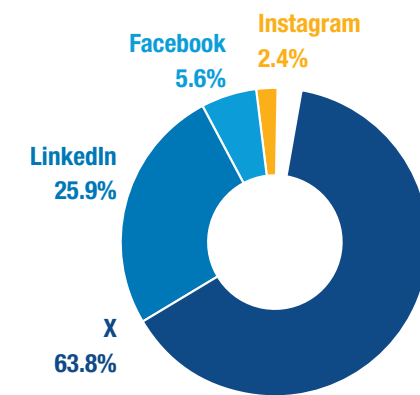


## Direct audience engagement through social media

### Social media reach:

**6.4 million users** across X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram (+8 per cent from 2022)

- Social media content available in **10 languages** (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Hindi Kiswahili, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Urdu)
- **Ongoing improvement of social media synergies** with United Nations-system accounts and other international organizations, resulting in UNCTAD reaching an additional **45 million social media audience (+62 per cent increase from 2022)**



	2022	2023	Percentage increase
Followers	533 540	586 151	10
Reach	6 000 015	6 473 137	8
Engagement	276 136	287 658	4
Video views	377 191	1 092 272	190
Total number of videos	98	318	224
Livestream sessions	13	18	38
People reached through other accounts	28 000 000	45 300 000	62



**318 videos** (from 98 in 2022) **boosted social media engagement by +190%** from 2022, reaching **1.1 million users**

### Record web traffic

Total pageviews  
**8 million** (2022: 7.5 million)

Publication pageviews  
**1 million** pageviews (2022: 0.9 million)

Meeting pageviews  
**0.4 million** (2022: 0.35 million)

News pageviews  
**1.4 million** (2022: 1.5 million)

**8 mini sites** dedicated to major publications, **viewed 226 000 times** (2022: 4 mini sites with 40 000 views)

### Strong media relations

Media coverage of UNCTAD  
**87 400 articles**, of which 14 385 included mentions of Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan

**11 press conferences** (+22 per cent from 2022) attended by **169 journalists** (+36 per cent from 2022)

**149 information packs** disseminated to global media outlets in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Spanish, Russian, Kiswahili, Urdu and Portuguese



**Awarded the best media team** (technical agency category) **for the second consecutive year** by the Association of Accredited Correspondents at the United Nations (ACANU)





## Major publications

### World-class research and analysis

In 2023, UNCTAD delivered over 146 reports, research and analytical materials, spotlighting key global issues and proposing actionable solutions. Major publications included assessments on the urgent need for a global “Blue Deal” to safeguard ocean resources, bridging the \$4 trillion annual funding gap for developing countries to achieve sustainable energy goals, addressing soaring debt burdens hindering growth, harnessing economic opportunities within Africa amidst global turbulence, fostering a just transition to decarbonize maritime transport, and advocating for comprehensive financial reforms to support vulnerable nations.

### A World of Debt

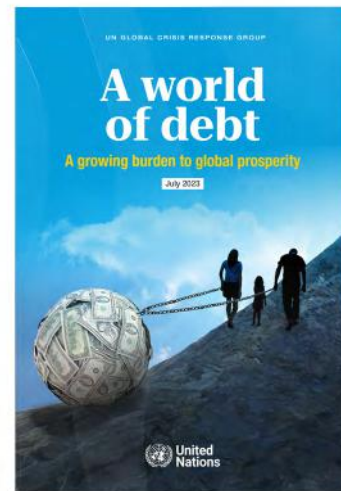
An innovative, data-driven platform that consolidates the United Nations knowledge on debt, with contributions from UNCTAD, the United Nations Global Crisis Response Group, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme, and the five regional economic commissions of the United Nations.

This online toolkit empowers policymakers, serves as a barometer for a country’s debt situation and has been widely cited by global leaders and media.

**It is among the finalists for the 2023 United Nations Secretary-General Award in the category of United Nations 2.0 – Quintet of Change.**

#### Key findings

In developing countries, soaring debt is dragging down development. Developing countries have limited access to financing, yet face rising borrowing costs, currency devaluations and sluggish growth. They are unable to react quickly to emergencies, tackle climate change or invest in their



people and their future. Countries are having to choose between servicing debt or serving their people.

#### Policy recommendations

2023 saw the launch of policy briefs for the United Nations’ *Our Common Agenda*, and these provide a roadmap for immediate action to alleviate the global debt burden. The policies call for a comprehensive approach, including measures to reduce debt costs, expand access to long-term financing, and provide contingency support to vulnerable countries.



### Trade and Environment Review

#### Key findings

This 2023 Report focused on building a sustainable, resilient ocean economy. As a resource, the ocean has vast economic potential for developing nations, yet threats such as climate change and overfishing are endangering the livelihoods of millions.

#### Policy recommendations

The Report highlights the urgent need for a global “Blue Deal” to boost investment in protecting the world’s oceans and sustainably using its resources.

### World Investment Report

#### Key findings

Vulnerable countries are being left behind in the global energy transition. Developing countries face a massive \$4 trillion annual funding gap as they work to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and transition to clean energy. Global flows of foreign direct investment have fallen, and funding has been concentrated in developed countries.

#### Policy recommendations

Urgent support is needed to enable developing countries to attract more investment. UNCTAD proposes a new stimulus and a new compact setting out priority actions, ranging from financing mechanisms to investment policies, to ensure sustainable energy for all.

### Economic Development in Africa Report

For the first time, UNCTAD released this publication outside of Geneva headquarters. A launch event in Nairobi was led by Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan, during her first official mission to Kenya.

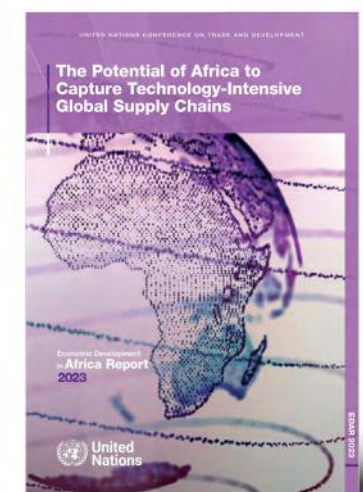
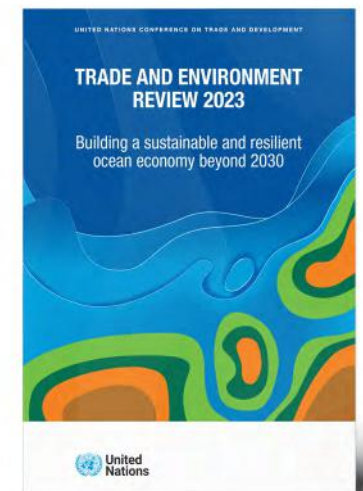
While there, Secretary-General Grynspan underscored the commitment of UNCTAD to continue bolstering African nations’ pivotal role in shaping the world economy and playing a leading role in global supply chains.

#### Key findings

A shake up in global dynamics, including turbulence in trade, global supply chains and geopolitical tensions have created dynamic opportunities for African governments and businesses to spur economic development. The continent can seize opportunities to add value to existing products and services, facilitating the integration of Africa as a pivotal point within global high-tech supply chains, and leveraging its youthful workforce and growing middle class.

#### Policy recommendations

To take advantage of these conditions, the Report outlines actions to overcome supply chain hurdles faced by some African countries, including poor logistics, low levels of technology, fragmented markets, limited access to financing and capital, and weak institutions and regulations.





## Review of Maritime Transport

The Report came out just ahead of World Maritime Day (28 September 2023). Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan headlined the press launch at the headquarters of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in London. The UNCTAD chief spoke alongside Kitack Lim, then Secretary-General of IMO.

### Key findings

With the maritime sector contributing to 3 per cent of all global emissions, there is a need for a just and equitable transition to decarbonize the shipping industry, which has experienced a 20 per cent increase in greenhouse gas emissions over the past decade. This will require massive investments, yet could also lead to higher maritime logistics costs, raising concerns for vulnerable shipping-reliant nations such as small island developing states.

### Policy recommendations

The Report calls for swift regulatory interventions and more substantial investments in green technologies and emphasizes ramping up digitalization, including AI, to boost efficiency and sustainability. In light of the challenges ahead, multistakeholder collaboration will be critical to driving transformative change, while balancing economic and environmental imperatives.



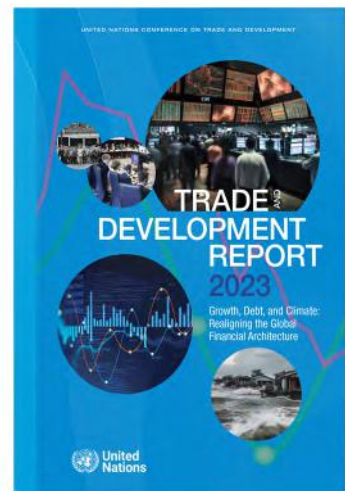
## Trade and Development Report

### Key findings

Divergent growth paths, widening inequalities, growing market concentration and mounting debt burdens are casting shadows on the future and jeopardizing the Sustainable Development Goals. As an example of these inequalities, patterns of profiteering in the food industry have been observed, with major food trading companies earning record profits, even as food prices have soared, and millions grapple with a cost-of-living crisis.

### Policy recommendations

The Report calls for a change in policy direction and institutional reforms to avert a “lost decade”. The Report makes a bold proposal for a development-conscious model of international financial architecture. Similarly, as the world lacks an effective system to deal with global debt, establishing an independent global debt authority that engages with creditor and debtor interests, is needed now.



## The Palestinian people

UNCTAD continued to monitor the impact of the Israeli occupation on socioeconomic conditions in the Palestinian Territory.

In October, the organization released the Report on UNCTAD assistance to the Palestinian People: Developments in the economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The report warned that inflation, a shrinking fiscal space, a decline in foreign aid and the build-up of debt has kept the economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory below its 2019 pre-pandemic level.

UNCTAD also published a report for the United Nations General Assembly in November, entitled “Economic costs of the Israeli occupation for the Palestinian People: The welfare cost of the fragmentation of the Occupied West Bank”. The report emphasized the urgent need to remove the restrictions to help provide the economic base necessary to reverse the current trend of socioeconomic deterioration in the region.



## The Least Developed Countries Report

### Key findings

“No one left behind” should not just be a slogan. Due to cascading polycrises, developing countries risk being left behind in achieving their development targets. The world’s most vulnerable nations require lasting financial stability. The upcoming Loss and Damage Fund could be a game changer if least developed countries (LDCs) are among the primary beneficiaries and if disbursements are swift.

### Policy recommendations

The current international financial architecture lacks appropriate financial mechanisms for LDCs. The Report stresses that effective development finance should be delivered according to “amount, appropriateness and access”. In turn, LDCs can strengthen their domestic resources by broadening their tax base, curbing tax evasion and illicit financial flows and gaining autonomy in negotiating and managing natural resources, particularly for critical mineral reserves.



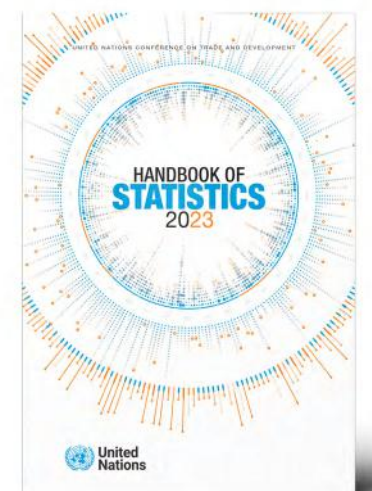
## Handbook of Statistics

### Key trends

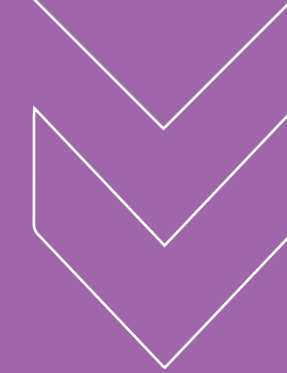
The 2023 landscape was marked by fluctuations and persistent disparities. While there was a decline in the value of goods exports, services and commodity exports continued to grow steadily. However, developing countries maintained a significant goods deficit of \$1.6 trillion, and efforts to reduce inequality stalled, highlighting ongoing challenges in achieving balanced economic growth.

### Key observations

In 2023, the global population surpassed eight billion with five out of six people living in developing countries. The ability of these nations to ensure environmental sustainability and improve living conditions becomes paramount in global efforts towards inclusive, sustainable development. There is also a notable trend toward urbanization, emphasizing the need to prioritize solutions for sustainable cities.







# Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes

The division seeks to beneficially integrate structurally weak, vulnerable and small economies into the global economy. It supports the development of national policies and international measures to build productive capacities for economic development and poverty reduction.





## Overview

In 2023, the division primarily focused on promoting sustainable structural economic transformation, reducing vulnerabilities and boosting domestic productive capacities.

It continued to play a pivotal role in generating high-quality knowledge, facilitating policy dialogue and providing technical and capacity-building support.

Main areas of work included building value-added economic activities, diversifying exports and supporting economies to graduate from the least developed countries (LDC) category.

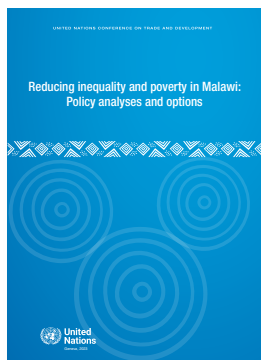
The division prepared two flagship publications, the *Economic Development in Africa Report 2023* and *The Least Developed Countries Report 2023*.

It produced research on issues of poverty and inequality, productive capacities and trade, transport and transit facilitation, including a study entitled *Reducing Inequality and Poverty in Malawi: Policy Analyses and Options* – kick-starting a new stream of research dedicated to assessing the nexus between trade, poverty and inequality.

The division also developed practical tools to guide evidence-based policymaking and released the second generation of the Productive Capacities Index (PCI) in June 2023.

With support from the division, government ministers of Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger and Togo signed a quadrilateral declaration on the legal convergence of frameworks on transport, intermediation, transit and trade.

The move aimed to bolster regional trade in West Africa and was accompanied by a comprehensive roadmap for implementing the agreement.



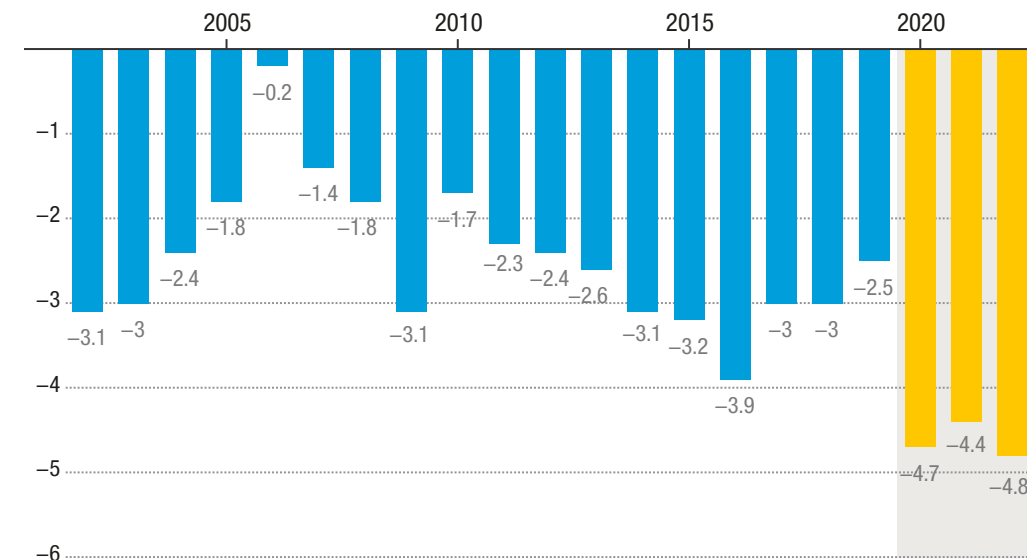
## Key issues

- Developing domestic productive capacities essential to **structural economic transformation**
- Diversifying economies and exports to **build resilience** in Africa, LDCs, landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS)
- Renewing calls for **an international financial architecture for LDCs** that is inclusive, innovative, and adapted to their specific needs



## The declining fiscal space of least developed countries

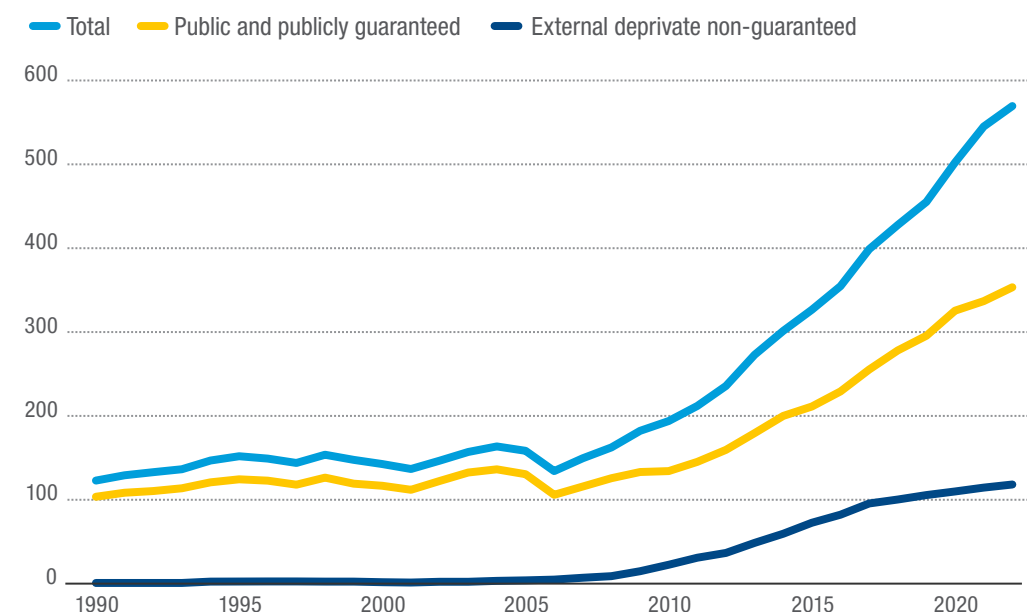
Fiscal balances in the 46 least developed countries, 2002–2022, percentage of gross domestic product



Note: Median of 41 LDCs for which data were available for all the years during the period 2002–2022. The number of LDCs dropped to 45 as of December 2023 following the graduation of Bhutan.  
Source: UNCTAD secretariat calculations, based on data from Kose et al., 2022.

## The growing debt burden of least developed countries

External debt stocks of the 46 least developed countries, billions of dollars, 1990–2022



Note: Data for 2022 are from UNCTAD. The number of LDCs dropped to 45 as of December 2023 following the graduation of Bhutan.

Source: UNCTAD secretariat calculations based on World Bank, International Debt Statistics (accessed March 2023).





## Results

In 2023, the division continued to promote cooperation to actively reduce fragmentation and maximize the impact of technical cooperation, both within UNCTAD and across the broader United Nations system.

The work aligned with the Bridgetown Covenant and the targets of various global programmes, most notably the [Doha Programme of Action for LDCs](#), [Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs](#), and [SAMOA Pathway for SIDS](#).

### Key publications



The *Economic Development in Africa Report 2023*, themed “The potential of Africa to capture technology-intensive global supply chains”, sought to put the continent in the spotlight in terms of its potential to diversify technology-intensive production and distribution networks.



In the *Least Developed Countries Report 2023*, focused on crisis-resilient development finance, the division stressed the reforms needed in global financial systems to support the world’s most vulnerable economies. These reforms, alongside increased commitments and innovative approaches are necessary for LDCs to finance their pathway to sustainable development and build resilience against multiple global challenges.

### Supporting LDC graduation

In 2023, the divisions supported LDCs that have prequalified for graduation.

It delivered vulnerability profiles (VP) of Cambodia, Comoros, Djibouti, Senegal, and Zambia, as mandated by the United Nations General Assembly.

As part of these VP preparations, the division undertook strategic missions, including an expert briefing in December for ambassadors of the five pre-qualified countries.

The briefing focused on the findings of the VPs and National Productive Capacities Gap Assessments, as well as steps towards and beyond graduation.

The assessments aimed to design holistic programmes to develop productive capacities across Cambodia, Comoros, Djibouti,

and Senegal. Similar exercises were also underway in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Zambia.

### Bolstering productive capacities

In 2023, Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan established the high-level advisory board on the PCI, bringing together economists, policymakers and researchers to guide the programme of work.

The statistical and technical advisory group on the Productive Capacities Index (PCI), comprising statisticians, national authorities and academia was also established. The first group meeting took place in February 2023 in Türkiye.

The division continued to coordinate the delivery of the European Union-UNCTAD Joint Programme for Angola: Train for Trade II, whose operational activities concluded in December.



### Boosting trade in West Africa

As part of a programme funded by the Enhanced Integrated Framework, the division supported efforts leading to the signing of a declaration and roadmap by ministers of trade and transport of Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Togo.

The work marks a pivotal step towards regional integration, as well as more harmonized legal frameworks on transport, intermediation, transit and trade.

### Building economic resilience

The division supported trade policymaking and market access expansion to help vulnerable economies build resilience to external shocks.

It led the preparation of a dedicated SIDS strategy, responding to demands from member States, as outlined in the Bridgetown Covenant.

The strategy seeks to offer trade and development support to SIDS in diversifying and strengthening their economies.

## Top projects

### EU-UNCTAD Joint Programme for Angola: Train for Trade II

- Seven components: green exports; commercial diplomacy; trade facilitation; transport and trade logistics; Empretec, the global entrepreneurship network; investment; and cultural and creative industries.
- Supported 15 national policy and strategy development processes in Angola.
- Trained 3,301 participants, including managers of 30 out of 100 top Angolan companies.

For example, the Generalized System of Preferences database, maintained by the division, provides information on leveraging the scheme, as well as other preferential trade agreements granted to developing countries and LDCs.

### Strengthening multilateralism

Additionally, the division worked to strengthen multilateralism and the capacity of LDCs to engage in the global trading system.

Advancing its agreed programme in support of the LDC Group at the World Trade Organization, the division helped boost countries’ negotiating capacity, trained delegates to develop clear group positions, and more effectively participate in WTO ministerial conferences and committee sessions.

The division also deepened collaboration with the secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area to implement the memorandum of understanding between both organizations.

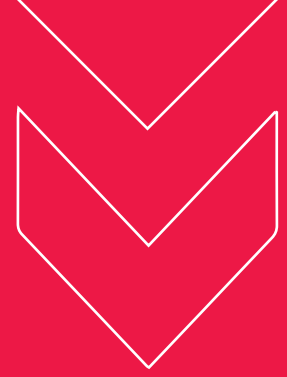
It increased engagement with six centres of excellence across Africa and Asia, which offer training on trade and development-related themes such as aquaculture, fisheries, infrastructure, among others.

### Additional information

- [Transforming4Trade](#) builds on the Train for Trade II programme and was selected as one of the twelve United Nations system-wide high impact initiatives that can rapidly accelerate implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The initiative was featured in a special high-level event at the United Nations Headquarters in New York in September 2023 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals Action Weekend.
- The magazine *Africa Renewal* ran a special feature covering the Train for Trade II Angola programme. The report highlighted beneficiaries’ success stories and the wide-scale impact of a holistic approach to economic diversification and institutional capacity-building in Angola as pioneered by UNCTAD.







# Division on Globalization and Development Strategies

The division promotes economic strategies to encourage sustained growth, inclusive and sustainable development, employment, and decent work for all. It advocates for poverty eradication in developing countries, especially the least developed countries, including through enhanced global cooperation. It also contributes to the international debate on globalization and the management of its consequences for developing countries.

The division undertakes studies on ways to implement successful development strategies and mitigate debt burdens facing developing countries. It provides technical assistance to help developing countries integrate into the international financial system and manage external debt.





## Overview

In 2023, the division released its mid-year *Trade and Development Report Update* to complement its annual flagship publication, the *Trade and Development Report 2023*, entitled “*Growth, debt, and climate: Realigning the global financial architecture*”.

Both reports provided insightful analyses of global economic conditions and cascading shocks, and the ripple effects on developing countries. To spur action on these challenges, the Report also outlined relevant public policy prescriptions.

Continuing past efforts, the division spearheaded the work of UNCTAD in providing assistance to the Palestinian people, despite adverse conditions.

In October, the division released the *Report on UNCTAD assistance to the Palestinian people: Developments in the economy of the occupied Palestinian Territory*.

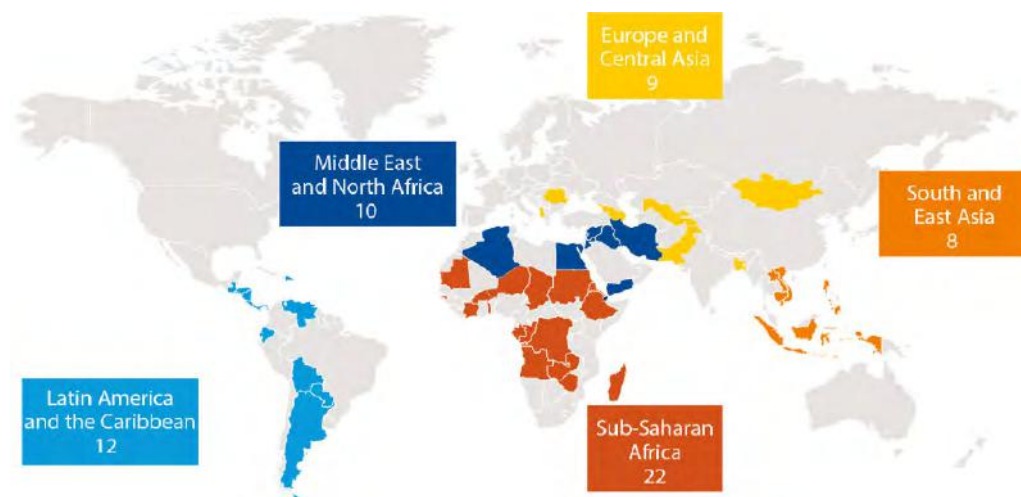
It also published a report for the United Nations General Assembly in November, entitled “*Economic costs of the Israeli occupation for the Palestinian people: The welfare cost of the fragmentation of the occupied West Bank*”.

Escalating borrowing burdens and growing debt distress among developing countries prompted UNCTAD to lead calls for stronger multilateral solutions.

In support of this cause, accurate debt reporting using the UNCTAD Debt Management and Financial Analysis System (DMFAS) continued to enable developing countries to track their debt sustainability, gain transparency and negotiate better terms.

As of 2023, DMFAS was used by 86 institutions across 61 countries.

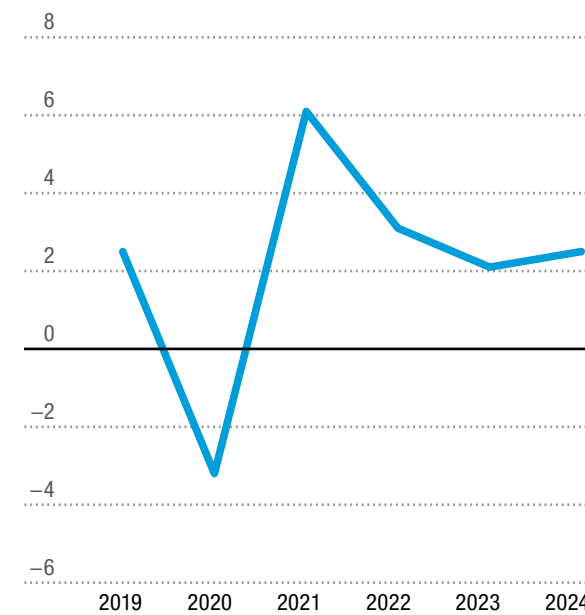
Map  
Geographical  
distribution  
of countries  
using the Debt  
Management  
and Financial  
Analysis System  
(DMFAS) in 2023



## Key issues

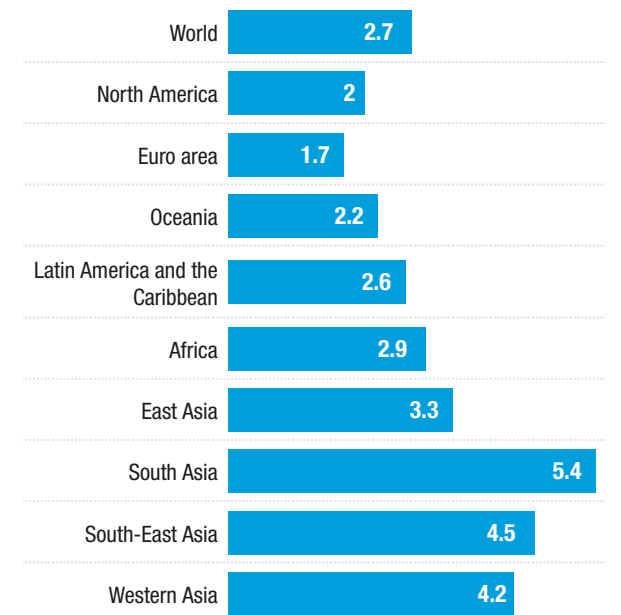
- As outlined in the *Trade and Development Report 2023*, diverging recovery paths, deepening asymmetries in income and wealth, corporate profiteering and growing pressures of indebtedness are pressing challenges facing the world economy in 2023
- **Promoting South–South cooperation** as a vehicle to share successful policy experiences among developing countries and catalyze growth
- **Improving debt data transparency** through DMFAS, helping an increasing number of user countries publish statistical debt bulletins and preparing debt portfolio reviews

➤ **World economic growth is stalling**  
Global gross domestic product annual percentage change, 2019–2024



*Note:* Calculations for country aggregates are based on GDP at constant 2015 dollars. Data for 2023 and 2024 are forecasts.  
*Source:* UNCTAD calculations, based on United Nations Global Policy Model; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), National Accounts Main Aggregates database, and World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP): Update as of June 2023; ECLAC, 2023; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2023; International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Economic Outlook, spring 2023; Economist Intelligence Unit, EIU CountryData database; JP Morgan, Global Data Watch; and national sources.

➤ **Building back weaker and separately**  
Average annual real gross domestic product growth rates by region, percentage change, 2022–2024 average



*Note:* Data for 2023 and 2024 are forecasts. North America excludes Mexico. Western Asia includes Türkiye. GDP growth rates are based on constant 2015 United States dollars.  
*Source:* UNCTAD calculations based on United Nations Global Policy Model; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), National Accounts Main Aggregates database, and World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP): Update as of June 2023; ECLAC, 2023; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2023; International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Economic Outlook, spring 2023; Economist Intelligence Unit, EIU CountryData database; JP Morgan, Global Data Watch; and national sources



## Results

### Helping countries tackle mounting debt

During 2023, DMFAS user countries remained dedicated to ensuring the availability of accurate information on public debt. Such data, enabled through DMFAS, contribute to stronger management of debt and related risks, informed policy decisions, and abilities to fulfil international reporting obligations.

DMFAS support provided through the division encompasses a wide range of areas, including:

- Implementing the DMFAS specialized debt management software;
- Assistance in database creation, data validation, operational risk management, statistical reporting, and support for debt analysis;
- Developing appropriate legal, administrative, technical and organizational environments to support debt management;
- Linking the debt database to different information systems, or to an integrated financial management information system.

Notable achievements in 2023 included 93 per cent of DMFAS user countries having comprehensive databases on government and government-guaranteed external debt, with 80 per cent of countries maintaining comprehensive domestic debt records.

Supported by DMFAS, governments can publish reliable and comprehensive information on public debt, accessible at international, national and local levels.

Concerning debt data transparency, 43 DMFAS user countries issued debt statistics bulletins and 36 countries produced debt portfolio reviews.

Additionally, 89 per cent of DMFAS user countries reported to the World Bank debtor reporting system. Of the countries that subscribed to the World Bank's Quarterly External Debt Statistics database, 83 per cent provided debt data.

Separately, the division organized the 8th session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Financing for Development, and the 14th bi-annual Debt Management Conference.

It continued to advance multilateral solutions to tackle the debt crisis facing developing countries, in particular by providing, inputs to the finance track of work at the Group of 20, under the Brazilian presidency.

The inputs included lessons from the Group of 20-endorsed Common Framework for debt treatments, debt vulnerabilities of low- and middle-income countries, as well as “debt-to-health” swaps – an innovative new financing mechanism that converts debt repayments into investments in public health.

### Training mission to the State of Palestine

During a mission to the State of Palestine in May 2023, UNCTAD trained Palestinian officials and researchers on econometric modelling and economic forecasting.

Participants hailed from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, the Palestinian Monetary authority, the Ministry of Finance and Planning, and the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute.

## Contributions to COP28

In November 2023, the division's macroeconomic and development policies team presented its work on climate and development during the United Nations climate change conference, COP28, in Dubai. The work was underpinned by three papers. First, on the new collective quantified goal on climate finance, which was agreed at COP28.

Second, on the new Loss and Damage Fund established at COP27 in 2022.

Third, on Article 2.1c of the Paris Agreement, which calls on governments to make financial flows consistent with a pathway to climate resilient development. This paper was prepared in partnership with climate finance negotiators from the Group of 77 – a coalition of developing countries.

### Initiatives and high-level events

The division hosted discussions focused on improving the economic environment to

support sustainable development.

These included the 6th multi-year expert meeting on enhancing the enabling economic environment at all levels in support of inclusive and sustainable development, and the promotion of economic integration and cooperation.

The two-day event brought together experts to explore how countries can sustainably develop industries and policies for a greener, more resilient and prosperous future.

In September, the division organized a high-level panel discussion following the 15th BRICS summit, which gathered emerging economies of Brazil, the Russian Federation, India, China, and South Africa.

During the discussion, high-ranking officials from existing and pending BRICS member States explored outcomes of the summit and their implications for the global economy.

The panel also identified areas of mutual interest and concern to developing countries, and ways to address compounding and cascading global crises.

## Top projects

- Development of the seventh major version of the DMFAS software, or **DMFAS 7, which was installed in Jordan** and tested by five additional countries from Eastern and Southern Africa.
- Extension of the **multiagency project** entitled “Mobilizing external financial resources beyond COVID-19 for greener, more equal and sustainable development in selected vulnerable SIDS in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean”, available at: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/news/communications-material/>.
- Creation of a **“Borrowers Club”** for debtor countries to discuss technical issues and innovation, explore novel debt instruments for sustainable development, and learn from each other.
- Publication of the report entitled *“Production Transformation Policy Review of Bangladesh”*, exploring how the country can build on its position as a global textiles manufacturing hub, diversify its economy and innovate. This is the fifth in a series of joint publications with the Development Centre of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
- Release of two reports on China through a South–South cooperations lens. One report focuses on development strategies for China's green growth, while the other explores pilot free trade initiatives.



*We are very pleased to be first in the [Middle East] region to use DMFAS 7. DMFAS is a key tool to assure reliability of debt figures.*

**Secretary General of the Ministry of Finance,  
Jordan**







# Division on International Trade and Commodities

The division seeks to build consensus, strengthen capacity and promote partnerships for trade policy, trade negotiations, trade in goods and services and the creative economy, economic diversification, competition and consumer protection laws, and manage issues arising at the intersection of trade, commodity dependence, gender, the environment and climate change. The division monitors trends and provides evidence-based analysis to make international trade an engine for inclusive and sustainable development.





## Overview

The work of the division aims to enable economic diversification, promote sustainable and resilient economies and foster the multilateral transformations needed to create a greener, more inclusive and prosperous world.

As such, its work during 2023 focused on providing evidence-based analysis to help realize trade and development gains from emerging industrial policy and climate action. The division supported member States to address the challenges of commodity dependence. It looked at how developing countries can harness the increasing demand for minerals critical to the energy transition for sustainable development and the climate crisis. Additionally, the division used trade measures to advance Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement, and explored how competition and consumer protection policies can make markets sustainable.



The United Nations climate change conference, COP28, welcomed the first-ever **“Trade Day”** and **“Trade House”**, underscoring the crucial role of trade and related policies in accelerating much-needed climate action. Trade Day was organized in collaboration with the CO28 Presidency held by the United Arab Emirates, the International Trade Centre, International Chamber of Commerce, and World Trade Organization.

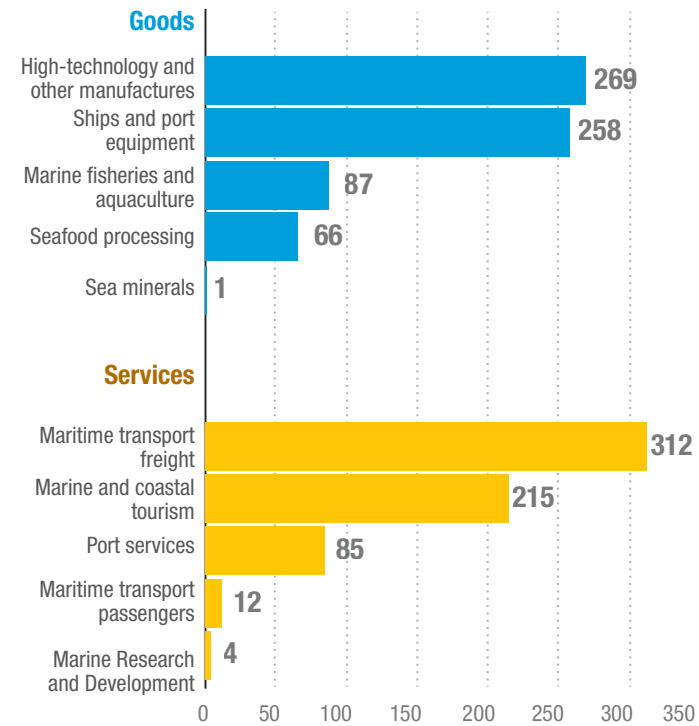
## Key issues

- Realizing trade gains and economic diversification from decarbonization
- Unpacking the impact of emerging industrial policy and trade de-risking measures on developing economies
- Capacity-building to help developing countries build high-quality and timely trade data



## ➤ Sizing up the ocean economy

Exports per category of ocean-based goods and services, 2020, billions of US dollars



## Building a sustainable ocean economy

The division launched the *Trade and Environment Review 2023*, highlighting the vast opportunities that the ocean holds for economic growth and resilience, particularly for developing countries.

Source: UNCTAD estimates based on UNCTADstat (accessed in January 2023).





# Results

## Leveraging trade to catalyze climate action

The division continued efforts to align trade policies with global climate goals.

At COP28, the division released a study examining how 60 developing countries have integrated trade into national pledges under the Paris Agreement on climate change, known as Nationally Determined Contributions. Separately, the division worked with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific to develop an algorithm to search for climate change-related, non-tariff measures in the UNCTAD Trade Analysis Information System database. The database covers nearly 150 countries, over 95 per cent of world trade, 20,000 different regulations, and nearly 90,000 distinct measures.

The division also published a report, entitled Plastic Pollution: The pressing case for natural and environmentally friendly substitutes to plastics.

The report, highly relevant in the context of the ongoing negotiations at the United Nations to tackle plastic pollution, presented an extended illustrative list of natural-based materials and products. These products can provide alternatives to, or substitutes for plastics, offering an initial basis for analysis and policy action.



### Trade value of plastics substitutes

Export in 2020 represented \$388 billion, approximately two-thirds represents exports of raw materials (\$258 billion)

	Raw materials	Products
Natural fibres (Plant/tree based) <b>116 819</b>	Mineral-based <b>77 109</b>	Mineral <b>65 825</b>
	Natural fibres <b>64 860</b> Dedicated crops <b>25 109</b> Agricultural by-products <b>22 301</b> Animal-based <b>17 450</b>	



Since March 2023, UNCTAD has been co-leading the Consumer Information Programme, hosted by the United Nations Environment Programme through its One Planet Network.

The programme drives multistakeholder consultations to empower consumers in the transition towards sustainable consumption. UNCTAD and the United Nations Environment Programme also formed a new partnership, exploring the interaction between multilateral environmental agreements and consumer protection.

## Highlights at COP28

For the first time, the Conference of the Parties dedicated an entire day to trade, highlighting the growing need to put trade front and centre in combating the climate crisis.

Opening Trade Day, UNCTAD Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan joined global leaders to outline a roadmap of trade policy options for a just and ambitious response to climate change.

UNCTAD and partners also jointly hosted the COP28 Trade House pavilion, a dedicated space to spark discussions and solutions on how trade can accelerate climate action. The pavilion held 44 sessions with contributions from some 200 speakers.

## Critical minerals and commodity dependence

The division substantially contributed to the Working Group of the United Nations Secretary-General on Transforming the Extractive Industries for Sustainable Development, created to help countries harness minerals that are critical to the energy transition for sustainable development.

The Working Group conducted research on the trade dynamics of critical minerals and related products, highlighting the specific characteristics of critical mineral markets for rechargeable lithium-ion batteries used in electric vehicles.

The *Commodities and Development Report 2023* outlined key actions in the context of the global energy transition.

The Report sought to help vulnerable economies avoid past pitfalls of commodity dependence, whereby commodities constitute more than 60 per cent of a country's merchandise exports in value terms. The Report also proposed green industrial policies to promote a fair, just and inclusive energy transition.

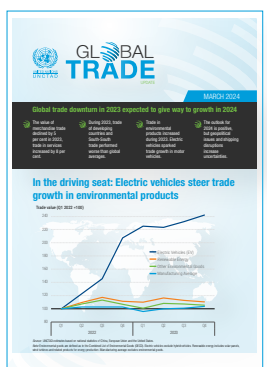
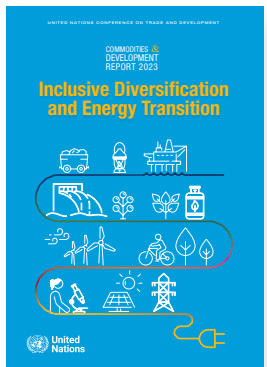
## Helping developing countries navigate changing global trade landscapes

Under the theme of shifting trade landscapes, the division analysed how implications of national industrial strategies and geopolitical dynamics reverberated across developing nations.

The United Nations Trade Forum identified four high-impact trade initiatives that will help leverage progress in key areas to accelerate the Sustainable Development Goals, incorporating South-South trade partnerships, sustainable ocean economy, sustainable consumption and production, and digital solutions to bridge the gender gap.

Global Trade Updates, issued on a quarterly basis, provided insights into the latest trends in goods and services trade, exports from developing countries, including South-South trade, geopolitical trends, and outlooks for the future.

The 32<sup>nd</sup> session of the Committee of Participants of the *Global System of Trade Preferences among Developing Countries* took stock of the implementation of the agreement, which requires one more ratification before entering into force.





The meeting explored ways to augment South–South cooperation in new and emerging areas of sustainable development, ensuring members reap commercial and development benefits under the current global economic and policy context.

The division continued to work in synergy with various teams across UNCTAD, leveraging trade as a tool to advance gender equality and women’s economic empowerment. The efforts supported policymakers in developing countries to navigate emerging global trade themes such as e-commerce and entrepreneurship from a gender perspective.

Nearly 2 200 participants in 154 countries have benefited from over 25 iterations of the division’s online course on trade and gender with a national, regional and thematic focus.

## Building trade data capacity in developing countries

Following the release of the data sets on ocean and biodiversity-based products in 2022, UNCTAD expanded its support to improve the data capacity of developing countries to better assess the creative economy and the plastics trade. The [UNCTADStat](#) database already features data sets on creative goods, services, and related industries.

As a follow-up to the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Trade, Services and Development, UNCTAD also launched an informal working group on data for services trade and development policies to help countries better collect and produce data on services trade.

## Top projects

- [Green trade for sustainable development in Pacific small island developing States of the Melanesian Spearhead Group](#)
- Technical assistance and [capacity-building](#) in competition and consumer protection for African Portuguese-speaking developing countries and Timor-Leste
- [Inclusion of green initiatives in national strategies of 20 African countries to implement the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement](#)
- [PROMOVE Comércio: Building competitiveness for exports in Mozambique](#)
- [Study on trade and entrepreneurship in Indonesia from a gender and development perspective](#)
- [African Continental Free Trade Agreement Non-tariff barriers: monitoring, reporting and eliminating mechanisms](#)



## Testimonials



*The willingness of UNCTAD to collaborate with the Competition Authority of Cabo Verde has been vital. Support from UNCTAD has been of fundamental importance, particularly regarding technical training and the anti-competitive analysis of some cases. High-level technical assistance made all the difference in developing a new era of competition law and policy in the country.*

**Emanuel Barbosa**  
President of the Competition  
Authority of Cabo Verde







# Division on Investment and Enterprise

The division seeks to ensure inclusive growth and sustainable development through investment and enterprise development to enhance productive and technological capacity-building, industrialization, economic diversification, job creation and progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

The division is the focal point within the United Nations system for issues related to investment and enterprise development. It conducts cutting-edge policy analysis, provides technical assistance, and builds international consensus on investment and enterprise.





## Overview

Since the COVID-19 crisis, global foreign direct investment flows have been trending downwards. Against this backdrop, the division continued to support member States to address key, emerging and overlapping global challenges that are impacting policies on investment and enterprise development at all levels.

The energy transition in particular faces a significant financing gap. The division's flagship publication, the *World Investment Report 2023* proposed a Global Action Compact to increase investment in sustainable energy for all, outlining priority actions from financing mechanisms to incentive policies. The Report informed several multilateral processes including United Nations summits and General Assembly discussions.

The 8<sup>th</sup> World Investment Forum, organized by the division, paved the way for discussions at the United Nations climate change conference, COP28. The forum was the largest-ever gathering of its kind, bringing together more than 8,000 participants, including eight heads of State and government leaders, 69 ministers and deputy ministers, 57 high-level representatives of international and regional organizations, and 700 private sector executives. The five-day event comprised a total of 157 sessions, some of which were organized in collaboration with 80 partnering entities.

2023 concluded with an independent evaluation of the work of the division, which confirmed the relevance, quality, efficiency and effectiveness of its interventions. The evaluation acknowledged strong links between activities and key mandates of the division, particularly in relation to supporting the Sustainable Development Goals.

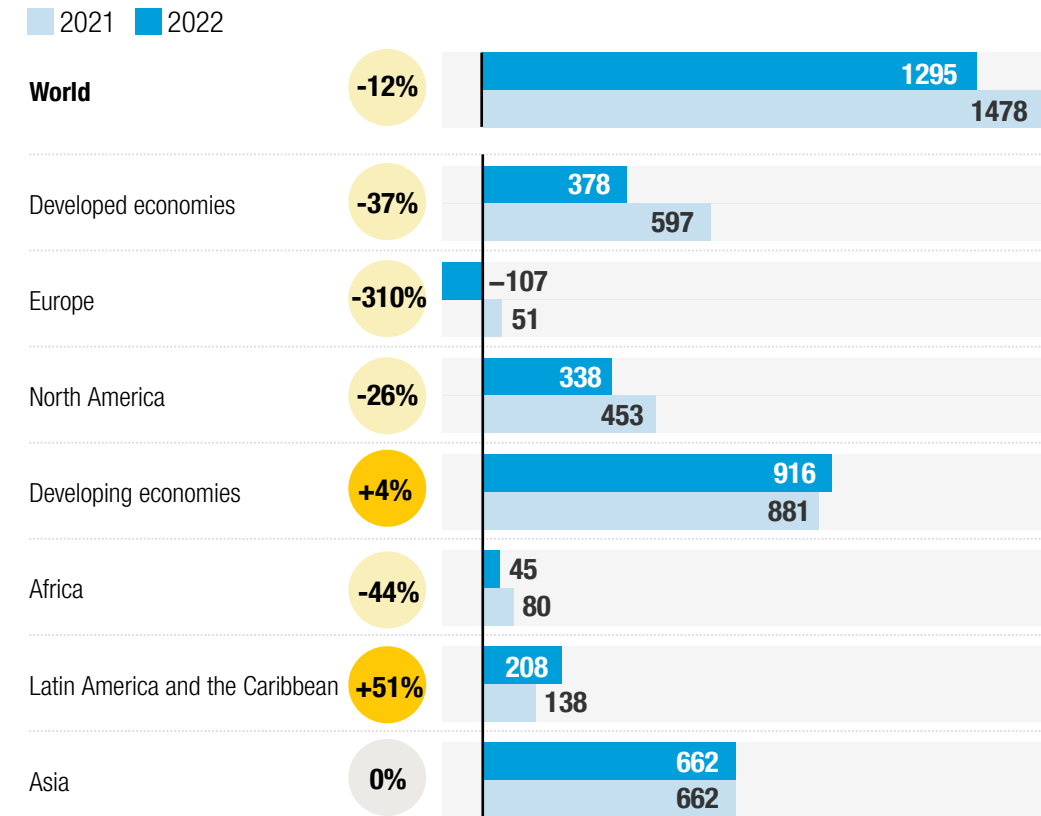
## Key issues

- Investment in the Sustainable Development Goals is growing, but too slowly. The funding gap has expanded to \$4 trillion, up from \$2.5 trillion in 2015
- Financing the energy transition through a Global Action Compact
- Broadening the scope of sustainability reporting



## Global foreign direct investment fell by 12 per cent in 2022

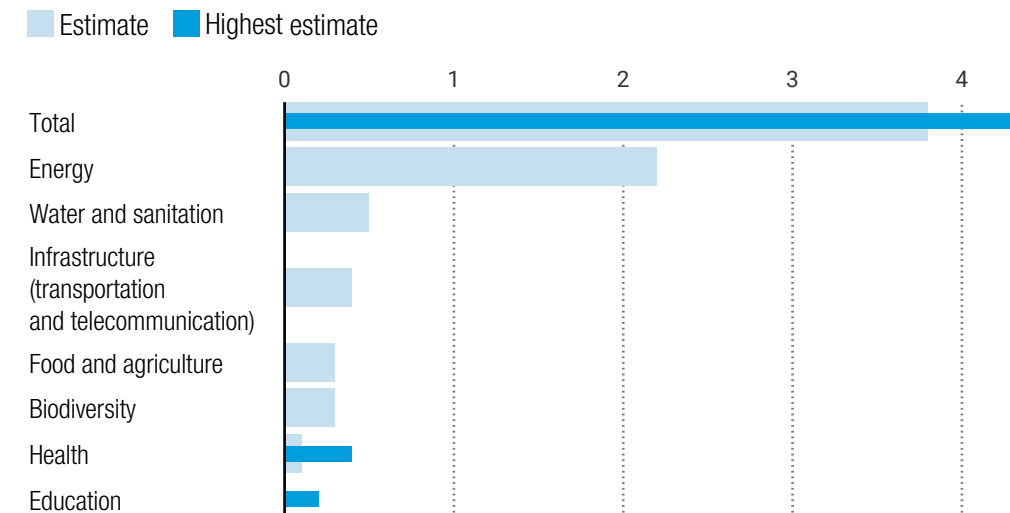
By subregion, billions of US dollars, per cent, 2021 and 2022



Source: UNCTAD, FDI/MNE database (<https://unctad.org/fdistatistics>).

## Sustainable Development Goals investment gap widens in developing countries

Estimated annual investment gap to reach the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, total and per sector, capital expenditure, trillions of US dollars



Source: UNCTAD SDG Investment Trends Monitor September 2023

Note: Investment refers to capital expenditure. The range for the health and education sectors reflects uncertainty about the size of the capital expenditure component in the total investment gap for the two sectors, for which the operational expenditure component is expected to be substantial.





## Results

**Against a background of cascading global crises, the division supported member States to address mounting challenges facing the international community.**

### Investing in the energy transition

The division published the *World Investment Report 2023*, with the theme “Investing in sustainable energy for all”, which outlined a Global Action Compact.

The compact contains guiding principles for the energy transition – meeting climate goals, providing affordable energy for all, and energy security.

It proposes six action packages for national and international investment policymaking in this regard, covering global, regional and South–South partnerships and cooperation; financing mechanisms and tools, and sustainable finance markets.

The global launch of the Report was a success, eliciting 2,678 media stories in 18 languages and 100,000 downloads. Visits to the webpage of the report increased by 30 per cent compared to 2022.

### 8<sup>th</sup> World Investment Forum

The 8<sup>th</sup> World Investment Forum took place in Abu Dhabi, focusing on “Investing in sustainable development”.

The forum addressed investment challenges stemming from multiple, overlapping global crises.

It included dedicated tracks on investment in food security, health, technology, sustainable finance, energy transition, and climate investment, and helped informed discussions at COP28.

The forum filled a systemic gap in global economic governance on investment, providing a platform for dialogue and action to shape international investment policies.

The forum also launched key initiatives, including:

- A model guide on voluntary carbon markets
- A global policy research agenda with a multidisciplinary approach
- A partnership with the African Sovereign Investors Forum to promote sustainable investment
- A multistakeholder platform to reform international investment agreements (IIAs)
- Three regional partnerships on sustainability reporting

### Impact on investment policymaking

UNCTAD continues to affirm its leading role in investment policymaking.

At the request of the United Nations General Assembly, the division led efforts to support member States in leveraging recommendations from the *World Investment Report 2023*.

These included policy actions on international tax reform and sustainable investment, and monitoring global progress on investing in the Sustainable Development Goals.



At the regional level, the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Countries adopted guiding principles based on the investment policy framework for sustainable development developed by UNCTAD.

Elsewhere, the division’s investment policy review programme supported Mauritania, Tajikistan, Togo and the West African Economic Monetary Union.

In the area of IIAs, the division continued supporting member States to review their investment treaty networks and design model investment treaties. The effort was complemented by the launch of a multistakeholder platform on IIA reform to identify ways to fast-track sustainable development and the energy transition.

**Building on its solutions for online single windows to facilitate business and investment, the division launched several new products to promote investment aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. This included an emissions registry to help countries meet Paris obligations, and a portal to accelerate approval procedures for critical medicines.**

The division also provided up-to-date information for policymakers through its Investment Policy Monitors, as well as online databases for national investment-related regulations and IIAs.

### Investing in health

The division’s workstream on investing in health explored options for new partnerships and carried out advisory work, including in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda, culminating in a regional policy framework and a regional cooperation mechanism.

These moves tackled bottlenecks in local antibiotics production in the region, while facilitating information exchange.

### Promoting sustainable finance

Sustainability-themed finance is on the rise. To fully leverage the contribution of all stakeholders to sustainable development, the division focused on strengthening the integrity of sustainability-themed investment.

This entailed efforts to address concerns around misleading claims of greenwashing, and harmonizing disclosure of environmental, social and governance issues.

In addition, the division launched a new United Nations Sustainable Stock Exchanges action framework aimed at maximizing the opportunities of carbon markets, and a new sustainability integration framework for institutional investors.

The division also supported firms to engage in sustainable business practices by disseminating UNCTAD core indicators for reporting on Sustainable Development Goals, and developing regional partnerships to assist countries in implementing global sustainability reporting standards.

### Bolstering entrepreneurship

Furthering its work on entrepreneurship, the division upgraded the UNCTAD entrepreneurship programme, Empretec, introducing innovative capacity-building activities to harness new technologies and better meet the evolving needs of entrepreneurs across developing countries.





## Top projects

- **Streamlining business processes for sustainable development** through digital government tools. Since 2016, the number of countries with online investment information portals increased from 130 to 169. A total of 96 systems in 60 economies have been implemented by UNCTAD, resulting in an 80 per cent reduction of business registration steps, forms, and documents.
- **Family business for sustainable development:** this helps to transform conventional business models for sustainability and prosperity and is available in six languages and more than 40 countries.
- **The Sustainable Stock Exchanges initiative:** with 133 members and 63,682 listed companies valued at \$125 trillion, the initiative is expanding. In 2023, the initiative delivered 47 workshops in 42 markets, training over 8,000 participants. It organized 14 events featuring 149 speakers (53 per cent female) from stock exchanges, security market regulators, standard setters, and key market stakeholders.
- **The Regional Partnerships for the promotion of sustainability and Sustainable Development Goals reporting:** this was launched in 2020 at the same time as the Regional Partnerships for Latin America. The initiative also launched partnerships for Africa (2021) and more recently helped to respond to the increasing demand from member States to create regional partnerships for Asia, Eurasia, and the Gulf. In parallel, the number of members grew exponentially – from seven members in 2021, to 40 in 2022 and 87 in 2023, representing 43 countries.



In 2023, the United Nations Sustainable Stock Exchanges initiative won a “Climate Leaders Awards” as part of the Finance for the Future Awards, which celebrates organizations that integrate sustainability into financial decision making.

The awarding panel said:

*The SSE Initiative from the United Nations continues to deliver one of the largest global education programmes on climate risk disclosures, convening organizations and stock exchanges to build knowledge in both established and emerging markets. The judges were impressed with the global reach of this entry, using the convening power of stock exchanges to access emerging markets and focusing on the bespoke needs of the market.*



© World Investment Forum 2023 | UNCTAD Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan (second right) at the forum with Thani Bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi (second left), Minister of State for Foreign Trade, United Arab Emirates, and James Zhan (first right), UNCTAD director of investment and enterprise development.

*The discussions and partnerships formed during this World Investment Forum will pave the way for a more inclusive, more sustainable future for us all. Together, let us script a story of hope, resilience and progress.*

**His Excellency Mr. José Ramos-Horta,**  
President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, and Nobel Laureate

*This World Investment Forum 2023 is a timely reminder that multilateralism remains an effective means of global engagement in a way that benefits all.*

**His Excellency Mr. Valdis Dombrovskis,**  
Executive Vice-President for an Economy that Works for People, European Union





# Division on Technology and Logistics

The division seeks to strengthen inclusive growth and development through science, technology, and innovation, including information and communications technology for development; efficient, resilient, and sustainable trade logistics services; and training and capacity-building programmes. It hosts the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) and implements the largest technical cooperation programme run by UNCTAD, the Automated System for Customs Data programme (ASYCUDA).





## Overview

In 2023, the division continued to advance the influence of UNCTAD in shaping global discussions on green and digital policy.

It published the *Technology and Innovation Report 2023*, which emphasized the need for developing countries to seize green innovation for economic and technological growth.

The division's flagship publication, the *Review of Maritime Transport 2023* underscored the energy transition that is imperative in maritime transport as well as the ambitious decarbonization requirements for the shipping sector. The Review also highlighted the impact of commercial and geographic tensions on shifting shipping patterns, trading routes, shipping costs and food prices

The *ASYCUDA Report 2022–2023* highlighted the benefits of automating and digitalizing customs procedures to accelerate climate-smart trade facilitation.

A number of analytical reports were issued, including on trade single windows, blockchain in trade facilitation, port performance, and contractual devices to allocate commercial risk and prevent loss.

The division hosted **eWeek 2023**, attended by a record 3,500 participants from 159 countries. The event brought into sharp focus the environmental costs of digital technologies and called for a better understanding of the connections between digitalization and sustainability.

Additionally, the division supported intergovernmental consensus-building in complex areas, such as how to make data work for sustainable development, trade facilitation digitalization, coordination and innovation.

Serving as the secretariat and providing substantive support to the CTSD, the division initiated the 20-year review process of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSI+20) with open consultations at the Internet Governance Forum in Kyoto and the UNCTAD eWeek in Geneva.

The event discussed the progress, challenges, and future expectations of the World Summit on the Information Society, ahead of its twentieth anniversary in 2025.

## Sustainable and resilient global supply chains

The division led the preparations of the first UNCTAD Global Supply Chain Forum, an initiative conducted in collaboration with the Government of Barbados. The Forum will be held in Bridgetown, Barbados, 21–24 May 2024. The event will feature a high-level

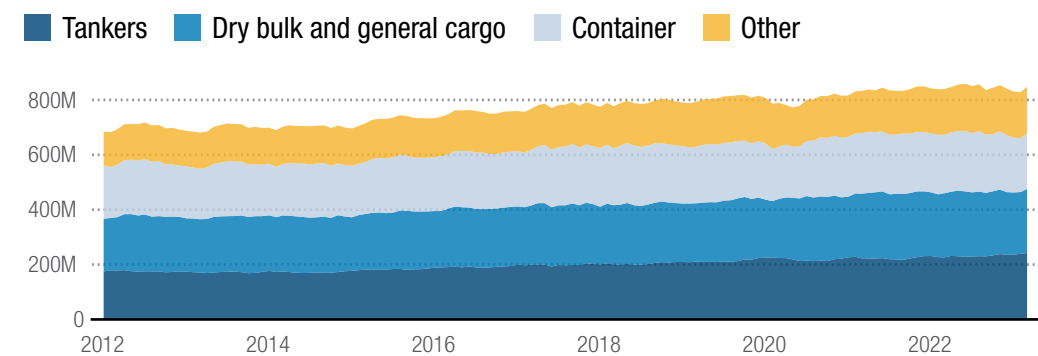
segment bringing together ministers and executives from a range of institutions active in the field of transport, trade, logistics and supply chain management and will feature 60 technical sessions. The Forum aims to generate action-oriented recommendations for more resilient global supply chains underpinned by sustainable, low-carbon, resilient and smart transport and logistics.



## Key issues

- Decarbonizing maritime transport: helping to accelerate a just and equitable energy transition
- Promoting green technology for growth in a low-carbon world
- Advancing the dual goal of digital technology development and environmental protection
- Supporting the IMO greenhouse gas reduction negotiating process and a just and equitable transition by conducting a comprehensive impact assessment of the GHG reduction measurement

### Shipping emissions are headed in the wrong direction Carbon dioxide emissions by main vessel types, tons, 2012–2023

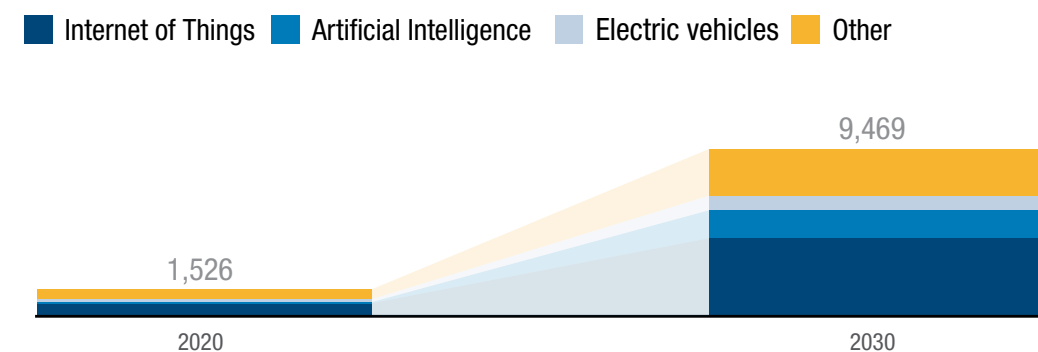


Source: UNCTAD based on data provided by Marine Benchmark, June 2023.

Note: The group "other" includes vehicles and roll-on/roll-off ships, passenger ships, offshore ships and service and miscellaneous ships.

### Value of frontier technologies is expected to boom in the twenty-first century

Market size of frontier technologies, billions of US dollars



Source: UNCTAD, based on various estimates.



## Results

### Empowering developing countries to leverage the digital economy

In 2023, the division completed eTrade readiness assessments for four countries, namely Ghana, Mauritania, Mongolia, and Peru.

So far, 36 developing economies have benefited from the assessments and 28 have developed or plan to develop a national strategy or action plan to mainstream e-commerce into national development agendas.

The UNCTAD-led eTrade for Women initiative helped empower more than 60 women digital entrepreneurs from 16 developing countries, bringing its active network of regional communities to 300 digital businesses across 40 countries.

The division delivered two online capacity-building courses, focused on leveraging digital identity for trade and development and delving into the legal aspects of e-commerce. A total of 566 participants from small island developing states benefited from the training. Additionally, the division developed and delivered an online course on “e-commerce for development”, jointly with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), which positively impacted 154 participants across Latin America and the Caribbean.

Training was also organized to help improve the capacity of developing countries in gathering and producing statistics on e-commerce and digital trade. This was carried out in close collaboration with global partners such as IMF, OECD, World Bank, WTO and the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics.

The division conducted research and analysis exploring regulations of cross-border data flows and approaches to measuring the value of e-commerce across the Group of 20, the world’s leading economies.

**The division also supported the discussion of the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development on the issue of data for development, which explored the multidimensional challenges of digital data and its development implications. In a ground-breaking decision, the Commission agreed to establish a multistakeholder working group on data governance frameworks.**

Together OECD, IMF, WTO and UNCTAD produced the second edition of the Handbook on Measuring Digital Trade, laying the foundation for further technical assistance and statistical capacity-building in this area.

The team also contributed to a joint report analysing digital trade for development, as well as opportunities and challenges for developing economies.

Additionally, the division led the work of a new task group focused on measuring the value of e-commerce and the digital economy, seeking to develop guidelines to improve statistical availability, quality, and comparability.

Finally, the division hosted the sixth session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on e-commerce and the digital economy, offering a set of agreed policy recommendations to help countries capitalize on data to drive sustainable development.



### Shaping the future of the digital economy

eWeek 2023, with the theme of “Shaping the future of the digital economy”, took place in Geneva and online in December.

Its outcome document, entitled “*The Geneva vision on the future of the digital economy*”, will serve as an input to the Global Digital Compact and the United Nations Summit of the Future slated for September 2024.

The document tackles pressing issues such as bridging the digital divide, using e-trade to help least developed nations double their share of global trade, supporting countries with digital readiness, and enabling businesses of all sizes to capture value from e-commerce and the digital economy.



*I am so glad that I was a part of the P166 course [on key issues on the international economic agenda], it really opened my mind. The UNCTAD presenters were all excellent and there was a broad variety of carefully selected national experts.*

**Darko Mitev**  
Senior Advisor, Transit and Border Formalities department,  
Customs Administration, North Macedonia

### Nomination for the 2023 United Nations Secretary-General Awards

The TrainForTrade programme, led by UNCTAD, was among the nominees for the 2023 United Nations Secretary-General Awards.

“Port Endeavor”, an innovative game developed by the programme, helps practitioners worldwide better understand how port management can be a key enabler for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The multilingual role-playing game puts participants in the shoes of port executives, asking them to formulate decisions to invest in sustainable activities, based on the real-life database of the World Ports Sustainability Program.

The digital game has engaged over 1,600 port professionals globally, turning them into United Nations ambassadors for the Sustainable Development Goals.

The TrainForTrade programme also delivered training focused on building port resilience against pandemics, drawing in a record 1,774 participants from 134 countries. The course received outstanding evaluations, with satisfaction and success ratings at 92 per cent and 78 per cent, respectively.





## Capacity-building bears fruit

The division continued to provide training to policymakers, Geneva-based diplomats and other key stakeholders on critical issues related to the international economic agenda.

A significant portion of these efforts was carried out via a programme known as “P166”, derived from the 166th paragraph of the Bangkok Plan of Action adopted at the 10th quadrennial conference of UNCTAD in 2000.

Within this programme, two regional courses took place in 2023, in Skopje and Cairo, respectively.

Participants have acknowledged how the course enhanced their understanding of economic and trade issues, ranging from

structural transformation to the latest developments in science, technology, and innovation.

In trade and transport facilitation, the division assisted developing countries in implementing reforms, particularly the Trade Facilitation Agreement of WTO, designed to simplify formalities and reduce trade costs. UNCTAD worked with 70 partner countries and 10 Regional Economic Communities in the area of trade facilitation in 2023 and organized 200+ webinars and meetings with more than 1,100 participants of which around 50 per cent were women.

The division also offered technical assistance, capacity-building, advisory services and analysis, to facilitate knowledge transfer and empower national trade facilitation committees.

## Top projects

### eWeek 2023

- A total of 150+ sessions were held, including 18 high-level sessions
- 3,500+ registered participants from governments, the private sector, international organizations, civil society, and academia
- 720+ speakers and moderators contributed
- 159 countries represented
- Recognized at the 9th Geneva Engage Awards as winner of the special category of “Effective and Innovative Meetings”, for the use of artificial intelligence to report on meetings during eWeek 2023

## ASYCUDA Programme



**Transfer of know-how**  
300+ training sessions &  
3 000+ participants

65 **Operational projects** (including 14 international and regional)

**Gambia**  
23% increase  
in customs revenue  
from 2022 to 2023

**Republic of Moldova**  
15 minutes  
validation of domestic  
products exports

**Nepal**  
Consignments  
cleared in less  
than 20  
hours

13 **Single Window projects**

- Barbados
- Burundi
- Comoros
- Jamaica
- Kazakhstan
- Rwanda
- Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
- Sao Tome and Principe
- Timor-Leste
- Turkmenistan
- Uganda
- Vanuatu
- Zimbabwe

### Funding Partners







*A valuable opportunity to gain knowledge and insights into the international economic agenda. Regional courses like the P166 programme offer a platform for diplomats like me to exchange ideas, network, and enhance understanding of economic issues.*

**Khuzama O.M. Hannon**  
*Third Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, State of Palestine*



*Namibia uses the UNCTAD Reform Tracker which is a critical tool for the National Trade Facilitation Committee which NAMRA chairs. The Reform Tracker assures sustainability of the National Trade Facilitation Committees, as it facilitates project management and monitoring and allows for systematic knowledge transfer. Since I started using the Reform Tracker, I have learned a lot and engaged more extensively with stakeholders.*

**Julinda Makili**  
*Senior Customs & Excise Officer, Namibia Revenue Authority*







# UNCTAD Statistics

**UNCTAD Statistics plays a pivotal role in coordinating and supporting all statistical activities within UNCTAD, ensuring high-quality statistics that adhere to international standards.**

**The UNCTAD Statistics team is responsible for providing official statistics and indicators spanning trade and development, finance, technology, transport, investment and sustainable development and ensuring robust research, analysis, and policy action.**

**The team develops methods and standards for collecting, compiling, and disseminating high-quality statistics that adhere to international standards. Key tasks include producing verified statistics via the UNCTADstat data centre, coordinating data activities, deriving insights with innovative methods, and contributing to global statistics development.**

**Additionally, Statistics works internationally to support national statistical capacity and collaborates around the world in developing new statistics and methods on topics related to the mandate of UNCTAD.**





## Overview

UNCTAD Statistics provides accurate data to inform policy and monitor progress in almost every economy in the world. In 2023, UNCTAD released 130 official statistics and extended the coverage of the Inclusive Growth Index, a tool evaluating the inclusivity and sustainability of economies, to encompass 129 countries.

The year was marked by active international engagement. In partnership with UNDESA and UNDP, UNCTAD Statistics led a United Nations initiative entitled “Valuing What Counts: Framework to Progress beyond Gross Domestic Product”, which will focus on wellbeing and agency, respect for life, greater solidarity to address inequalities, building participatory governance, ethical and innovative economies and strengthening resilience to reduce vulnerability.

UNCTAD also developed methods to assess the cost of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Both topics were debated at the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Summit in September 2023.

UNCTAD substantively contributed to trade statistics manuals, linking business and trade statistics to generate new insights, while advancing global data governance and leading efforts to highlight gender considerations in trade statistics.

UNCTAD is a custodian of Sustainable Development Goal indicators, and in 2023 this role yielded tangible results. Countries reported the first official numbers on illicit financial flows, thanks to capacity development by UNCTAD, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the five regional commissions of the United Nations.

Pioneering countries also shared the first data on the framework to measure South-South cooperation, a tool developed by the global South to make their mutual support visible on the 2030 Agenda.

## Key issues

- Valuing What Counts: Framework to Progress beyond Gross Domestic Product, to recalibrate the notion of “progress” in a world awash with compounding crises of environmental concerns, debt burdens, war and insecurity.
- Bridging the data gap on women’s economic empowerment to enable more gender-focused policy actions; helping developing countries generate new policy insights by linking and reusing existing national data.
- Developing credible methods and tools to assess the cost of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals – in partnership with together with UNDESA, UNDP and UN Women.



## Results

UNCTAD Statistics provides official statistics and indicators for research, analysis and policy action on trade and development, including finance, technology, transport, investment and sustainable development.

The Statistics team offers data-driven analysis of global trade and development issues coupled with innovative techniques and methodologies for new insights. This supports national efforts to strengthen statistical capacity and international collaboration.

The Statistics team strives to improve availability of policy-relevant and reliable data, with UNCTADstat serving as a gateway to official statistics on trade, economy, productive capacities, digital economy, government expenditure, foreign direct investment, and various types of trade in plastics, oceans, creative goods and services and biotrade, among others. Statistics on trade in goods and services are jointly compiled and released with WTO.

In September 2023, UNCTAD released a modernized UNCTADstat data centre. New data sets were provided, including the Inclusive Growth Index, Technology Readiness Index and Government Expenditure by sector. In 2023, UNCTADstat recorded over 812,000 sessions with over 7.7 million page views and 505,000 data downloads by close to 342,000 users.

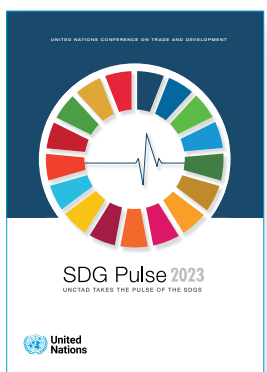
## Quality statistics for development

In uncertain times, reliable statistics and analysis are even more indispensable. To this end, the service engages with the United Nations Global Crisis Response Group, providing data science and methodologies, particularly for food, energy, and price data.

Halfway to 2023, progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals is severely off track. To plug the data gap for more targeted action, in September UNCTAD released the first cost estimates of accelerating Sustainable Development Goal transitions and advancing gender equality, accompanied by a repository of tools to support member States, available at [unctad.org/sdg-costing](https://unctad.org/sdg-costing). The analysis covers over 90 economies and 72 per cent of the global population, focusing on 48 developing economies.

In December, the Handbook of Statistics pooled key numbers in an engaging, interactive analysis of international trade, economy, investment, maritime transport and development. This was complemented by the UNCTAD SDG Pulse, which has an equivalent focus on key numbers, but for sustainable development issues. The SDG Pulse was restructured in 2023 to focus on multilateralism, development finance, diversification and sustainability.

Additionally, the Productive Capacities Index 2.0 was released with enhanced methodology and data sources. This upgrade enhances what is a vital tool for countries to assess their productive capacities, and to design effective policy actions. The data are available on [UNCTADstat data centre](https://unctadstat.org).



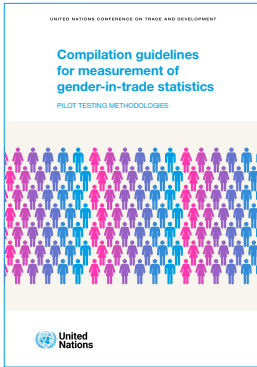


## Shoring up capacity-building

UNCTAD reaches a large group of statisticians and data users. In 2023, WTO and the United Nations Statistics division together with UNCTAD Statistics and the TrainForTrade programme trained 2,494 participants from 176 countries on how to compile and use international trade statistics.

Of the attendees, 58 per cent were male and 42 per cent were female; 74 per cent of participants successfully passed the training with a certificate. Feedback showed that 89 per cent of the trainees were satisfied with the training.

Separately, through a project focused on improving statistics on gender and trade in developing countries, 106 participants were trained on linking existing national statistical data to assess gender in trade. The process, called “microdata linking”, offers a cost-effective and sustainable alternative to creating new one-off surveys. In collaboration with the United Nations regional commissions for Africa and Europe, UNCTAD held sessions about the methodology for this and released [compilation guidelines](#) resulting from the project, including at the 9th United Nations Global Forum on Gender Statistics.



## Wide-ranging collaboration

In 2023, UNCTAD launched work on measuring South–South cooperation, with methodologies being developed with 51 experts from 16 countries and 10 international organizations.

UNCTAD and the United Nations regional commissions organized an interregional meeting to kick-start a global project on measuring illicit financial flows (IFFs), which involved training 38 experts from 10 countries.

More broadly on this topic, approximately 400 experts participated in online events and shared country experiences on measuring tax, commercial and crime-related IFFs.

In a project with the World Health Organization, UNCTAD Statistics developed new classifications and methods to unpack data on trade in processed foods.

In 2021, food represented 8 per cent of global trade valued at \$1.7 trillion, compared to 6 per cent in 2000. The composition of food trade can have important health impacts. This is why monitoring is supported with granular trade flow data, released on UNCTADstat in early 2024.

In 2023, statistical coordination mechanisms were strengthened. UNCTAD Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan signed the UNCTAD Statistics Quality Declaration as part of the renewed [UNCTAD Statistics Quality Assurance Framework](#), and established an organization-wide statistical release calendar and annual statistical programme.



## Top projects

- Activated a global project, led by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, to support **eight countries** to produce standardized estimates of **illicit financial flows** and feed these data to their investigative and analytical capacities for effective response.
- Initiated a global project to help developing countries better **quantify South–South cooperation** to mobilize funds for sustainable development. The first expert meeting brought together **16 developing countries** and over **10 partner organizations** in Brasilia.
- Concluded a **four-year** United Nations Development Account project on **data and statistics** for more **gender-responsive trade policies**, which supported **six countries** to develop and use statistics to address gender disparities in trade.
- Finalized the [Trade in Services Statistics Information System](#) to collect and compile international trade in services statistics. **Eight countries in Western Africa** are using this tool to enhance the evidence base for trade policy and produce internationally comparable statistics.

## Looking ahead

In 2023, UNCTAD provided high-quality statistics which contributed to fostering inclusive economic development, enhancing transparency and empowering governments and stakeholders with valuable data and evidence-based tools.

Looking ahead to 2024, the demand for reliable data remains significant. This is evident in high-level political resolutions where UNCTAD has been requested “to strengthen capacity-building on the initial voluntary conceptual framework for the measurement of South–South cooperation based on country-led mechanisms” and “provide stronger support to national authorities to measure illicit financial flows” with UNODC.

In the context of financing for development, there is a “need to urgently develop measures of progress” beyond gross domestic product. Meeting these increasing demands for statistical development calls for stronger engagement by UNCTAD with United Nations entities, member States and other partners.







# New York Office

UNCTAD continued to make substantive contributions to intergovernmental and interagency processes held in New York. In an era of challenges to multilateralism, UNCTAD was instrumental in building consensus at the Economic and Financial Committee of the General Assembly (Second Committee) on several key development issues, including:

- International trade
- Commodities
- Investment
- Information and communication technologies
- Science, technology and innovation
- The creative economy (a new United Nations General Assembly agenda item introduced in 2023)
- Debt sustainability
- Illicit financial flows





UNCTAD took the lead in preparing and presenting the reports of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for the resolutions mentioned above. These reports provided essential background information for discussions of the Second Committee of the United Nations. Furthermore, UNCTAD directly supported the month-long negotiation of seven of the 41 resolutions considered by the Second Committee during its 78th session. UNCTAD further supported the negotiation of a new General Assembly resolution which proclaimed 16 September as the International Day of Science, Technology and Innovation for the South.

During the 78<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly, UNCTAD served as the co-convenor of the joint ECOSOC-Second Committee side event (Economic and Social Council) on *Leveraging Commodities for Sustainable Economic Development*. This included a keynote address by Nobel Laureate Dr. Joseph Stiglitz and highlighted the expertise of UNCTAD in one of its most long-standing areas.

An important element of UNCTAD engagement in New York is the direct involvement of UNCTAD senior officials.

This takes place through speaking roles, for instance by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals Summit and the high-level week of the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly, as well as some 140 bilateral meetings supported by the New York Office. These engagements helped position the work of UNCTAD in New York and reinforced UNCTAD contributions to multilateral discussions on development, including through the UNCTAD-led High Impact Initiative for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, *Transforming4Trade*, presented during the Sustainable Development Goal Action Weekend in September 2023.

In the run up to the high-level week of the United Nations General Assembly, UNCTAD was convoked by Cuba as Chair of the Group of 77 to contribute to the Havana Summit on Science and Technology of the Group of 77 and China. UNCTAD participation in this event, coordinated from New York, contributed to setting the stage for the position of the Group of 77 on a series of intergovernmental debates.

The engagement of UNCTAD in New York was reinforced through the substantive

contribution of the Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD; of the President of the Trade and Development Board to the ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development Follow-up; and of the Chair of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, all of which were facilitated by the UNCTAD New York Office. UNCTAD officials also contributed to the sessions of the General Assembly, especially the Second Committee, ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies, including the United Nations Statistical Commission.

Throughout the year, UNCTAD New York played a leading role in channelling contributions from UNCTAD into the agenda of the Financing for Development mechanisms defined in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. This included supporting UNCTAD in its role as one of the five major institutional stakeholders of the Financing for Development process and as a member of the related Inter-Agency Task Force, which is responsible for the United Nations Financing for Sustainable Development Report. Furthermore, UNCTAD was the co-convenor of the Inter-Agency Task Team on Science, Technology and Innovation, which organizes the multi-stakeholder forum

on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals, a mechanism established by the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

With its longstanding expertise on the challenges of countries in special situations, UNCTAD engaged in the preparatory processes for the 4th International Conference on the Small Island Developing States, and the 3rd International Conference on the Landlocked Developing Countries. The UNCTAD New York Office contributed extensively to these processes by drawing on the work of UNCTAD, particularly the Productive Capacities Index and as well as through the work of UNCTAD in the fields of science, technology and innovation, digitalization, finance, investment, trade, transport and trade facilitation.

The contribution of UNCTAD in New York was further recognized through the inclusion of the Chief of the UNCTAD New York Office in the Board of Advisors on Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States of the 78<sup>th</sup> President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Dennis Francis.







# Regional Office for Africa

The Regional Office for Africa, situated in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, advances the work of UNCTAD in support of African countries and their people to benefit from the global economy. The office facilitates trade and development initiatives led by UNCTAD that are dedicated to promoting sustainable development and fostering inclusive economic growth across Africa, including supporting the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement.





In 2023, the Regional Office for Africa relocated to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa complex in Addis Ababa. This strategic move positions the office in the same compound with other United Nations organizations and fosters increased collaboration with them.

During the year, the office organized two events to disseminate key messages and policy recommendations from the *Economic Development in Africa Report 2023* and the *Least Developed Countries Report 2023*. The events, delivered to over 100 African-based stakeholders, fostered dialogue on the themes of the Reports, which focused on the potential of Africa to capture technology-intensive supply chains and crisis-resilient development finance.

The office also distributed 1,300 copies of UNCTAD flagship reports and its technical cooperation toolbox to Addis Ababa-based embassies and permanent missions, universities and other stakeholders.

To amplify the visibility of the work of UNCTAD, the office increased engagement with the African Union and member States with permanent missions and embassies in Addis Ababa and other African-based stakeholders.

It also expanded communications and outreach to audiences across Africa and stepped-up efforts to mobilize resources to support priority initiatives such as the AfCFTA and facilitate technical assistance on the continent.

In 2024, the office will continue its main areas of work and redouble efforts to:

- Revitalize engagement with member States, regional economic commissions and other stakeholders based across Africa to amplify UNCTAD visibility and expand partnerships.
- Publicize the work of UNCTAD, including flagship reports, publications, research products and projects in Africa and highlight activities that seek to develop the continent.



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This publication has been edited externally.

UNCTAD/OSG/2024/1



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