



DTL/KDB/MISC/2021/1
(21/25gd)

NOTIFICATION

Short courses on key international economic and development issues for delegates from permanent missions to the United Nations Office at Geneva and the World Trade Organization

First semester 2021

The UNCTAD secretariat is pleased to announce that another series of short courses on key international economic issues for delegates from permanent missions to the United Nations Office at Geneva and the World Trade Organization will be held in the first semester of 2021.

The aim of the courses is to give delegates from permanent missions an opportunity to become better acquainted with topical issues and developments in the international economic agenda as they are reflected in the work of UNCTAD. Course descriptions are provided below.

Four courses will be held: on Tuesday, 2 February; Thursday, 4 March; Friday, 16 April; and Friday, 7 May 2021.

If conditions permit, the courses will be held at the Palais des Nations from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. (10 a.m. to 12 p.m. if the course is held in a virtual format) and will be delivered in English, with simultaneous interpretation into Arabic, French and Spanish. Courses will begin promptly at 10 a.m. to allow sufficient time for debate after the presentations.

The secretariat invites permanent missions to nominate delegates who follow matters pertaining to UNCTAD and/or the World Trade Organization to attend these courses. Course applications may be completed online at [Short courses, first semester](#).

Queries concerning the courses should be addressed to Ms. Randa Jamal, Project Coordinator, Knowledge Development Branch, Division on Technology and Logistics, UNCTAD, tel: 41 22 917 2718; email: randajamal@unctad.org.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mukhisa Kituyi'.

Mukhisa Kituyi
Secretary-General of UNCTAD

26 January 2021

**Short courses on key international economic issues
for delegates from permanent missions to the United Nations Office at Geneva
and the World Trade Organization
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Course descriptions

The UNCTAD *Review of Maritime Transport 2020: Global trends and lessons learned from the pandemic*

2 February 2021

Delivered by the Division on Technology and Logistics

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has underscored the global interdependency of nations and set in motion new trends that will reshape the maritime transport landscape. The sector is at a pivotal moment, facing not only immediate concerns resulting from the pandemic but also longer-term considerations, ranging from shifts in supply chain design and globalization patterns to changes in consumption and spending habits and a growing focus on risk assessment and resilience-building, along with the increased importance of a global sustainability and low-carbon agenda. The pandemic has brought to the fore the importance of maritime transport as an essential sector for the continued delivery of critical supplies and global trade in a time of crisis, during the recovery stage and when resuming normality.

The course will present key findings from the UNCTAD *Review of Maritime Transport 2020*, launched in November 2020, as well as some recent updates on key developments in international maritime transport. It will follow the structure of the report and include the presentation and discussion of the following topics: International maritime trade and port traffic; maritime transport services and infrastructure supply; performance indicators; and the COVID-19 pandemic, including lessons learned from first-hand experiences and legal issues and regulatory developments.

Harnessing blockchain for sustainable development: Prospects and challenges

4 March 2021

Delivered by the Division on Technology and Logistics

In an increasingly digitalized economy and society, the security and accountability of data transactions are critical elements in creating trust and enabling breakthrough innovations in the digital world. In this regard, blockchain technology could be a game changer, serving as the base technology for cryptocurrency and enabling open (peer-to-peer), secure and fast transactions. However, there are some potential market constraints, including issues associated with scalability, privacy concerns, uncertain regulatory standards and difficulties posed by the technology in its integration with existing applications. There is also the risk that the potential of blockchain for solving developmental problems has been somewhat inflated by its early adopters and technology-related media and that it may not be as applicable in developing countries and the least developed countries.

The course will address the challenges that Governments face in this regard, in addition to policy options that could influence the rate and direction of innovation and the building of blockchain to contribute to national development priorities and accelerate progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The course will also present the basics of blockchain technology, describe its ecosystem of innovation and discuss how blockchain could impact the Sustainable Development Goals. It will focus on scenarios that impact sustainable development, and delegates will have the opportunity to deepen their understanding of the basics of blockchain technology, its potential impact on achieving the Goals and policy options to influence the rate and direction of innovation. The course will also raise awareness on the prospects of and challenges in harnessing blockchain technology for sustainable development.

The UNCTAD productive capacities index: A new tool for policy formulation in developing countries

16 April 2021

Delivered by the Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes

In response to a request by member States at the fourteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, UNCTAD developed the productive capacities index. This multidimensional composite index covers 193 economies and is composed of 46 indicators across eight categories: namely, information and communications technology, structural change, natural capital, human capital, energy, transport, the private sector and institutions. The index will be a valuable tool in guiding the formulation and implementation of development policies. It will also assist in the assessment of progress made in the implementation of domestic policies and global actions and frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals and specific programmes of action. The index builds on long-standing work by UNCTAD on productive capacities as the productive resources, entrepreneurial capabilities and production linkages that together determine a country's capacity to produce goods and services.

Delegates will have the opportunity to deepen their understanding of the importance of the index as a tool for guiding policy formulation and implementation in developing countries; evaluations of aggregate indexes in developing countries; levels and conditions of category-specific scores and values with policy implications; and the way forward and the relevance of the index in their daily activities.

Services value added in exports: Policies for development

7 May 2021

Delivered by the Division on International Trade and Commodities

Services provide intermediate inputs to all economic sectors, namely, the primary sector, the industrial sector and even the tertiary sector. For example, automated crop monitoring services are increasingly relevant in agriculture, software services are key in the automotive industry and telecommunications services are necessary for mobile and digital financial services. The increased use, production and export of services embedded in all sectors is the “servicification” of the economy and trade. As such, the performance of the whole economy and trade is related to the effectiveness of services inputs. In developing countries, services account for two thirds of total productivity growth. For example, UNCTAD conducted a case study on services value added in Brazil where, in 2015, services accounted for 17 per cent of direct exports and 48 per cent of value-added exports. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development reflects the importance of services in several Goals, for example by including infrastructure development, access to information and communications technology and access to financial services as targets under Goal 9 on industry, innovation and infrastructure. The economic crisis triggered by the pandemic requires, with greater urgency, the use of servicification to promote export diversification, upgrading and a robust economic recovery. Servicification and its effects have not been sufficiently discussed in policy debates, including those on trade policy. This is because some servicification-related concepts disrupt some traditional analytical approaches and also due to the lack of sufficient data and information on the relevance of servicification.

The course addresses this gap by covering the relevance of servicification, related concepts and how servicification can be addressed in policymaking, including in trade policy and regulatory frameworks. It will discuss the strategic importance of services value added for the economy and international trade. Delegates will have the opportunity to deepen their understanding of this importance and of the ways through which services value added is incorporated into the economy and trade. The course will shed light on the significance of servicification, including utilizing the UNCTAD guidebook on the methodology for measuring services value added, in addition to providing knowledge on the services-related policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks necessary to use services value added in exports to pursue development goals.