**TIP** It is recommended that members subscribe to Debates and Resources on the Virtual Institute site to receive e-mail notification of additions to these sections.

>> Everyone on the Vi Team offers their best wishes for the NEW YEAR! <<

>_NEWS_

**Foreign Trade University of Vietnam becomes latest member to join the Vi**

The Foreign Trade University, the key institution in Vietnam developing qualified human resources for international trade, was established in 1960 and has since then evolved into a multi-disciplinary institution with a variety of academic and research programmes that meet the specific requirements and needs of the country's transitional economy. FTU offers undergraduate and graduate programmes and a Phd in world economy and economic relations, as well as providing research to the Vietnamese government and services to the business sector.

**Virtual Institute Completes Successful Workshop on Investment, in Bangkok**

The workshop, devised in collaboration with the UNCTAD program on investment agreements, was concluded at the beginning of December and generated great interest among academicians from Asia on the teaching and research of investment. Several universities plan to use the materials to strengthen their existing courses, and participants at the workshop also envisage new research projects on investment. The workshop, financially supported by the Government of Japan and hosted by the International Institute for Trade and Development in Bangkok, gathered an audience of 19 participants from universities and research institutes from 11 Asian countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam).

**Virtual Institute Workshop on Commodities, Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, 16th-20th Jan.**

A 5-day workshop for African academics and researchers who are either already involved in teaching and researching commodities or who plan introducing these issues into their courses and research. The workshop will present a training package on the economics of commodity production and trade jointly developed by the Vi and the UNCTAD Commodities Branch. It will also address ways in which commodity issues are or can be reflected in university curricula and how the training package can help in this regard. Finally, it will introduce issues that are currently on the commodity research agenda and discuss methods that can be used to analyze them.
The Hong Kong Ministerial and Beyond
A collection of articles by Virtual Institute members addressing the prospects for the Hong Kong ministerial, and beyond, has been posted to the Vi Website. The articles look at the development challenge of the current multilateral negotiations from the perspective of developed countries, middle income developing countries and the Least Developed Countries.

Submission of Research Papers on Trade and Poverty
The Vi university member Latin American School of Social Sciences (FLASCO), in Argentina, acts as the coordinator of the Latin American Trade Network (LATN), an interdisciplinary research network established to support the capacity of trade policy making in Latin American countries. In cooperation with the International Development Research Centre in Canada, the LATN has called for the submission of research papers on the impact of trade agreements on poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean. The contest is open for residents of Latin America and accepts papers till the 31st of January 2006.

>_TEACHING RESOURCES

The Economic and Legal Aspects of International Investment Agreements (IIAs)
This new material on FDI and IIAs is now available to members to use as a stand alone resource on FDI and investment agreements or to augment existing courses at a postgraduate level. The material was recently presented in a workshop on IIAs in Bangkok (see news) and received a great deal of positive feedback.

The material is broken into two halves: the first consists of two modules which provide background information on the economic aspects of investment agreements and FDI, while the second consists of two modules focusing more specifically on the legal aspects of IIAs. Throughout the material there are comprehension and class discussion questions relating to the themes described in the 'table of contents'. There are also practical exercises, case studies, glossaries and lists of relevant readings. In addition, members will also be able to download a series of interesting powerpoint presentations used by our workshop facilitators in Bangkok. You will need to log in to access these materials; they can be found under > 'training materials' > 'Economic and Legal Aspects of IIAs'

UNCTAD CD-Rom on the Contribution of Corporations to Development
This CD-Rom contains documents and presentations from a recent expert meeting held in Geneva at the beginning of November this year. The 'experts' come from many backgrounds ranging from the private sector, government agencies, the United Nations to NGOs and academia. The meeting consisted of five sessions covering the areas of investment in developing countries, the provision of affordable goods and services, employment, the transfer of technology and the role of government policy. All five of the sessions are reflected by the material on the CD-Rom, which includes Powerpoint presentations, briefing documents and speeches. This material is not available on the Vi website, but it can be ordered for free by sending an email with your postal address to joseph.clements@unctad.org
UNCTAD World Investment Report 2005

This year's WIR looks at the internationalisation of R+D and the role of transnational corporations and their impact on development. In part one, it documents the recovery of FDI inflows to developing countries, in particular South America, and the prominence of Asia and Oceana as the largest recipients and sources of FDI among developing countries. In contrast, FDI to developed countries declined, with the notable exceptions of the UK and the US, owing mainly to cross border M+As.

In part two, the report highlights the trend of TNCs establishing more R+D facilities outside developed countries and examines the implications of this trend for development. The spillover effects of R+D in developing countries can potentially bring technological change, industrial upgrading and increased skills to workforces. However, it also points out that this trend is uneven in developing countries, for example, in Africa where - with the exception of Morocco and South Africa - R+D by TNCs is "virtually non-existent."

The report also emphasises the need for strong government policies to extract the development benefits from FDI flows. A final chapter outlines the role of international agreements in this area. Click here to access the interactive database on FDI flows, stocks, mergers and acquisitions, and investment treaties based on year and country. You will need to register first.

UNCTAD Information Economy Report 2005

In the Information Economy Report 2005, UNCTAD outlines the expansion in the dissemination and use of ICT in developing countries. However, the report also highlights that the gaps between developing and developed countries are still too wide for the promise of a global information society to be achieved. For example, in Africa, the number of internet users grew by 56 per cent in 2003, but in absolute terms only 1.1 per cent of Africans had access to the internet compared with 55.7 per cent of North Americans. To be able to benefit fully from the internet, users do not only need access but also fast and good-quality connections. In many developing countries such connections are not available.

However, the scarcity of data on ICT hinders effective policy-making. Furthermore, the report underlines that national and international level strategies promoting the transition of developing countries to information economies have to be developed. Appropriate ICT policies can have positive impacts on growth, productivity, employment and business performance. Special emphasis is made on the urgent need to explore policies and best practices in order to increase the productivity and competitiveness of enterprises through the use of ICT in developing countries.

The report is divided into six chapters: chapter 1 gives an overview of general trends in the development of ICT access; chapter 2 deals with connectivity arrangements for developing countries; chapter 3 examines the role of e-credit information in providing access to trade-related finance; chapter 4 looks at the opportunities that e-tourism provides for developing countries; chapter 5 outlines concerns in regard to information security; and chapter 6 addresses the phenomenon of cybercrime.
UNCTAD Developing Countries in International Trade 2005

One of the highlights of the report is an attempt to develop a conceptual framework for analysing the complex interaction of factors affecting the link between trade and development. This interaction is expressed in terms of the Trade and Development Index (TDI). In constructing the TDI, a point of departure was to recognize that to act as an engine of development, trade must lead to steady improvements in human welfare by expanding the range of peoples’ choices. The latter depends on the factors determining both trade outcomes and human development outcomes.

In accounting for these interactions, the TDI tries to provide a quantitative indication of the trade and development performance of countries. The highest TDI scoring countries tend to score uniformly high in the different components measured. This finding highlights the need for greater coherence between trade policy and rule making on the one hand, and development strategies, as well as development solidarity and partnership, on the other.

The report presents TDI scores and components analysis in its first Chapter. Chapter 2 deals with the determinants of export performance and chapter 3 examines the issue of adjustment following trade liberalization, using results from country case studies and simulations.

> **MEETINGS**

There are currently no meetings at UNCTAD of interest to our network. We will keep you informed of any changes to this situation in the new year.

> **LINKS**

**Bridges Weekly Digest**

Featured previously in our July 2004 newsletter, the Bridges Weekly Trade Digest, provided by the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development, is a valuable round up of the trade and sustainable development field. During the week of the WTO ministerial in Hong Kong, they are sending out daily email updates on current developments in the negotiations. Their site can be accessed by clicking on the link above.

**Global Facilitation Partnership for Transportation and Trade**

The GFP is a partnership of several organisations including UN agencies and the World Bank. The website is designed as a “single window” entry point for anyone interested in trade facilitation: a particularly useful resource is the database of training resources, although some of the material is not fully online. The site encourages contributions from members which are also rated by site users,
making it easier to select appropriate resources. In addition the site features news and developments on trade facilitation issues.

>FEEDBACK

The Virtual Institute would welcome any feedback, both positive and critical, about the new look Vi Newsletter. Is it clear? Are the links helpful? Do they work? Equally if there is any aspect of UNCTAD's work that you would like to see reported in the newsletter, please make suggestions and we will try to cover it. We would also welcome any news items from member universities about their current activities. Send all comments to: joseph.clements@unctad.org

ALSO, if you haven't already, please have a look at our new website and familiarise yourself with its layout and content.

The Virtual Institute on Trade and Development is a knowledge-sharing programme designed to strengthen the capacities of academic institutions to teach and research trade issues, particularly in developing countries.

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