Second Vi Meeting Concluded in October

The second Vi meeting was attended by 13 of the 15 Vi Member universities who gathered in Geneva to discuss the future work plan of the network, build professional relationships with each other and participate in discussions on a number of trade topics. The former Ambassador of Uruguay to the United Nations in Geneva gave a lecture on the future prospects for international trade and multilateral trade negotiations, which was filmed and is available as a DVD from the Virtual Institute by sending an email to susana.olivares@unctad.org.

The members reviewed up-coming training material that will be published in 2007 on regional trade agreements, the transfer of technology and trade data analysis, adding comments and suggestions as well as debating some of the issues and questions of relevance to the topics. Additionally the network agreed to the next phase in the development of training material: localising resources for the specific regional and country contexts of the members. Already, our network member in Colombia - EAFIT university - has submitted a proposal to localise the training material on the Economic and Legal Aspects of Investment, by adding a chapter on Colombian regulatory provisions and the domestic impact of IIAs, as well as translating the material into Spanish. The University of Mauritius has also submitted a proposal to localise the Investment material and the Economics of Commodities Production and Trade.

The network also agreed to collaborate on joint research projects and a number of proposals were generated at the meeting, which can be viewed in the summary of the meeting by clicking here. The network also reviewed its commitment to encouraging greater participation with the Virtual Institute and to actively disseminate and promote the work of the Vi. Talib Awad, from the University of Amman in Jordan and Hoang Chao of the Free Trade University in Hanoi, Vietnam, have been signing up new students and teachers to the network so that they can access the Vi's resources and training materials. Valentina Delich of FLASCO in Buenos Aires, Argentina has concluded an agreement with Cordoba University to work with them as an affiliate member university, and Sascha Feurst of EAFIT University in Colombia will also be signing up 8 regional universities in Colombia as affiliate members. To sign up individuals to the website so that they receive email alerts, the newsletter and access to the Vi materials, please send an email to susana.olivares@unctad.org with their first and surnames, work address and email.
Vi Members Involved in UNCTAD Paragraph 166 Course in Bangkok

Two Vi Members recently participated in the UNCTAD Paragraph 166 regional training course on key issues on the international economic agenda which took place in Bangkok, 13th Nov - 1st Dec 2006. Mehdi Fakheri from the School of International Relations in Tehran, Iran, attended as a participant of the three week course and Manoj Pant of Jahwarlal Nehru University in New Delhi, India took part as a resource person for the investment module.

"Since the participants were mainly policy makers, I think they have got the essence of what issues are crucial in trade and development" said Manoj Pant. "I gained mainly from the presentations in the 1st and 3rd weeks as the content was enormous and can be a great help in my own teaching program. I also found the module on regional trade arrangements extremely useful,"

Mehdi Fakheri echoed Manoj's views on the course: "I found the course very interesting. The training material was rich and relevant to my work, modules were well planned, but some of them too technical for some participants. Presentations were excellent, especially those done by UNCTAD resource persons. Being a professor, the course will have a considerable impact on my work, for which I am appreciative to the organizers.

The next UNCTAD Paragraph 166 course will take place in February in Cairo, Egypt and will involve the Economic Commission for Africa as well as Vi member coordinator Francis Matambalya of the University of Dar-Es-Salaam in Tanzania.

Vi Members Take Part in UNCTAD 'Expert Meeting' on Training, Research and Capacity Building

An UNCTAD expert meeting is an opportunity to bring together a group of specialists to discuss and exchange experiences and best practices on a particular topic, in this case the building of skills in developing countries: training, ICTs and networking. A background paper was prepared by staff of the Virtual Institute as well as the agenda and programme for the meeting all of which are available on the UNCTAD website.

Both Vi members Sarah Geddes from Carlton University in Canada and Francis Matambalya from the University of Dar-Es-Salaam in Tanzania made presentations under the session on strengthening training and teaching capacities in developing countries. Additionally, Francis also participated in the first roundtable of the meeting, on the challenges for capacity building efforts. In the third session, on strengthening research capacities in developing countries, Sam Laird - former principal trade expert at UNCTAD - presented the Virtual Institute's workshop on trade data and trade policy analysis, held in Geneva earlier this year (see Vi Newsletter issue 10). Also present at the meeting were representatives from the African Economic Research Consortium and the Economic Research Forum, both featured in our 'links' section below.

Vi Member, Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar, Organises Forum Linking Research and Policy Making

The "Days of the Senegalese Economy" organized by the Centre of Applied Policy Research (CREA) at the University of Dakar and its partners provided a forum for researchers and policy makers to jointly reflect on the main challenges faced by the country and possible policy responses supported by research findings.

CREA has conducted research on the competitiveness of Senegalese firms whose findings were shared and debated with the audience. The study concludes that in the market segment in which the Senegalese products are positioned, price is the most crucial determinant. According to Vi member coordinator, Aly Mbaye,
Director of CREA, what now needs to be done is to integrate the various pro-competitiveness programmes under a strategic document. As many of the actions to be undertaken, be they training or the building of infrastructure, take time and yield a result in a longer run, he also underlines the importance of starting the implementation process as soon as possible. The full text of an interview with Aly Mbaye is available in French on the Vi website by clicking here.

>_TEACHING RESOURCES

Now Available - CD-Rom of the Vi Trade Data and Trade Policy Analysis Workshop
Following our workshop in September on trade data and trade policy analysis, a CD-Rom is now available containing all the presentations and reading material from the week. Additionally, the CD contains links to sources of information and trade data as well as methodological tools, such as UNCTAD's Agricultural Trade Policy Simulation Model. There are also two short movies of the session on research questions and the round-table discussion between the workshop participants and Geneva-based policy makers. The recommendations for researchers and policy makers arising from this session are also available on the CD. To order a copy of the CD-Rom, please send an email to susana.olivares@unctad.org

CD-Roms Available of the Vi Annual Meeting
As mentioned above in the news section, there are two CDs available from the Vi meeting in October. The first contains all the presentations of members, the Vi team and UNCTAD staff on finished and proposed teaching material, the previous years' achievements and the future work plan of the network. The second CD contains a film of His Excellency Carlos Perez Del Castillo, former Ambassador of Uruguay to Geneva, giving a lecture on the prospects for international trade and multilateral trade negotiations. To order copies of the CDs please send an email to susana.olivares@unctad.org, stating which CD you are interested in.

Presentation by Vi Member Coordinator, Talib Awad Posted to Vi Website
This short movie on FDI and the Jordanian economy shows a presentation narrated by Vi member coordinator, Professor Talib Awad, from the University of Jordan. The movie was originally posted under the discussion section of the Vi website with the intention of generating responses and feedback from the network and other visitors, whilst at the same time allowing Talib to respond to any questions. The presentation can still be found under ‘discussions’ on the Vi website.

>_PUBLICATIONS

World Investment Report, 2006 - FDI from Developing and Transition Economies: Implications for Development
This year's World Investment Report looks specifically at the increase in FDI by developing countries' TNCs. The report examines the magnitude of this phenomenon and investigates its drivers and determinants. In particular, the report analyses its impact on global economic development and discusses policy responses for both home and host developing countries.

As in previous years, the report presents the latest data on FDI and traces its global and regional trends. The main finding is that FDI inflows increased
considerably in 2005, including a surge of FDI in developing countries’ commodity-producing sectors and maintained a high-level of FDI in developing countries’ service sectors. While Asia remained the main magnet for FDI flows, followed by Latin America, FDI in Africa has also increased, albeit from a low level.

**Information Economy Report, 2006 - The Development Perspective**

This year's report provides data on the adoption of ICT by enterprises in developing countries. It explores ICT policy options for governments, introduces a framework for national ICT policy reviews and discusses its best use for assessing existing policies and for designing pro-poor e-strategies.

In particular, trends in core ICT indicators such as the use of the Internet and of mobile phones are analyzed. The report concludes that in developing countries governmental intervention is still needed, in order to promote the diffusion of ICT in areas where private providers would not invest, due to excessive costs associated with geographic hurdles or the absence of a critical mass of customers.

Moreover, the report presents research on the impact of ICT on developing countries’ GDP, concluding that even in poor countries there is a positive effect, though this effect increases with the level of ICT already in use.

**Landlocked Developing Countries, Facts and Figures, 2006**

Dependence on trade and transport systems in neighboring and coastal countries and geographical remoteness continue to impose constraints on the overall socio-economic development of landlocked developing countries. Their sea-borne trade depends on transit through other countries. Additional border crossings and long distances from markets increase the total expenses for transport services. This discourages investors and reduces the capacity of LLDCs to obtain benefits from the international division of labour.

This report presents key economic, social and trade information on all 31 LLDCs. It helps to understand the development challenge faced by these countries and underlines the need for developed countries to assist them.

>_MEETINGS_

**UNCTAD Expert Meeting on TNC-SME Linkages - CD-Rom available**

This CD contains all the presentations and background papers of the UNCTAD expert meeting on SME-TNC linkages, which took place in Geneva from the 6th - 8th of November, as well as a summary of the meeting's sessions written by Vi staff. The expert meeting provided a forum for contributions from the public sector (e.g. from successful Business Linkages Programs - BLPs - in Malaysia, Ireland and Brazil), business (e.g. BASF or SAB Miller) and development agencies (such as UNCTAD, UNDP, GTZ or the ITC).

The experts largely agreed upon the following crucial success factors for a BLP: a conducive economic environment, including a critical mass of firms and consumers in the market; the dynamic cooperation of all relevant stakeholders; a catalyst facilitating the process and providing support; and the need to generate a mutual win-win situation for all stakeholders. Please send an email to susana.olivares@unctad.org to order a copy of this CD.
African Economic Research Consortium

Established in 1988 and based in Nairobi, Kenya, the AERC's main objective is to build up research capacity, which will contribute to improved economic decision-making in Sub-Saharan Africa. The website grants free access to almost 200 research papers with a particular focus on the economic development of Sub-Saharan Africa. The site also provides access to the joint research project of Harvard University, Oxford University and the AERC, which seeks to explain economic growth performance in Africa. AERC's research project on the impediments to an efficient participation of African countries in multilateral trade negotiations, the strategies to overcome these obstacles and the resulting possible impact on African economic development, provides several case studies on African countries' participation in such negotiations.

The website provides information about AERC's training activities, such as its capacity-building workshops for researchers, its collaborative university degree programs in economics and its efforts to improve the quality of promising economic departments of African universities.

Economic Research Forum (ERF)

ERF is a research network that initiates and funds policy-relevant economic research in the Arab region, Turkey and Iran, and disseminates the research results to scholars, policymakers, and the business community. The organization contributes to developing research capacity in the region through methodological workshops and trainings, online library facilities and networking opportunities. You can find more information on ERF's activities on their website: following the link you can access, for example, a series of trade-related working papers, a newsletter, and links to other regional and international institutes.

UNCTAD Vi Member Projects

This category, under 'resources' on the Vi website, was recently created following the Vi Meeting in October. The purpose of the category is to provide a place on the website for Virtual Institute University Members to post their work, research and other documents relevant for the network membership.

The category also contains documents relating to some of the member projects outlined in the Vi's activities and work plan, such as the guidelines and proposal forms for the localisation of teaching materials and joint research projects. The resources under this category are private, unless otherwise stated, and therefore only accessible to university members.

>FEEDBACK

The Virtual Institute welcomes any feedback, both positive and critical, about the 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: susana.olivares@unctad.org

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

***NOT A MEMBER? Sign up as an associate member by clicking here.***


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