The UNCTAD Virtual Institute celebrates its first anniversary

It has been one year this month since the Virtual Institute was launched at the eleventh conference of UNCTAD in Sao Paulo. From its 6 founding universities the membership has since increased to the current 12. More

Four new higher learning institutions join Vi

Each new addition to Vi membership broadens and strengthens the expertise within the Vi network and creates opportunities for partnerships with other institutions around the world. More

CONTENTS

1. VI ACTIVITIES
   1.1 Virtual Institute celebrates its first anniversary
   1.2 Virtual Institute/University of the West Indies study tour to Geneva
   1.3 Japan funds two Virtual Institute projects for Asian and African LDCs
   1.4 First annual Virtual Institute meeting

2. NEW UNCTAD AND Vi RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS
   2.1 Why is competition policy important for development? - new training material
   2.2 Negotiating for food security - simulation exercise on WTO negotiations
   2.3 Science and Technology in development
   2.4 Background materials on commodities

3. MEMBERS: Information about members and members’ activities
   3.1 New Virtual Institute members
       ➢ University of International Business and Economics (UIBE), China
       ➢ Cheikh Anta Diop University (UCAD), Senegal
       ➢ University of the West Indies (UWI)
       ➢ Latin American School of Social Sciences (FLACSO), Argentina
   3.2 New position for Professor Mario Presser

4. FORTHCOMING UNCTAD MEETING: opportunities for researchers

5. INTERESTING LINKS
   5.1 UNCTAD INFO COMM website - Market Information on Commodities
   5.2 Global Trade Negotiations website
1. Vi ACTIVITIES

1.1 VI celebrates its first anniversary

One year on and what have we learnt?

Surprising as it seems one year has passed since the launch of the Virtual Institute.

In 12 months membership has increased by 100% - up from 6 members to 12. We have published 183 resources and we have launched new projects on key trade and development areas (see relevant content number).

We have conducted a needs analysis to get a better idea about what universities are interested in and all of us have been on a sharp learning curve - finding out about each others' work and our training needs. We now look forward to extending our collaboration through our first Vi meeting in Geneva in July, where we will set out detailed objectives and activities for the Vi’s second year!

1.2 Virtual Institute/University of West Indies Study Tour to Geneva

"The tour enhanced my personal understanding of the role of international organizations in trade relations", said one of the participants.

Post-graduate students of UWI visit UNCTAD

30 post-graduate students from the Masters Programme in International Trade Policy at the University of the West Indies (UWI) spent 3 weeks in Geneva, meeting and discussing with experts. The UWI course has a creative approach to training future policy makers. Students must all spend time on a "practicum" where they get to see close up the work of trade professionals.

In keeping with this policy orientated approach, this study tour - organised jointly by the UWI the Vi in collaboration with other UNCTAD divisions, the WTO and the ITC - gave the students access to expert presentations, Q&A sessions, simulations and practical exercises on a range of trade, investment and development issues. Study tour participants also met with delegates of their respective Missions in Geneva.

Thanks to the study tour students returned with greater insights into the trade policy processes and with even greater determination to make international trade work for development.

1.3 Japan funds two Virtual Institute projects for Asian and African LDCs

...the aim is to provide resources and activities that will enable academic

How can commodities support economic development? What are the purpose and impact of international investment agreements?

Two new Vi projects for universities - one on International Commodity Trade and the other on International Investment Agreements - made possible thanks to the Government of Japan, will address these questions.

A better understanding of the challenges and opportunities of commodity production and trade are essential to the economic development of many African countries, especially the least developed ones. Similarly, it is important to be able to analyze the
| institutions to enhance their research and teaching of important trade issues and to provide tools that will help them contribute to policy discussions in their countries. | role of investment and international investment agreements in the economic and social development of LDCs.  
Undertaken jointly with the Commodities Branch and the Investment Agreements Section of UNCTAD, the idea is to work with universities, academics and other researchers to broaden the base of key actors who can contribute to policy discussions in Asian and African LDCs.  
The materials from the project will be used as a basis for two regional seminars, one in Africa, and the other in Asia, with the participation of university partners of the UNCTAD Virtual Institute, and disseminated to members through the Vi website. |
|---|---|
| **1.4 First annual Virtual Institute meeting** | **What is the role of the UNCTAD Virtual Institute network? How can we contribute to the development of national policy capacities?**  
These are the kinds of questions we will discuss at our first meeting. The purpose of the meeting is for UNCTAD and the universities to agree ways of working together so as to promote sustainable approaches to improving the quality and impact of teaching and research of trade and related areas. So between July 11-15, the 12 members of our network will share their knowledge and experiences: for example, how does the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing prepare its graduates to become policy makers; how does the Jawaharlal Nehru University of New Delhi conduct research into FDI in South Asia; or how does the University of Mauritius use ICTs to teach international economics?  
Several sessions will be dedicated to keynote speeches focusing on how academic work can influence effective policy-making. Topics include the links between trade and poverty reduction, participatory approaches to building national trade-related capacities, the role of dispute settlement for developing countries and the role of UNCTAD in economic research and analysis.  
We count on your involvement and participation for the success of the meeting! |
| The materials relating to the meeting are available in the Resources section of the new Vi website http://vi.unctad.org, under Vi meeting. | Two new teaching materials are now available in the Training Materials Section of the new Vi website.  
A new material on the role of competition policy in development is available to Vi members. The material consists of a video presentation from UNCTAD’s Chief of Competition Policy on its importance for developing countries; a simulation exercise where students take the role of government competition officials to investigate a complaint about anticompetitive behaviour; the UN Set of Principles and Rules on Competition, the UN model law on competition as well as background case studies on Brazil and recent competition cases including South Africa, Peru, Mexico and Zambia. The materials were developed with the Competition Policy Branch of UNCTAD for the Vi/University of Campinas Study Tour. |
| **2. NEW Vi AND UNCTAD RESOURCES** | **2.1 Training material on competition policy**  
If you use Vi materials we would really value any information you can give us about how they were received, what you used them for or suggestions for additional information or improvements. |
### 2.2 Simulation exercise on WTO negotiations on food security

A simulation exercise based on WTO agricultural negotiations is now available. The resources for the simulation include a sample negotiating text, suggested agenda, detailed instructions, and background information on the countries involved in the negotiations. Additionally, tips on how to manage the exercise are included for teachers or facilitators. With proper preparation and background information, the simulation can be used to give students an introduction to basic negotiating techniques. It also provides an excellent practical opportunity for them to extend and deepen their knowledge of the WTO Agreement on Agriculture.

### 2.3 Selection of materials on the role of Science and Technology in development

A recent meeting of the UN Commission on Science and Technology discussed the contribution that technological changes and innovations can make to the achievement of the millennium development goals, as well as national development objectives. Presentations and discussions addressed a number of questions: What kind of factors can increase the impact of Science and Technology on development and poverty reduction? What is the role of infrastructure (ICT, transportation) in the development of a nation’s technological capacity? How to improve national Science and Technology education and strengthen its linkages with applied research and industry? How can technology contribute to the generation of employment? What role can the governments play in supporting science and technology?

All the materials are available in the Resources section of the site, under Science and Technology.

We have posted for you on the Vi website a selection of UNCTAD papers related to these questions. The background paper for the meeting on "Science and Technology Promotion, Advice and Application for the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals", as well as the accompanying presentation by Mongi Hamdi, Chief of the Science and Technology Section at UNCTAD, discuss major benefits and challenges of science and technology development in promoting economic growth and reducing poverty. Two other presentations that we have selected illustrate the importance of countries investing in science and technology and related education for social and economic development (Professor Atta-ur-Rahman, Federal Minister and Chairman of the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan) and the potential of ICT to promote employment and enterprise development (Bruno Lanvin, Senior Advisor on e-strategies at the World Bank).

Those interested in getting some examples of S&T challenges, policies or initiatives in countries like Angola, Cameroon, China, India, Iran, Italy, Jamaica, Romania, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka and Sudan can refer to a compendium of country reports submitted to the Commission. More comprehensively, the "Science, Technology and Innovation Policy Review of the Islamic Republic of Iran" provides an assessment of the country's innovation system and its policy framework for science, research and technologies, and examines in greater detail cases of its oil, gas and petrochemical sector as well as the biopharmaceutical sector.

For further reading, see "The digital divide: ICT development indices" providing statistics on the international digital divide, and proposing solutions and policy options which are illustrated with successful cases from China, Egypt, Republic of Korea, Czech
2.4 Background materials on commodities

All the materials are freely available in the Resources section of the site, under Commodities.

Three more resources on commodities are also available: The first one, "International trade negotiations, regional integration and South-South trade, especially in commodities", focuses on trade negotiations in commodities and the expanding commodity trade between developing countries. This paper is a good introductory reading on the issue of economic cooperation and regional integration. The second one is a strongly argued discussion paper on "Commodities under neo-liberalism: the case of cocoa" that could be of interest to anyone looking for different points of view on the causes and consequences of low commodity prices. A third document, "Turning losses into gains: SIDS and multilateral trade liberalization in agriculture", examines the specific situation of several small island developing countries and provides several useful case studies (Barbados, the Pacific Islands, the Windward Islands…).

3. MEMBERS

3.1 New Vi members

And now we are 12… Four universities have joined the Vi network between April and June 2005.

For more information about all our members check the About the Vi, University Members section of the new Vi website.

School of International Trade and Economics (SITE) of the University of International Business and Economics (UIBE), Beijing, China

SITE is one of China’s leading centres for the study of international trade, finance and economics.

The School offers undergraduate, graduate and PhD degrees in International Trade, Finance, Logistics, and Industrial Economics to Chinese students, as well as a MA in Applied Economics for an international audience coming from 30 countries from across the globe. It also runs an executive development programme on International Development and workshops on Trade Policy. Graduates accede to important positions in government agencies, large enterprises and Chinese representations abroad.

Research holds a prominent place in SITE’s work. Five specialized research centres have been established within the School on International Economic Cooperation, Financial Markets, Investment, Agricultural Trade Policies and Chinese Economic Studies, and collaboration is under way with UIBE’s research centres on the WTO, and on Transnational Corporations. SITE produces a substantial number of working papers, books, as well as papers published in internationally recognized journals.
Cheikh Anta Diop University (UCAD), Dakar, Senegal

The Cheikh Anta Diop University founded in 1957 is the oldest and the most important higher learning institution in Senegal.

Its Faculty of Social Sciences and Management offers two types of Masters in economic sciences and management - a professional Masters for graduates who want a career in government, business or civil society, and a research Masters leading to a PhD. Among the professional Masters currently under way are those in Management with specialization in international trade; Financial management; Economic Regulation; Statistical and Econometrical Methods; Finance and Banking; and Economic Policies and Project Analysis. A postgraduate degree in International Trade Negotiations is also being developed in partnership with the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences.

Dakar also hosts one of the 5 campuses of the Programme de Troisième Cycle Interuniversitaire en Economie (PTCI), which is common to 17 sub-saharan African countries and is sponsored by a panel of donors.

In addition, the university’s Centre of Applied Economic Research (CREA) carries out analysis on market access, investment, competitiveness, informal sector, governance and institutional development, with special focus on Senegal. A particularly important topic for the Centre is poverty. CREA is one of the research centres in the sub-region participating in the MIMAP (Micro Impacts of Macro Policies) programme sponsored by the IDRC and a member of the Poverty and Economic Policy (PEP) network.

University of the West Indies (UWI)

In 2004, the UWI launched a Masters programme in International Trade Policy seeking as its primary objective to create a cadre of young professionals specifically trained to assist in the specific areas of vulnerability unique to the sub-region, and build within UWI an institutionalized capacity to address human capacity needs of the OECS and the wider CARICOM in the area of international trade policy.

The University of the West Indies is an autonomous regional institution supported by and serving 15 different countries in the West Indies. With its 3 campuses: Mona (Jamaica), Cave Hill (Barbados) and St Augustine (Trinidad and Tobago) and a strong emphasis on Caribbean issues in both teaching and research it offers an ideal learning ground for both regional and international students.

UWI offers a range of undergraduate degrees in Economics, Statistics, Banking & Finance, International Relations, as well as Masters and PhDs in Economics and International Relations, and a MSc in International Economics and International Law.

“We expect that Vi membership will help us keep our teaching up-to-date and make the results of our research more widely known”, says Aly Mbaye, coordinator of UCAD’s participation in the Vi and director of CREA.
Among the key areas of research at UWI are: monetary policy, tax reform, small developing economies, Caribbean economies, competitiveness, and international negotiations and advocacy. The University also publishes several journals - for example, the Journal of Eastern Caribbean Studies addresses the issues of small economies in the world economy.

### Latin America School of Social Sciences (FLACSO), Argentina

FLACSO-Argentina, founded in 1974 as part of a Latin American University created under an initiative of UNESCO, is one of the leading universities in International Relations in Latin America and also an important and influential think tank.

It offers graduate degree programmes in the area of social sciences, among which a Masters in International Relations and Negotiations, jointly run by FLACSO and the University of San Andres, Argentina, in association with the University of Barcelona, Spain.

The key areas of research at the Centre for Applied Economic Research of FLACSO are market access in the FTAA, trade in services, special and differential treatment, Mercosur, and international trade law.

FLACSO also plays a crucial role of a coordinator of the Latin American Trade Network (LATN; [www.latn.org.ar](http://www.latn.org.ar)), which is the most important regional research network that produces material focused on supporting Latin America’s participation in trade negotiations. The network collaborates with universities, research centres and international organizations from the Latin America but also from the United States, Europe, and Asia etc.

### 3.2 Mario Presser taking up a new position

Mario Presser, Vi coordinator at the University of Campinas (UNICAMP), Brazil, will be the next professor to hold the UNICAMP Chair of the Faculty of Economic Sciences at the University of Buenos Aires, where he will lecture on “Brazil and the WTO Doha Development Round”. According to Presser, the course intends to reflect the findings of his latest research to be published later this year in the International Relations series of the Hucitec Publishing Company.

### 4. FORTHCOMING UNCTAD MEETING: opportunity for researchers

**Call for participation - Expert meeting on Methodologies, Classifications, Quantifications and Development Impacts of Non-Tariff Barriers, Geneva, 5 to 7 September 2005**

The Expert Meeting will aim to clarify methodologies for defining and classifying NTBs according to their nature and source, including clusters of NTBs that are already subject to WTO disciplines, and discuss options on how to analyze their relative restrictive impacts on trade. For more information about the meeting [click here](http://www.unctad.org).
### 5. INTERESTING LINKS

#### 5.1 Infocomm is an UNCTAD portal that contains up-to-date information on major commodities and fundamental factors influencing the functioning of international commodity markets.

Member States of UNCTAD have been requested to nominate experts for this meeting by **5 August 2005** at the latest. To participate you will need to have proven expertise in the subject so as to contribute to the debate and make a presentation on one of the topics.

Funds will be made available to finance the participation of a limited number of officially nominated experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition. If this meeting is of interest to you then you will need to contact your government mission in Geneva. For a list of these missions click [here](#).

**UNCTAD's Infocomm website - [www.unctad.org/infocomm](http://www.unctad.org/infocomm)**

The commodity sector is key to the development of a number of developing countries but teaching and research of commodity issues are frequently constrained by a lack of access to reliable, specialized and accurate information. A wealth of such information is available through UNCTAD's Infocomm portal.

The core of Infocomm consists of commodity profiles (currently 22 of them are available in French, 9 in English and 9 in Spanish) where information is structured around headings such as Characteristics, Crop, Quality, Uses, Markets, Marketing chains, Companies, Technology, Prices and Economic policies. To get an idea of how a commodity profile looks like, we would suggest that you consult the one on cotton by clicking [here](#). In cooperation with outside partners, Infocomm also provides monthly market briefs on a gradually expanding range of commodities - currently rice, citrus fruit and bananas (see an example of rice [here](#)). If you are interested in receiving these briefs, which can be used as cases in trade data analysis, by e-mail, please contact [Olivier.Matringe@unctad.org](mailto:Olivier.Matringe@unctad.org).

Another useful piece of information on the site are statistical data on world trade, production and consumption of agricultural commodities and minerals. To access the UNCTAD Commodity Yearbook please click [here](#).

#### 5.2 The Global Trade Negotiations website is a resource for those interested in learning about and further researching issues in international trade.

The Global Trade Negotiations (GTN) website gathers and disseminates information and research on the multilateral trade system and global trade negotiations. You will find there a wealth of resources on issues ranging from Accession through Dispute Settlement to Trade Facilitation. The materials are structured around three sections: (1) Issues area (specialized information on each issue area including a summary of recent developments in trade policy relating to each issue, a list of papers, and links to additional resources), (2) Resources (recent research papers, links to non-governmental and international organizations - including UNCTAD, information about individual countries, links to researchers in the field, research institutes and data sources) and (3) Trade News (selection of recent news articles).

**Global Trade Negotiation website [http://www.cid.harvard.edu/cidtrade/site/researchinstitutes.html](http://www.cid.harvard.edu/cidtrade/site/researchinstitutes.html)**
The GTN site was launched in 1999 and is maintained by a group of Harvard affiliates at Harvard University’s Center for International Development under the guidance of Professor Dani Rodrik and Professor Robert Lawrence.

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<th>The next Vi Newsletter will be posted in September 2005</th>
<th>Please send news items or articles to us by the end of August at the latest for inclusion in the next newsletter.</th>
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<td>The aim of this newsletter is to provide members with details of the current activities and future projects of the Virtual Institute, abstracts of recent UNCTAD publications, and links to other trade and development related sites. The newsletter will also serve as a means by which the network of members can communicate and share ideas on a regular basis.</td>
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<td>Our next newsletter will be posted in September. We invite you to submit suitable material for inclusion in it. Material may consist of articles, abstracts, reviews or letters relating to development issues and/or news concerning your university department.</td>
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