3rd UNCTAD Virtual Institute Members Meeting

Twenty-three core and affiliate members from the Vi network’s academic community participated in the biggest Vi meeting yet, reflecting the substantial growth of the network from its original five founding members in 2005. The meeting, held in Geneva, February 4-8, was open not only to members of the network but also to Vi partners, including diplomats from beneficiary and donor countries.

In addition to discussing areas of joint cooperation and designing the work plan for the network, the meeting offered sessions on substantive themes in trade and development. Of particular interest was the keynote speech by UNCTAD’s Heiner Flassbeck on the growing imbalances in the international financial system, specially those triggered by speculation on interest rates differentials, and how they affect developing countries. He also outlined some policy options for both individual countries and the international community to help address this problem.

Also of interest was the round table on Regional Trade Agreements (RTAs) and regionalism, chaired by the World Trade Organization’s Chief Economist, Patrick Low, with panelists from the University of Geneva, the European Commission, the World Bank, the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery, the World Trade Institute, and UNCTAD. The discussion covered areas such as the interface between RTAs and the multilateral trading system and the impact of RTAs on development, by looking at recent north-south and south-south RTAs as well as current economic analysis on RTAs.

Participants also appreciated the opportunity to listen to other network members, who made presentations on their experience with Vi services, such as fellowships, study tours and professional development workshops. Sessions on the localization of teaching material and on management of the new website also received top marks.

All participants have received a CD-Rom containing all documents related to the meeting. The contents are now available online.

Italy joins the Vi

L’Università Commerciale Luigi Bocconi became Vi’s 24th core university member in March, joining members from Canada and France as the third Vi university from a developed country.

The admission of Bocconi responds to the membership’s request for expanding the participation of developed-country universities. Its recommendation and selection is the outcome of Vi’s cooperation with UNCTAD’s Division on Investment and Enterprise Development.

The Vi will work with Bocconi’s PhD School, which offers an interdisciplinary degree in International Law and Economics covering international economic, legal and taxation subjects, as well as the functioning of international economic organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Professor Fabrizio Onida, Director of the PhD in International Law and Economics, has been named Vi coordinator for the university. He is also president of Bocconi’s Centre of Research on Innovation and Internationalization (CESPRI). He can be reached at fabrizio.onida@unibocconi.it.

For more information, take a look at Bocconi’s university profile.

Vi Russian network expands: New affiliate joins, study tour starts

The Moscow State Institute of International Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia (MGIMO) has joined the Vi network as an affiliate member, following a recommendation by Tatiana Isachenko, Vi member coordinator of Russian core university member, the State University Higher School of Economics. MGIMO joins St. Petersburg State University as the second affiliate from the country.

With seven departments in the economics field, MGIMO’s School of International Economic Relations has graduated more than 7000 students in its 40-year history. The university offers Bachelor, Master,
Post-graduate and Doctoral degrees in Economics to a student body of approximately 2000 students. Its approach to training combines fundamental general economic disciplines with a number of applied disciplines of analytical and forecasting nature. Anna Abramova, PhD, has been appointed Vi coordinator for MGIMO, and can be reached at aabramova@mgimo.ru.

Thirteen participants from MGIMO joined 38 students and lecturers from the two other Russian members in a study tour scheduled for March 31 to April 4. The study tour’s programme include discussions on dispute settlement mechanisms, intellectual property rights and Russia’s accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO). Sessions will be led by experts at UNCTAD, WTO, the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

For more information about the new affiliate, take a look at its online profile.

Vi Egyptian university member links up to discuss UNCTAD’s WIR

 Egyptian Vi member, Cairo University, connected with UNCTAD experts and country representatives via video conference to discuss the 2007 edition of UNCTAD’s World Investment Report (WIR).

The video conference, held January 15, gathered an audience that included economists (Arab League and Egyptian Banking Institute), academics (Cairo and Ain Shams universities) and government representatives (Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Permanent Mission of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the UN in Geneva). Sherine El Shawarby, Senior Country Economist of the World Bank Office in Cairo, hosted the conference.

H.E. Ambassador Nihad Abdel Latif, of Egypt’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, expressed the hope that in the future there would be more opportunities for a dialogue between UNCTAD and Egyptian academics.

“This (dialogue) allows for a direct exchange that is of central importance to the process of economic development,” added H.E. Sameh Shoukry, Ambassador, Permanent Mission of the Arab Republic of Egypt, who joined Ambassador Latif in welcoming the cooperation between the Virtual Institute and Cairo University.

Two of the report’s authors, Jean-Francois Outreville and Riad Meddeb from the Division on Investment and Enterprise Development, first gave an overview of the major trends and prospects in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) worldwide. Afterwards, they focused specifically on trends in the region (Egypt and the African continent), with an emphasis on investment in extractive industries - the core topic of this year’s report.

Dr. Ahmed F. Ghoneim, Director of the Center for European Studies, and Vi member coordinator for Cairo University, highlighted the relevance of the WIR to the country as “Egypt is among the top economic performers in Africa and top recipient of FDI inflows on the African continent.”

Spanish university offers scholarships for Vi members

The University of Barcelona generously reserved 10 scholarships for qualified Vi members to enrol in its new Masters of Law in International Economic Law and Policy (IELPO), which begins in September.

Twenty-three academics from 20 countries expressed interest in the programme. Nineteen applications -- nine from university members and 10 from associate members -- were submitted to IELPO for consideration.

For further information, visit the programme’s website at http://www.ielpo.org/, or e-mail us at vi@unctad.org.
**New and improved! - Vi website launched**

The Vi launched its new website with a hands-on training session for participants of the third membership meeting held in Geneva in February.

The website, developed in 2007 using Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) and in-house expertise, has enabled the Vi to increase user participation by adding functionalities that allow members and coordinators to publish articles, upload documents, and manage university profiles.

At the core of the site is the digital library, which allows members to conduct full-text searches of the more than 500 trade-related documents contained in its public and private collections. Further facilitating research, the resources can also be browsed by category, title, publication year and author. Most importantly, university members can now easily upload their own research through a user-friendly web interface.

Also new to the site is the ability for interested users to self-register, create personal profiles with photos and contact information, as well as upload professional CVs, and enter information about expertise and research interests. For the purposes of the new site, all existing user names remain the same. However, passwords have been changed to `unctadvi`. All users should have received a notification to this effect, and can easily modify their password through the personal profile web form.

A multimedia help file is in the works and will be online soon. In the meantime, please contact [susana.olivares@unctad.org](mailto:susana.olivares@unctad.org), should you require assistance.

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**New director from the University of the West Indies visits UNCTAD**

Dr. Keith Nurse, Director of the Sridath Ramphal Centre for International Trade Law, Policy and Services at Vi's Caribbean university member, University of the West Indies, met with the Vi team January 16 to discuss future activities and areas of cooperation with the network. He was in Geneva as a panellist in UNCTAD's Secretary-General High-level Panel on the Creative Economy and Industries for Development.

Dr. Nurse reiterated his commitment to the network, particularly to the Vi study tours, a required element of the university's M.Sc. in International Trade Policy. A fourth study tour is scheduled for May, and a fifth is already planned for 2009.

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**> UPCOMING EVENTS**

**UNCTAD XII - Addressing the opportunities and challenges of globalization for development**

The 12th session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development will be held from 20 to 25 April in Accra, Ghana. The quadrennial conference, where the 192 member states set the priority areas for UNCTAD’s work, will discuss poverty reduction, sustainable economic development, productive capacities, investment, and other trade-related issues affecting development. As during the last conference, video of many of the sessions will be webcasted through the conference’s site. More information will be available soon at [http://www.un.org/webcast/unctadxii](http://www.un.org/webcast/unctadxii).

**Vi Belarus member hosts UNCTAD flagship training in June**

Vi members from countries with economies in transition can apply to participate in UNCTAD’s regional training course on Key International Economic Issues for Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, to be held in Minsk, 23 June to 11 July. **Deadline for applications is April 18.**
The course, organized with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), will be hosted by Vi core member, Belarus State Economic University (BSEU). The program will examine international trade and economic policies, and how gains from trade can impact positively on development.

Although the course is primarily targeted at policy makers, the Vi is making a systematic effort to include members of academia, who can subsequently use ideas and materials from the course in their own teaching.

Vi Ugandan member conference
Makerere University Business School (MUBS) will hold its 13th Annual International Management Conference May 28-30, in Kampala, Uganda. This year's theme, "Moving the Economy to the Next Level" will look at sectors and issues such as manufacturing, tourism, capital markets, investment and revenue generation.

"The conference proposes a most interesting program," said Vi Chief, Vlasta Macku. "We particularly liked the session on the role of academia - as we are working in this area."

Vi Mozambique member organizes conference on SADC
The Faculty of Law of Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM) invites Vi members to participate in the First Maputo International Conference on Regional Integration and Southern African Development Community (SADC) Law scheduled for April 23-25.

The conference, organized in partnership with the SADC Secretariat and the Ministry of Industry and Trade of Mozambique, is part of the faculty's programme on Regional Integration and SADC issues, which represents a landmark pilot project designed and developed with the objective of facilitating the mainstreaming of regional integration and SADC policies in Mozambique.

>_TEACHING RESOURCES

Localizations completed: IIA for Mauritius and Commodities for Argentina
The first localization of the training package on international investment agreements (IIAs), done by the University of Mauritius, is now available on the Vi website in the training materials section. While tailored to Mauritius, lecturers in other countries - particularly in Southern and Eastern Africa - will find this addition to the IIA training package interesting and easy to access. Most of the information added is relevant for modules 1 and 2, covering local evidence on the economic aspects of foreign direct investment (FDI), policies and international rules. Some information is also provided to enrich module 4, on the interactions between IIAs and other areas. A host of diverse topics is covered, including: entry modes, flows to Africa, determinants, investment promotion, double taxation treaties, and particularly impact on growth in sub-Saharan African countries.

The localization of the training package on the Production and Trade in Commodities undertaken by FLACSO in Argentina has also been uploaded to the website. The material is fact in an article which analyzes the Argentinean soy sector and the history of a legal case between the Argentinean government and the biotech firm, Monsanto. The article is an excellent case study, which could be used to illustrate some concepts in module 2 of the material, giving regional examples of government policy in the agricultural production and exports and the role of intellectual property in this sector. The case study would also provide a useful illustration for module 2 of the upcoming Transfer of Technology material.

New resources on digital library
The digital library has been updated with more than 80 publications from 2007 and 2008, including UNCTAD’s current flagship reports on investment, trade and development, the information society and other areas. Most of the resources are open to the public without registration. To search for publications of interest, please visit the library.
Short courses for Geneva-based diplomats

Based on the successful experience of 2007 and the call by member states to continue this activity, the Short Courses on Key International Economic Issues have entered their second year.

Materials are available online for the first two courses of the 2008 spring series, dealing with trade and environment issues and the capital flow paradox, which took place February 29 and March 28 respectively. The last course for the season on Small and Medium Enterprises in the global value chain, is scheduled for June 27. Materials will be available on the course’s website.

> _PUBLICATIONS_

**Information Economy Report 2007-2008** - Science and technology for development: the new paradigm of ICT

This year's UNCTAD flagship report offers a wealth of quantitative and qualitative information on usage of information and communication technologies (ICTs), and places it in the larger context of knowledge creation and diffusion, which in turn fuels economic growth. Among other things, it explores how ICTs help generate innovations that improve the livelihoods of the poor, supporting enterprise competitiveness, and its effects on productivity and growth. The report also reflects on the need for a development-oriented approach to intellectual property rights in order to enable effective access to technology. The report is recommended to researchers and lecturers in the field of ICT and policy makers, as much of the analysis identifies important areas of concern and best practices necessary for the formulation of policy decisions to support and accelerate ICT diffusion.

**Manual for the Production of Statistics on the Information Economy**

UNCTAD’s first manual of this kind provides detailed information on the compilation process of ICT-related indicators. Providing a guide to data collection and analysis, international standards and definitions on business use of ICTs, it is particularly tailored to issues of relevance for developing countries and countries with economies in transition. Furthermore, it offers model questions for surveys on ICT use, and reviews important institutional issues related to compiling ICT statistics.

**UNCTAD’s Review of Maritime Transport**

The latest edition of this publication provides statistical information on international trade and transport, particularly maritime transport and related services. In addition to information on the world fleet, ports, trade and freight markets, this year's review also contains special chapters on legal and regulatory developments, and on Asia. The review should be of interest to researchers and lecturers dealing with economic or legal issues of maritime transport, not only due to the large amount of data provided, but also for its analysis of regulatory developments and other relevant developments in the field of transport and supply chain security.

> _LINKS_

**Free access to ITC research tools**

Members from developing countries and countries with economies in transition can now access, free of charge, four online market analysis tools developed by Vi’s partner, the UNCTAD/WTO International Trade Centre. The tools available are: Trade Map (statistics on trade flows), Market Access Map (data on tariffs), Investment Map (FDI flows) and Product Map (export-oriented information by sectors). Funded by ITC's Global Trust Fund and the World Bank, the free access is valid until 31 December, 2008. To register, visit [http://mas-admintoools.intracen.org/accounts/NewAccount.aspx](http://mas-admintoools.intracen.org/accounts/NewAccount.aspx).
United Nations University (CRIS) - http://www.cris.unu.edu
A research and training programme of the United Nations University, the website of the UNU-CRIS (Comparative Regional Integration Studies) contains papers, publications and other research dealing with all aspects of regionalization. Moreover, the website offers free access to an online course on regional integration. Also of interest to Vi members are opportunities for visiting researchers, and support for PhD studies and other training programmes.

Through its partners, the GDN website provides access to specialized journals from (among others) the Document Delivery Service of the British Library of Development Studies, featuring resources in themes such as trade, finance, globalization and poverty. It also provides access to a database of country profiles. Information is also available from the Free Journal Access Portal of the John Hopkins University (USA). In addition, the site lists publicly accessible, non-subscriber journal services, as well as abstracts of papers from journals that are fee-based (http://www.gdnet.org/middle.php?oid=247). It also provides access to a database of papers posted by its members and a collection of research papers and documents from GDN-funded activities (http://www.gdnet.org/search.php).
While many documents are publicly available, access to the specialized journal services is restricted to member institutions. See http://www.gdnet.org/middle.php?oid=26 for details.

> PEOPLE

The Virtual Institute team is sad to announce the death of Mario Ferreira Presser, coordinator of Vi founding member, the University of Campinas in Brazil. Mario passed away on Wednesday, March 26, after battling cancer. He was 59.
"Mario's experience and deep conviction that universities should play an important role in trade-related capacity building contributed to the conceptualization of the UNCTAD Virtual Institute," said Vi's Chief, Vlasta Macku.
Our thoughts are with his wife, Luciana Togeiro de Almeida, and his children, Victor and Eduardo.

> 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 and document requests to: susana.olivares@unctad.org
Previous issues are available on the website.

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